The Country and the City in the Irish Novel, 1922-51

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Declaration

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Summary

This thesis examines the manipulation of the country and the city in Irish novels published from 1922 to 1951. The timeframe has been carefully chosen to facilitate an examination of the ways in which the rural and the urban become bound up in the processes of state formation, and how writers critique the state and model alternative visions of Ireland arranged around that paradigm.

The introduction offers some of the ways in which the country and the city have been crucial to readings of Irish literature and culture. In referencing the example of Éamon de Valera's 1943 broadcast 'On Language and the Irish Nation', I contend that the spatial orientations which are undertaken in treatments of the speech are symptomatic of a general approach to critical treatments. I then briefly sketch the use of the country and the city in criticism, arguing that the Revival in particular formed an important sedimentation of the country and the city which has altered little in certain treatments of Irish culture since.

The first chapter deals with the construction of Saorstát Éireann after the Treaty debates and the Civil War, with the new state focusing on the countryside as a space of tradition and continuity. The Irish Free State engaged in a rhetoric of monumentality, with the Ardnacrusha Power Station and the reconstruction of Dublin becoming central spaces in this rhetoric. I relate this development of an identity rooted in statues and development to a body of fiction written by the ex-combatant writers Eimar O'Duffy, Liam O'Flaherty, and Peadar O'Donnell, all of whom critiqued the state by redeploying its rural-urban divide in representations of Dublin and the West.

The second chapter focuses on the novels of Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin, who were not only prolific in the cultural politics of the 1930s but also later formulated their experiences with the novel into theorisations of the form. While also ex-combatant writers, their project was more concerned with sketching an alternative to the 'Irish Ireland' literature that was being sponsored by Daniel Corkery. In this era, de Valera's Fianna Fáil party came to power, a takeover which exemplified for O'Faoláin and O'Connor the disappointments of the Irish Revolution. They sketched the contours of this disappointment in novels set in their native Cork.

The third chapter examines the construction of a separate northern identity in oppositional terms to the south. Arguing for a refocus on the propagation of an urban identity before and after the partition of the island, the chapter calls for a reconsideration of the northern novel as a response to the identarian disputes of the decades after partition. Examining St John Ervine and Agnes Romilly White's construction of a geographically coherent Ulster identity in their novels, I compare these with the dissident spaces of novels written by Shan F. Bullock,

Olga Fielden, and Michael McLaverty.

The fourth chapter examines the Irish novel during the Second World War, arguing that the war offered a point of connection for Irish and British culture. Drawing upon the work of Clair Wills and Angus Calder, the chapter suggests that the rural aesthetics of the British war effort – the 'Deep England' of propaganda – resembled the representations of Ireland during this period. The novels of Kate O'Brien, Michael McLaverty, Mary Lavin and Maura Laverty all betray a form of nostalgia for a lost childhood, which is freely associated with the landscapes of Ireland and Europe.

The final chapter examines the novels of Benedict Kiely, Anne Crone, Joseph Tomelty, and Sam Hanna Bell. Arguing for a further reconsideration of the northern novel, I examine it in the context of a wider turn towards the rural in the representations of the state and the regionalist movement driven by John Hewitt. The chapter also focuses on the construction of a 'coming of age' narrative for the post-war consensus across the water – the Festival of Britain – and the awkward relation of the north to this effort.

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Introduction

The Ireland That We Dreamed Of?

As one of the most infamous articulations of Irish identity in the twentieth century, Éamon de Valera's 1943 Radio Éireann broadcast 'On Language and the Irish Nation' has often offered a useful point of attack for critical treatments of Irish culture and politics. Terence Brown's *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (2004), for example, criticises the speech as conveying the speaker's general attachments to the 'uncomplicated satisfactions of an Ireland Free' in what Brown terms a 'Gaelic Eden'.[1] Diarmaid Ferriter considers 'On Language and the Irish Nation' as 'an articulation of traditional, non-material, rural values', and Bryan Fanning similarly argues that it 'evokes a Catholic, anti-materialist, rural social ideal'.[2] Aidan Beatty's excoriation of the broadcast in the opening of his recent study of Irish masculinity terms the broadcast 'nothing short of an elegy to an imaginary, ever-agrarian Ireland, with harmonious ideals of vigorous masculinity and submissive femininity at the centre'.[3] For a range of diverse interpretations and extrapolations of de Valera's message, readings are usually corroborated by the following offending section:

> The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live.[4]

A tendency in evaluations of this passage is the use of terms which refer to the countryside, agriculture, or 'the rural', with all three condemned by association with the offending aspect of the vision. The speech is also more often referred to, inter alia, as 'the Ireland that we dreamed of', the '"comely maidens" speech', or in its apocryphal version, 'comely maidens dancing at the crossroads' rather than its original title. Thus renamed, 'On Language and the Irish Nation' becomes the apotheosis of a particular ideological attachment to the rural in Ireland.

Perhaps the mythical insertion of dancing at the crossroads has appeared because much of the commentary quotes a work which quotes the speech, rather than directly citing either the full broadcast itself or the printed version in *The Irish Press*. The subsequent discrepancies have

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[1] Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (London, 2004), 146.
[2] Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland* (London, 2004), 5; Bryan Fanning, *Irish Adventures in Nation-Building* (Manchester, 2016), 48.
[3] Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884–1938* (Basingstoke, 2016), 1.
[4] Éamon de Valera, qtd in Bryan Fanning, *Irish Adventures in Nation-Building* (Manchester, 2016), 48.

even led these apocryphal dancers to instigate entire studies, such as Helena Wulf's *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland* (2008). In the introduction of her cultural history of Irish dance, Wulf openly confesses that she was

> well into [her] research before [she] discovered that de Valera did not talk about "comely maidens dancing at the crossroads". The mistake has occurred partly because the version of the speech which was printed in *The Irish Press* (1943) diverges from what de Valera actually said... de Valera actually said "happy maidens" on air, but it was printed as "comely maidens". Nowhere does "dancing at the crossroads" appear.[5]

Despite the proliferation of pseudonyms for 'On Language and the Irish Nation', the original title of the broadcast referred to its overarching purpose, which was a restatement of the government's commitment to the restoration of the Irish language. But the status that this one part of the speech has enjoyed – or suffered – suggests how relevant it remains as a particularly unattractive expression of Irish society. Both the broadcast and article began with an explicit situation of this utopian vision '[b]efore the present war' – looking back to a time when he could reach the Irish American diaspora – and qualified any nostalgic reflection by acknowledging how '[a]cutely conscious… we all are of the misery and desolation in which the greater part of the world is plunged'. As these provisos to his audience and readership indicated, the message was a temporary diversion from the misery and desolation of the Second World War, more idealistic vision than policy document. Although it offered a standard representation of pastoral in its call for peace amidst mass warfare, this vision of peace and harmony was not confined to the countryside. De Valera also approvingly quoted the nineteenth-century Young Irelander Thomas Davis: 'Our cities… must be stately with sculpture, pictures, and buildings, and our fields glorious with peaceful abundance'.[6] In other words, Dublin was also the locus of his spiritual commitment to what he conceived as an Irish nation which was, at least here, indivisible from the country or the city.

Even in the most cited paragraph, in which de Valera indicated that the countryside was where he felt the Irish language could endure, the speech contrasted with the specific details of the policies which he and his party had previously adopted towards it. Patrick Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin note that Fianna Fáil's 1932 election victory allowed them to pursue a strategy for 'reducing congestion in the rural west and stemming the flood of emigration', which was partially achieved by the creation of 'new Irish-speaking colonies within easy reach of Dublin'.[7] Nor was the distillation of the national image into a picturesque rural landscape an exclusively

[5] Helena Wulf, *Dancing at the Crossroads: Memory and Mobility in Ireland* (New York, 2008), 12.
[6] Éamon de Valera, 'Language Must Be Saved: Call to the Nation', *The Irish Press* (18 March 1943), 1; emphasis mine.
[7] Paul Fitzgerald and Brian Lambkin, *Migration in Irish History 1607-2007* (London, 2008), 209.

Irish tactic of representation. The broadcast's ruralist language recalled, for example, 'On England' by British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin in 1926, which idealised 'the sight of a plough team coming over the brow of a hill… [as] the sign that has been seen in England since England was a land, and may be seen in England long after the Empire has perished'.[8] As this similarity gestures towards, however toxic, regressive, or pusillanimous 'On Language and the Irish Nation' was in terms of its masculinity, its social policy, or its attachment to exclusivist versions of Irish identity, in this instance de Valera's rhetoric cannot be simply explained away by reference to its location in the west of Ireland. What might be asked, then, is not only how the speech has become synonymous with a particularly negative image of Ireland, but also what motivations were and are behind this repeated attack on its location in the countryside. One way of interpreting De Valera's vision is that it reflects what Raymond Williams terms a residual cultural process, which is 'effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present'. In this definition, Williams actually deploys the example of 'the idea of rural community', which for him 'is predominantly residual, but is in some limited respects alternative or oppositional to urban industrial capitalism… incorporated, as idealisation or fantasy'.[9]

In his reassessment of the notorious broadcast, J.J. Lee argues that 'de Valera's model emphasised the essential links between the generations as he identified his ideal for the dependent ages in society… the generations woven together into a seamless social fabric'.[10] For Ferriter, Lee's interpretation was a warning of the 'danger of reading history backwards and of imparting present-day values to past situations… bringing to an assessment of twentieth-century Ireland a corrosive cynicism that does scant justice to its complexities'.[11] Considered in the light of this warning, and particularly in their attachments to the objective term 'rural', the readings of 'On Language and the Irish Nation' as expressing an essentially rural ideal also fit Fredric Jameson's description of the 'always-already-read'. Writing in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), Jameson argued that

> we never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or – if the text is brand-new – through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions. This presupposition then dictates the use of a method (which I have elsewhere termed the "metacommentary") according

[8] Stanley Baldwin, 'On England', speech to the Royal Society of St George, 6 May 1924, repr. in *On England: and Other Addresses* (London, 1926), 1-9: 7-8.
[9] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 122, 122.
[10] J.J. Lee, 'A sense of place in the Celtic Tiger?', in Harry Bohan and Gerard Kennedy, eds, *Are We Forgetting Something?: Our Society in the New Millennium* (Dublin, 1999), 71-83: 74; qtd in Ferriter, *Transformation*, 5.
[11] Ferriter, *Transformation*, 5.

> to which our object of study is less the text itself than the interpretations through which we attempt to confront and to appropriate it. Interpretation is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code.[12]

De Valera's flight of rhetoric provides a signal example of how texts and authors are commonly subject to a particular interpretative master code, which comes before the reader as always-already-read. This master code is the country and the city, which has sanctioned a range of diverse interpretations of Irish culture by repeatedly conceptualising and reconceptualising Ireland within this master code. The central argument of this thesis is that the manipulation of the rural and the urban in Ireland's literature and culture is more complicated than has been considered before, and that in this prominent example, the simple recourse to a single paragraph in one of de Valera's speeches only illuminates part of this picture.

Conceptualising 'Ireland'

To begin with, there was nothing new about this framing of Ireland within the settings of the rural and the urban. Joep Leerssen argues that while a dichotomy of country and city was deployed throughout Europe as a cultural formula since at least Roman times, it was nuanced by British Imperialism in Ireland since the establishment of the Pale. From that time, it led to a 'denigrat[ion] of the people who dwelled at its uncultivated, uncontrolled frontier'.[13] However, these repeated configurations of the city and the country as sites of civility and barbarity found powerful expression in the late nineteenth century when Ireland was making its first moves towards legislative autonomy, and this pattern continued in the first decades of the twentieth century. Two examples from this period demonstrate how landscape and development became bound up in a description of national character. To take the first of these, in the midst of the First Home Rule Bill in 1893, the Unionist Member of Parliament for North Antrim, Thomas Sinclair, had imagined Ireland as a top-heavy fraction:

> The proposed Irish Legislative Assembly will be a pattern of a class legislature. Its rural and urban constituencies will be in the ratio of six to one. Its rural constituencies, except in two or three constituencies contain no admixture of large manufacturing districts and towns, such as frequently occur in Great Britain. Its urban constituencies in the South and West are, as we have seen, declining. The overwhelming interest, therefore, in the assembly will be agricultural. It will be, not an Irish Parliament, but an Irish Agricultural association. And when it is considered that one-fourth of the agriculturists of Ireland are cottiers occupying holdings of £4 valuation and under, that over one-fifth of Irish electors cannot read or write, that... disloyalty widely permeates the electorate, it must be acknowledged that the legislative body to which the

[12] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981; Cornell, 2014), 9-10.
[13] Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006), 28.

> commercial and manufacturing interests of Ulster are to be entrusted is unique among such institutions.[14]

For many Belfast businessmen like Sinclair, the increasingly divergent economic outputs from Dublin and Belfast were proof of a difference in character and culture. Sinclair, later drafter of the Ulster Covenant, was a 'leader of business opinion in the Belfast region' until his death in 1914, and throughout his life sought to complicate the received notion of a united Irish nation by an oppositional configuration of Ulster's urban industry to the rest of Ireland's reliance upon rural agriculture.[15] For him, one of the potential offshoots of Home Rule was a heavily agricultural state dominated by disloyalty and illiteracy, which would be disastrous for the burgeoning industrial economy in the north-east.

By contrast Mary E. Daly contends that, in the early years of the twentieth century, aspects of a cultural nationalism which was largely centred in Dublin were motivated by a belief 'that Ireland's destiny was to be a rural, agrarian society'. Daly particularly emphasises the popularity of figuring the country and the city as a moral and social divide in mounting a critique of English culture. As she elaborates, '[m]any of the formative leaders of the Gaelic revival believed that Ireland was destined to be a rural peasant society, in contrast to an urban and industrial England', and thus '[o]ne of the key factors in the valorisation of Irish rural life was the tendency to highlight the grimmer aspects of life in the city'.[16] This dynamic was evident in Douglas Hyde's seminal declaration of cultural independence in 1892, 'The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland'. This speech was intended – like 'On Language and the Irish Nation' – as a call to revive the Irish language. One of the ways that Hyde attempted to energise the language was by associating it with the rural landscape: 'we must strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil'. His backwards journey towards an ideal was shadowed, however, by an equally historically-embedded hatred of the urban:

> Let us suppose for a moment – which is impossible – that there were to arise a series of Cromwells in England for the space of one hundred years, able administrators of the Empire, careful rulers of Ireland, developing to the utmost our national resources, whilst they unremittingly stamped out every spark of national feeling, making Ireland a land of wealth and factories… whilst they extinguished every thought and every idea that was Irish, and left us, at last, after a hundred years of good government, fat wealthy, and populous, but with all our characteristics gone… How many Irishmen are there who would purchase material prosperity at such a price?

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[14] Thomas Sinclair, 'The Case Against Home Rule: From an Ulster Point of View', *The Irish Times* (1 August 1893), 5.
[15] Phillip Ollerenshaw, 'Businessmen in Northern Ireland and the Imperial Connection, 1886–1939', in Keith Jeffrey, ed., *An Irish Empire?: Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), 169-190: 172.
[16] Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1922–1973* (Madison, 2006), 22, 24, 26.

Hyde's dystopian vision of the project of English development in Ireland which would make it a land of wealth and factories obviously registered a feeling that industry diluted national character. His soil-versus-industrialisation dichotomy also stressed 'the necessity for encouraging the use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books, especially instead of English periodicals. We must set our face sternly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and still more the garbage of vulgar English weeklies'.[17] These perceptions quickly found expression in Irish language literature. Writing of Fr Peadar Ó Laoghaire's *Mo Sgéal Féin* (1915), Tom Garvin argues that the autobiography epitomised what had become a dominant expression of a 'simple-minded, evil-city-versus-virtuous-village polarity, tied up, of course, with an identification of England and English modes with the former and Ireland and Irish-language traditions with the latter'.[18]

Liam O'Dowd argues that 'much of the social and political ideology of twentieth-century Ireland has emphasised the contrast between rural and urban life'. For O'Dowd, by the twentieth century, 'rural and urban were not seen therefore as merely descriptive terms referring to physical settlement types, [but] carried a heavy volume of associations: moral, cultural, and political'.[19] In the first decades of the twentieth century, many of the arguments for and against a political and cultural separation of Ireland from Britain were illustrated by the country and the city, and the following chapters feature some examples of these political visions of Ireland which depended upon this contrast to chart their imagined community. These competing visions of Ireland, north and south, engage in what Colin Graham has identified as a discursive necessity in critical treatments of the nation, in which 'what the word "Ireland" signifies is obviously semantically and politically fraught to the extent that it is tempting to suggest that Irish critical discourse, in its multiple manifestations, finds itself *de facto* always returned to exactly that defining activity'.[20] While Graham writes of this rhetorical strategy in the context of critical studies of Ireland and its culture, it also serves as a useful description for the identarian disputes of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth-century period in politics and literature. One of the formulas by which definitions of Ireland and its national identity operated was by using the categories of the country and the city as axial lines. Consequently, the ontological anxiety which Graham diagnoses in the repeated conceptualisation or definition of 'Ireland' was often alleviated in this period by the deployment of the rural and the urban. As

[17] Douglas Hyde, 'The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland' (1892), repr. in Charles Duffy, George Sigerson, and Douglas Hyde, *The Revival of Irish Literature and Other Addresses* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), 115-161: 159, 117-8, 158.
[18] Tom Garvin, *Irish Revolutionaries: Patriots, Priests, and the Roots of the Irish Revolution* (Oxford, 1987), 59.
[19] Liam O'Dowd, 'Town and Country in Irish Ideology', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 13.2 (December 1987), 43-53: 44, 46.
[20] Colin Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh, 2001), 66.

O'Dowd argues, this amounted to a 'common vocabulary which many, often conflicting, interests used' in the fraught political context of Ireland in the early twentieth century. While some political and cultural movements constructed associations with these places in 'highly specific ways' to conceptualise a divisive vision of the country and the city, 'the more influential sought to combine the oppositions. Thus, Sinn Féin propagated a dream of a Gaelic Manchester, Ulster unionists saw the puritanism of their small community as reconcilable with "decadent" Empire and with industrialism'.[21] But the constructions offered by Hyde and Sinclair show that these categories were heavily politicised both during and before partition. Although they were ideological antipodes and political enemies, both Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism frequently sought to read and represent Irish culture and society within the terms of this binary.

Despite the many configurations of Ireland along these lines in fiction and rhetoric, there has been some resistance to the idea of critically interpreting Irish culture and history using the model of the country and the city. In 1973, J.J. Lee warned that '[t]he tension between town and country, which many historians detect on the continent, barely existed in Ireland. Irish towns were overwhelmingly rural… Ireland cannot be imprisoned in the urban historians' synthetic straitjacket of "town versus country"'.[22] Though over forty years separate the current study and Lee's comment, this attitude has had a significant legacy in Irish Studies, not least in Lee's later *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (1989), which asserted that there was 'no cultural chasm between town and country' in the Irish Free State.[23] In 2002 Declan Kiberd acknowledged the continued manipulation of the rural and urban in his essay 'The City in Irish Culture', but claimed that it remained less pronounced in Ireland than its neighbouring island:

> It has long been fashionable in Irish nationalist discourse to denounce the city as an essentially English phenomenon, a place of fuming chimneys, dirty factories… Some even go so far as to critique the city as a place of modernity and, as such, of corruption and immorality. Those readings have, however, been over-emphasised. The rural-urban split seems far more rooted in British than in Irish culture.

In stating that the colonial hangover was one of the biggest factors in the denunciation of Dublin, Kiberd reconsidered what has been claimed as the Revivalist excoriation of the urban. For him, this was 'less as an attack on the city as such than on the idea of a colonial or imperial capital, less as an assault on the city as a non-Irish phenomenon than an attempt to imagine an Irish alternative'.[24] But while Kiberd may have argued for a reconceptualisation of the city

[21] O'Dowd, 'Town and Country in Irish Ideology', 46, 45-6.
[22] J.J. Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1973), 97-99.
[23] J.J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989), 72.
[24] Declan Kiberd, 'The City in Irish Culture', *City* 6.2 (2002): 219-228: 220, 221.

through Irish terms, both his and Lee's analyses position Ireland as a peripheral space, a location which is ciphered in the latter's use of the term 'town' instead of 'city'.

This perception has proved particularly popular in studies of history and culture in Ireland, which share the perception that the country and the city is an external framework of interpretation which either requires nuance, or needs to be rejected altogether in favour of an exceptionalist view of Ireland. More recently, for example, Cóilín Parsons's examination of the legacy of the Ordnance Survey in Irish literature similarly claims that urbanisation and industrialisation were 'significantly less transformative of Irish culture than of British and continental culture'.[25] The general rationale for this reluctance to use the framework of the country and the city to examine modern Irish literature is that Ireland did not enjoy the fruits of the industrial revolution to a similar degree as its archipelagic neighbours. But one way in which these readings have been sustained is by a repeated ignorance towards the north as a place of Irish culture and identity, which obscures how the identities of the two states that emerged in the aftermath of the partition of the island were articulated along a binary of the rural and urban. Following on from a recognition of how these identities were formed, this thesis aims to describe how Irish novelists reinforced or challenged the interpretive master code of the country and the city. The novel was a platform for repudiating the rhetorical appropriation of a particular space on behalf of 'the people', contributing to a wider debate about the shape of the nation. Yet in constructing their own proscriptions of an Irish identity, novelists often demonstrated the same contradictions of Hyde and Sinclair's notional Irelands. The states which emerged in the wake of these visions propagated different geographical imaginings of the past and the present which were structured around the country and the city – a framework which has proved particularly resilient in the culture and politics of the island since partition.

The problems of The Country and the City

Perhaps ironically, Kiberd and Lee's treatment of Ireland as an exception within the framework of the country and the city is also undertaken in one of the first attempts to codify the traditions of rural and urban writing in English literature, *The Country and the City* (1973) by the Marxist and cultural materialist Raymond Williams. In this study, Williams engaged in a far-ranging survey of literary representations of the rural-urban binary in English literature since the sixteenth century, offering a fresh methodology and vocabulary for conceptualising the experiences of the country and the city within a dialectic rather than a binary framework. His analysis of the breakdown of 'knowable communities' in the face of urbanisation, as well as

[25] Cóilín Parsons, *The Ordnance Survey and Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford, 2016), 27.

the 'structures of feeling' which offer a complication to the simplicity of the base-superstructure model, presented a model for the examination of literature across a long history of settlement and representation. *The Country and the City* was a rigorous attempt to unveil the 'abstraction of rural against urban forces' in favour of what the author terms the 'ordinary processes of life and work', a theme that runs throughout Williams's writing.[26] As Williams later summarised his major idea, 'two apparently opposite and separate projections were in fact indissolubly linked, within the general and crisis-ridden development of a capitalist economy, which had itself produced this division in its modern forms'.[27] However, with its focus on Britain and its literature, culture, and history, *The Country and the City* has certain limitations, and though Williams is careful to qualify much of the text with caveats and admissions of bias, it still betrays a sense of English exceptionalism. As Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward write, '[t]he rise of interdisciplinary work in history, geography, literature, and art history, combined with the broadening of the English literary canon, make a project like Williams's largely unthinkable today'.[28] Edward Said offered his own take on the limitations of Williams's analysis in arguing that *The Country and the City* addressed the exportation of Englishness 'in a less focused way and less expansively than the practice actually warrants'.[29] Following on from Said, Jed Esty places Williams's book in the context of a 'discourse of particularism in mid-century England', which for him contained a 'buried cargo of universalism' in making 'redemptive claims about England's first-in, first-out relationship to both modernity and its discontents—claims that make England at once the most atomised society and the most integrated culture'. [30]

For Esty, in *The Country and the City* 'the idea of England's archetypal modernity takes on more explicit form' in its rapid and prosperous development in the nineteenth century, making 'a telling shift from British to "English" as it turns from the material facts of modernity to the intellectual countertradition cherished by Williams as part of the national "experience"'.[31] In terms of Ireland – which Said lists amongst the colonies Williams had ignored in his study – what Esty considers as the shift from British to English is detectable in his comparison of D. H. Lawrence with the more marginal Scottish writer Lewis Grassic Gibbon.[32] Locating Gibbon

[26] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; Frogmore, 1975), 255.
[27] Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, ed. Robin Gable (London, 1989), 227.
[28] Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward, 'Introduction' in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, 1999), 1-23: 3. The introduction to this collection provides a more comprehensive overview of the reception of Williams's work than would be possible here. See also John Higgins, *Raymond Williams: Literature, Marxism and Cultural Materialism* (London, 2013), 84-86.
[29] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1994), 98-99.
[30] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, 2004), 192.
[31] Esty, *A Shrinking Island,* 192.
[32] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 99.

amongst the Celtic fringes, Williams argued that the

> long transformation of rural England, which had earlier than anywhere else forced the dissolution of a true peasantry and replaced it with the rent-and-wage formations of a capitalist agriculture, had left, on its edges, socially distinguishable areas: in Ireland, in parts of Scotland, parts of Wales. If we read the literature of Ireland and Scotland and Wales, into the twentieth century, we find ways of life that are hardly present in the English villages after the eighteenth-century changes. But this difference can be exaggerated… what has never quite happened in any of these countries, though in Scotland and Wales the penetration has been greater (and extensive industrialisation of parts of the country has brought its own changes), is the social integration, however bitterly contested, of the English capitalist rural order… To read the Irish and Welsh rural writers, over the whole emotional range from the picturesque to the bitter, to find, in all its forms, creative and destructive, a spiritual self-subsistence which much more than the actual system of ownership is the decisive social mode.[33]

Considering the qualifications which are made for Scotland and Wales, the suggestion is that 'emotional' Ireland was never 'penetrated' by industrialisation in the way that the British nations were, with the north-east enclave written out of the picture entirely. This is the same terms of repudiation that Kiberd and Lee deployed, and yet Williams did not actually demonstrate in the text any comprehensive reading of the 'Irish and Welsh rural writers'. But if these unnamed writers did not appear in the text, then what function do they serve in his argument? Writing of the deployment of the 'Celtic fringes' for the 'urban intellectual', Malcolm Chapman argues that since at least the eighteenth century those spaces 'have posed… a location of the wild, the natural, the creative and the insecure'. For Chapman, whether this location facilitates a derisive or favourable opinion of the Gael is unimportant, since 'in both cases the coherence of the statements can only be found at their point of origin, the urban intellectual discourse of the English language'.[34]

Although Williams did not hide his 'Welshness' – indeed subsuming some biographical details into his criticism – the Arnoldian subordination of the Celtic fringes to the socially integrated England relied upon constructing Ireland as the *ne plus ultra* of these margins. Whether 'picturesque or bitter', the 'spiritual self-subsistence' that Williams observed as a 'decisive social mode' in these Irish 'rural' writers was strikingly similar to the aforementioned descriptions of 'On Language and the Irish Nation'. But he did make an exception for one Irishman, the unambiguously urban James Joyce, in calling *Ulysses* (1922) 'the most extended and memorable realisation in our literature of [the] fundamentally altered modes of perception and identity' which emerged in the modernist novel. Distanced from the 'rural' literature of

[33] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 322.
[34] Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (London, 1978), 18.

Ireland, Joyce was given pride of place in the English literary tradition because of its representation of 'an ordinary language, heard more clearly than anywhere in the realist novel before it'. Yet for Williams, *Ulysses* could only attain this status by being disassociated from its Irish context: 'the reality to which [Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom] may ultimately relate is no longer a place and a time, for all the anxious dating of that day in Dublin'. In other words, while *The Country and the City* did not seek to hide its own genesis as the result of 'personal pressure and commitment', it denied these same pressures and commitments in Joyce's work.[35] While the present study is not immune to the personal pressures, biases, or commitments of Williams's study, it seeks to explain and qualify some of the literature that the text glosses over in favour of examining more canonical writers. I return periodically to Williams's theories and readings across the range of his works, and particularly *The Country and the City*, but there are more specific purposes at hand, which are to examine how the Irish novel represented the country and the city in the aftermath of partition, and how this connected with a way of reading the literature and culture of the island in the years of state formation.

The Country and the City in Ireland

One of the first sustained engagements with the Irish inflection of the country and the city was Fintan O'Toole's 1985 *Crane Bag* article 'Going West: The Country versus the City in Irish Writing', which even titularly suggested the binary representation of each space. In his meditations upon the rural and the urban as dichotomous constructs within Irish culture and politics, O'Toole set out the case for a reappraisal of the Irish Literary Revival not as a rural phenomenon but as a metropolitan fantasy of communal stability projected onto the countryside. He argued that the Revival's ruralist image of Ireland 'was created in a metropolitan context for a metropolitan audience. Yet it helped to create and sustain an image of rural Ireland as an ideal which fed into the emergent political culture of Irish nationalism'. 'Going West' lucidly described the political effects of the rural vision of the Literary Revival, and the socio-economic background of its key agents and proponents. But O'Toole's claim that the sustained 'image of rural Ireland as an ideal' was 'create[d]' by the Literary Revivalists dismisses both the long history of idealising Ireland through its rural landscape, as well as how the Revival movement reacted to the history of representations of the island and its people.[36] O'Toole thus simplified the complexities of the Revival to attack what he saw as the rural

[35] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 291, 291, 245, 11.
[36] Fintan O'Toole, 'Going West: The Country versus the City in Irish Writing', *The Crane Bag* 9.2 (1985), 111-116: 111.

conservatism of present-day Ireland, using Michael O'Loughlin's 1980 poem 'Dublin After the Civil War' as a neat point of contrast:

> Here it was hunger, there it was murder
> De Valera, Stalin, Free State and Soviet
> The grotesque reality of an aborted ideal
> Where we talked like kings in a place of dreams
> And lived like dogs in the rains of the city.[37]

O'Loughlin's heavy-handed association of de Valera with the 'aborted ideals', and the related semaphoring of the city as reality, provide a useful abbreviation of some of the constructions and indeed assumptions that Irish criticism has made about the rural-urban divide. Indeed, for O'Toole, ventriloquising the poem, it was only at the time of his article's publication that 'an urban literature from within the modern city is beginning to develop… it is time that the dogs of the city began to bark'.[38]

This is another recurring and often contradictory strategy: the repudiation of the rural Revival as a means of revitalising a new 'generation' of supposedly urban writing. As we shall see, there is nothing new about this caricature, or the opposition of city and country in service of heralding the arrival of a new cohort of iconoclastic writers. But this repeated attack on the spatial imaginary of the Revival actually reaffirms how successful the movement was in propagating its vision of Irish life. The Revival is described by Declan Kiberd and P.J. Mathews as 'an intense phase of intellectual rejuvenation that fashioned a new civic culture outside the scope of institutional religion, the colonial state, and conventional politics'.[39] As discussed below, the conceptualisation of this new civic culture necessitated a revision of the relationship between the country and the city, with the centres of moral and spiritual (if not political and economic) powers located on the fringes of the state. Thus whether dismissing or valorising its creation of a separate consciousness, such explanations often simplify the Literary Revival's varied anthropological and agricultural attachments as a validation of their arguments. As Sineád Garrigan-Mattar writes, '[t]he primitivism of the Irish Revival has been misunderstood for too long because its complex and varied politics have been seen as depending on a particularly uncomplicated attitude towards the past'.[40] We might also consider how attitudes towards space generally, and the rural-urban binary more specifically, have been equally underappreciated, often because our understanding of the past has been so reductive. Indeed,

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[37] Michael O'Loughlin, *Stalingrad: The Street Dictionary* (Dublin, 1980), 12; qtd in O'Toole, 'Going West', 116.
[38] O'Toole, 'Going West', 116.
[39] Declan Kiberd and P. J. Mathews, *Handbook of the Irish Revival: An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writings 1891-1922* (Dublin, 2015), 24.
[40] Sineád Garrigan-Mattar, *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (Oxford, 2004), 281. Garrigan-Mattar's book, along with P.J. Mathews's *Revival: The Abbey Theatre, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and the Co-operative Movement* (Cork, 2003), and Gregory Castle's *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge, 2009), offer a more complete account of these diverse motivations than the current study has space for.

despite the dichotomisation of the rural and urban as a process that lasted over several centuries, the Revival is one of the most important crystallisations of this binary, and studies of Irish literature have also tended to use the paradigm of the country and the city to explain its emergence and disappearance.

As Gerry Smyth argues, '[t]he ideological division of physical space into an opposition organised around the concepts of "city" and "country" constitutes the major point of overlap between the disciplines of history and geography'.[41] This overlap also finds expression in the tendency to analyse and explain Irish culture according to a paradigm of development from its rural past into the urban present and future, with a corresponding rise of modernist literature and culture. Terry Eagleton provides a germane example of this tendency in arguing that the economy and society of nineteenth-century Ireland, like that of Britain, was 'a capitalist formation… [b]ut it was a woefully inert brand of rural capitalism, an old-fashioned form of modernity which lacked the challenge of an industrial middle class to spur it to life'. Thus the radical 'mantle of revolutionary modernism' was handed over to a 'rural middle-class' in Ireland who were 'one of the most conservative formations in Western Europe'. Despite the rural character of these unlikely revolutionaries, Eagleton resituates Ireland, through the lens of Perry Anderson, as 'an exemplary case of what Marxism has dubbed combined and uneven development' because of the existence of an industrial enclave in the north-east with a middle-class base, and yet entirely in ignorance of any culture from that base.[42] The argument that Ireland offered an exemplary case study of development is also advanced in Joe Cleary's more recent study of twentieth-century Irish literature and culture, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (2006). However, Cleary rejects Eagleton's profile of an Irish modernism which is strongest in locations of uneven or mixed development, dismissing the city of Belfast, 'unionist northern Ireland', and their associations with conservative British culture as a failed 'lightning rod for a modernist cultural efflorescence of the kind that issued from other European industrial enclaves also encased within largely agrarian societies'.[43] This assertion is counter to the marginalisation of the island in Williams's study, as well as Eagleton's reliance upon the existence of Belfast (if not its literature) for his theorisation of modernism in 'post-independent' Ireland. Instead the Famine is the originating moment of Irish modernism.

In Cleary's formulation, the island – or rather, those parts which fully subscribed to 'Irish' culture – eschewed the high culture on the continent or in Britain. Instead Ireland was 'a

[41] Gerry Smyth, *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* (London, 2001), 76.
[42] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London, 1995), 277, 274.
[43] Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), 86.

society bowled by a stunning force with terrific velocity into modernity'. Consequently, the Revival was both a modernist and nationalist movement which relied upon a pre-capitalist form of vernacular low culture to alleviate the ravages of colonialism in Ireland. W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge were central figures in this alleviation, whom for Cleary sought 'some sense of the coherent community, linguistic vivacity, and pagan vitality that had supposedly been leached from the modern world'.[44] Thus read, the movement deployed the binary opposition of the country and the city to eviscerate the colonial conception of Ireland as the land of 'buffoonery and easy sentiment', and looked back to a time of tradition and spiritualism.[45] In one instance Cleary argues that the Irish Literary Revival's ruralist ideal was a reappropriation of a negative colonial representation of the nation, which deployed different political and cultural motivations: 'what is decisive [politically] is not whether a modernist writer embraces the archaic or the modern elements, the country or the city… but rather how the dialectic between the two is actually elaborated'.[46] This schemata for determining the 'politics' of the Irish modernist writer is also a useful way of reassessing his own criteria for inclusion in his analysis, which in itself deploys the country and the city to sanction the location of Irish modernism. Though not wishing to dismiss Eagleton or Cleary's theorisations of how Irish modernism emerged altogether, it is striking how their complicated formulations of the past are complemented by their unwillingness to elaborate the dialectic between the north-eastern industrial and the western agrarian enclave.

Partition, cultural politics, and the rural-urban divide

Curiously, while recognising the importance of Belfast in the nineteenth-century economy and society of Ireland, Eagleton and Cleary do little to integrate the political and cultural spheres of influence within Ulster and the 'north-east' in their analyses. Nor do they question the discursive construction of 'the country' and 'the city' in the island's culture and politics before partition. With their extrapolation of Irish modernism beyond the time of Parnell, Eagleton and Cleary only slightly qualify Richard Kirkland's description of the 'classic Revival narrative' which offers

> as a beginning the fall of Parnell in 1890 and a subsequent disenchantment with hegemonic political activity; what Yeats describes in his famous 1923 Nobel lecture to the Royal Academy of Sweden as "a disillusioned and embittered Ireland turn[ing] from parliamentary politics". This disappointment is seen to

[44] Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 88, 132.
[45] Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (London, 1913), 20.
[46] Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 91.

> lead to an increasing concentration on cultural activity and the political invigoration of the interest in Celtic antiquarian study that had been steadily gaining momentum through the course of the nineteenth century.[47]

As Gerry Smyth writes, after independence was achieved in the twenty-six counties of southern Ireland, 'temporality' was 'installed as the dominant factor in any consideration of island life, past or present, urban or rural' by the 'institutional hegemony' of Irish history.[48] The logical consequence was the recurrence of this genealogy of the Irish Revival, which is perceived as an essentially southern phenomenon. This has a corresponding effect on the country and the city, because even in the alternative genealogies for the Revival sketched out above, there is no revisitation of the literature of the north in any detail, instead conforming to the equally classic partition of literary discussion.[49] Yet the positive image of the Irish west was also produced by a much more negative stereotype of the more industrialised area of Ireland – the 'north-east' to which they both refer.

While Irish nationalism was figuring itself as an alternative to Britishness, the northern inflection of British nationalism – Ulster unionism – in turn offered an 'urban' alternative which deployed negative stereotypes of the Irish peasant. Thus a diverse range of literary and political movements have been explained or defined by using the paradigm of the country and the city. This shared method of explaining or conceptualising literature and politics has also, however, led to an unconvincing projection onto the island's political boundaries. For example, as W.J. McCormack's examination of Irish modernism indicates, one perception is that the Free State was more culturally experimental than the state which it bordered:

> the establishment of the Irish Free State constituted a modernist *success* in that the society thus formalised as a self-governing nation had broken away from the industrialised, urbanised, and (allegedly) dehumanised world of the United Kingdom, in apparent compliance with Yeats's early primitivist version of modernism, [which] as a literary project might have been thought redundant in Ireland after 1921. Against this argument there remains the case of Northern Ireland, where urbanisation and industrialisation were closer to the centre of society's self-image, where no break with the rest of the United Kingdom was effected, and where no discernible modernist campaign persisted.[50]

From the opposite perspective, McCormack's description of the Free State's 'modernist success' which relied upon discourses of primitivism relies specifically on the industrialisation

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[47] Richard Kirkland, 'Dialogues of Despair: Nationalist Cultural Discourse and the Revival in the North of Ireland, 1900-20', *Irish University Review* 33.1 (2003) 64–78: 68.
[48] Gerry Smyth, *Space*, 19.
[49] I discuss Cleary's aporia in more detail in chapter three, as well as how the northern unionist elite embraced aspects of the colonial identity of Britain, and stressed the commercial and industrial benefits that the Union had delivered in Belfast and its surrounds.
[50] W. J. McCormack, 'Austin Clarke: The Poet as Scapegoat of Modernism', in Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis, eds, *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s* (Cork, 1995), 75-102: 76; McCormack's emphasis.

and urbanisation of the north as a site of contrast. These theories of Irish literature, conceptually divided by development and politics, simplify the complexities of the Revival and its aftermath by a denigration of northern culture as too industrial for primitive modernism, complemented by a picture of the south as not industrial enough for bourgeois realism.

John Wilson Foster makes much the same point as McCormack in arguing that 'fictional realism during the years of the Irish Renaissance can be found in the North of Ireland where commerce and industry and an associated middle class, as well as an urban working class, flourished'. In his *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (1987), he maintains that the Literary Revival's associations with 'cultural nationalism, their romanticism, their attention to the peasantry', *inter alia*, were matched with a 'repudiation of realism, democracy, individualism, modernisation, the bourgeoise, and cultural union with England'.[51] Over the course of his critical writings, Foster maintains that the realist novel was often excluded from certain strands of the Irish Literary Revival, a movement which (for him) contemporary criticism focuses far too much attention on. In his most succinct comment on this disparity, he claimed it as a legacy of its own day:

> If these [women] writers who went to England were coming from behind it was merely the disadvantage of the ambitious provincial who knows that opportunities reside in her cultural capital and nearest metropolis, which was, where each of these writers were concerned, London… all violated equally the tacit "Residency Requirement" of the Revival.

Thus the legacy of these writers is hidden or 'driven underground' in the new Ireland, with 'no shelf-space for credible Irish writing that neither promoted nor repudiated the Revival and that reflected the continuities in both Irish fiction and Irish society that survived Revivalism in literature and separatist nationalism in politics'.[52] Yet even while Foster complicates the narratives of the Irish Revival, he also falls back on one of its central rhetorical constructions by re-establishing the metropolis as the only environment for realism, democracy, and modernisation. The reverse implication is that the 'provincial' rural landscape is where the narratives of national identity prevail, limiting the individual opportunity which is inherent in Foster's valorisation of London, the 'cultural capital and nearest metropolis'. Douglas Hyde's aforementioned apathy towards English cultural production is thus taken up as a central characteristic of Revival writing by Foster.

These often anachronistic laminations of literary style onto the political border of the island are counterparted in historical treatments of the period. In his own attempt to complicate the picture of the cultural representation of the countryside, R.F. Foster's *Paddy and Mr. Punch:*

[51] John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (Syracuse, 1993), 176, xi.
[52] John Wilson Foster, *Irish Novels 1890–1940: New Bearings in Culture and Fiction* (London, 2009), 34, 6.

Connections in Irish and English History (1993) comments that '[i]t is remarkable how long the inheritance of the turn-of-the-century formulations has lasted'. For Foster, the primary endowment from the 'cultural roots of that nationalist revival' was a 'perceived conflict between the values of the "city" (English) and the country (Irish)'. In one particular passage this reliance upon the country and the city as static sites of meaning is epitomised:

> Despite a half-century of cultural imposition in independent Ireland, the values of the city may have won out. But that is no reason not to make "the city" Irish too. Looking back once more to some unexpected aspects of turn-of-the-century nationalism, we find *The Leader* in 1901 defining the "real Irish people" not as pampootie-wearing Aran fishermen, but as petty-bourgeois artisans living in the south of Ireland. This is the beginning of realism; but the reference to the south of Ireland should be noted... What official identity has lacked up to now is the sceptical perspective of the city boys.

The odd acceptance of the country-city binary here does little except to reframe the kind of Manichean formulations that Foster seems to be critiquing, since what are characterised as the limiting terms of the first sentence of this paragraph – the 'perceived conflict' – are followed by the subsequent analysis. Throughout the essay, Foster places stress on an often proleptic sense of 'reality', which in one instance is associated with 'now seems like the kind of realistic reflection associated with the sane and balanced enquiries of a modern scholar like Estyn Evans'.[53] The subtle emphasis on scepticism, realism, sanity, and balance locates these concepts as synonymous with an urban consciousness, which is subtly imbued with a teleology by the suggestion that realism was born in the recognition of the urban. However, this teleological emphasis merely occupies the opposite position to the formations it critiques.

Again, while the country and the city did not obtain these associations because of the Revival, some of the movements which dominated it often eloquently articulated the rural and the urban in a binary formula. This formula survives in critical treatments of the period, even when motivated by different purposes. As such, Declan Kiberd and P.J. Mathews have argued that the interpretation of the Revival has often been governed by political concerns rooted in the present, leading to a number of reinterpretations which merit their own criteria for inclusion:

> Different versions of the Revival have been produced at different historical moments… In the early years of independence, however, attempts were made to appropriate the Revival to suit the agendas of the time… By contrast, in more recent decades, the tendency has been to dismiss and demonise the Revival as

[53] R. F. Foster, 'Varieties of Irishness: Cultures and Anarchy in Ireland', in *Paddy and Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (1993; Harmondsworth, 1995), 21-39: 37, 24. The 'city boys' comment echoes Foster's earlier reference in the speech to Stewart Parker's *Northern Star* (1984). In the play, the fictionalised Henry Joy McCracken offers the rural-urban binary as unveiling a central contradiction within Irish nationalism to Jemmy Hope, his childhood friend: 'A field, with two men fighting over it. Cain and Abel. The bitterest fight in the history of man on this earth. We were city boys. What did we know about two men fighting over a field?'. Stewart Parker, *Plays 2: Northern Star. Heavenly Bodies. Pentecost.* (London, 2000), 59.

> the source of many Irish ills and a repository of many backward tendencies.[54]

Regardless of the agendas and ideologies which lay behind interpretations of the Revival, even by its constant point of reference as a beginning of something new in the Irish imaginary, it retains significant influence as a residual point of reference for the fashioning of Irish identity. As Colin Graham writes: '[t]he Revival had to be its own point of origin. In being a revival it had not quite done away with literary history, but it had started from the assumption that almost nothing was in place'.[55] By the time of the establishment of the two states in Ireland, the Revival's supposed dichotomisation of the country and the city also provided a powerful embellishment to the elaboration of a state identity, an ideal exemplar for the identarian disputes of the early twentieth century.

The Novel After the Revival

One of the central aspects of the Revival was to repeatedly assert that literature could be a record of immediate human experience. The circular sent around the Irish Volunteers by Eóin MacNeill in February 1916 attests to this, in his plea that 'what we call our country is not a poetical abstraction, as… in the exercise of our highly-developed capacity for figurative thought, are sometimes apt to imagine – with the help of our patriotic literature'. Rather than the mythical protagonist of W.B. Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1901), for MacNeill '[w]hat we call our country is the Irish nation, which is a concrete and visible reality'.[56] The circular thus engaged in another rhetorical countering of literary abstraction with the supposedly tangible reality of the Irish nation. In a more general sense MacNeill's perception that some of the volunteers believed Cathleen ni Houlihan to exist resembles what Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature*, termed 'a powerful and often forbidding system of abstraction, in which the concept of "literature" becomes actively ideological'. The repeated counterings of a Revivalist or neo-Revivalist perspective have often, as in O'Toole's article, matched this description:

> The effective suppression of this process and its circumstances, which is achieved by shifting the concept to an undifferentiated equivalence with "immediate living experience" (indeed, in some cases, to more than this, so that the actual lived experiences of society and history are seen as less particular and immediate than those of literature) is an extraordinary ideological feat. The very

[54] Kiberd and Mathews, *Handbook of the Irish Revival*, 26.
[55] Colin Graham, 'Literary Historiography, 1890-2000', in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary, eds, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature: Volume II 1890-2000* (Cambridge, 2006), 562-599: 568.
[56] Eóin MacNeill, qtd in F. X. Martin, 'Select Documents: Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising', *Irish Historical Studies* 12.47 (March 1961): 226-71: 239-40.

> process that is specific, that of actual composition, has effectively disappeared or has been displaced to an internal and self-proving procedure in which writing of this kind is genuinely believed to be (however many questions are then begged) "immediate living experience" itself.[57]

Many of the criticisms of the Revival's appropriation of the peasant life which I have mentioned above fall back on the same rural-urban binary to re-establish this sense of immediate living experience. Even criticisms of the Revival deploy one of its central modus operandi, in locating the real or the true in one space at the expense of the other. This places the realist novel in an ideal position to repudiate the Revival. As Fredric Jameson wrote in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013): 'the satire of the anti-ontological is everywhere in ontological realism and indeed goes hand in hand with the very structure of the form'.[58] While Joyce and other modernists were questioning the capabilities of any narration to be equated with living experience, a number of novelists attempted to represent the 'real Ireland' in response to the appropriation of rural and urban space in wider culture and politics, and so narrative devices, plots, and the symbolism of novels were equally involved in this circumscription of the real.

The following chapters examine some of the ways in which the heavy shadow of the Revival was interpreted – and often rejected – by Irish writers during its later stages and in its aftermath, with novels demonstrating the influence of that movement alongside the many other elaborations of the country and the city. As such, this thesis is particularly motivated by a conviction that the separation of literature in the north and south deny a fuller understanding of how the country and the city were figured in literature and culture, which is equally dominated by what Peter Leary terms the 'metro-centric assumptions' which dominate historiography. Leary's *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border 1922-1972* (2016) warns that 'the authoritarian and homogenising instincts most decried of both states in Ireland for much of the twentieth century emanated from, as amply as they besieged, their metropolitan elites and urban centres'. As he notes, treatments of Irish history and culture have traditionally relied upon metro-centric discourses, with chapters partitioned into north and south: a division which treats them as separate cultural and historical entities.[59] In its resistance to these authoritarian and homogenising urban centres, this recalls the aforementioned insistence of Malcolm Chapman that any representation of the peasantry on the 'Celtic fringes' can only be made through the urban intellectual discourse of the English language. But Leary's criticisms also pose a challenge to the prevailing interpretations of Ireland's history and literature after partition, many of which critique the Revivalist appropriation of the rural, or the northern projection of

[57] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 46.
[58] Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London, 2014), 214.
[59] Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border 1922-1972* (Oxford, 2016), 19, 18, 123-124.

an industrial image, without a serious recognition of the similar spatial processes that such analysis also undertakes. Similarly refusing to ignore or dismiss the contributions of the north – however they problematise the coherence of the Irish imaginary – this thesis seeks a fuller portrait of the island's literature and culture. While I separately examine the discursive construction of a self-image by the two states which surfaced during the revolutionary period, this separation is to demonstrate the methods by which the country and the city have become bound up both in the representation of the state and in critiques of it.

After the partition of Ireland into two states, each of which governed from the city, the political border on the island was figured as a boundary between the economies and cultures which were supposedly distinctive to rural and urban areas. Several examples of these configurations were found in the 'Treaty Debates' which took place in the then council chambers of University College Dublin on Earlsfort Terrace, running from 14 December 1921 to 7 January 1922. Though not released to the public record until 1972, these fierce debates were occasionally characterised by piques of rhetoric about Ireland's landscape and development, particularly in contributions from the pro-Treaty side. In his defence of the negotiations with the British government in the early stages of the debates, Michael Collins claimed that 'every day some other business concern in this city is taken over by an English concern and becomes a little oasis of English customs and manners. Nobody notices, but that is the thing that has destroyed our Gaelic civilisation'.[60] Another Easter Week veteran, J.J. Walsh, declared in his equally fervent and anti-partitionist defence of the Treaty that 'there are a great many country boys here and the country boy differs very materially from the city boy… the farmers of Ireland were… the back-bone of the fight through which we have gone'.[61] While also arguing in favour of the treaty, Piaras Béaslaí admonished what he saw as this kind of fissiparous thinking that was dividing the country from the city in the name of Irish nationalism:

> There are still some people who say they love Ireland. But to them it seems to be a name, an abstraction, a formula. To me, Ireland is the Irish people. Not the pure souled Republicans alone, but the plain men and women that live in the cities and on the hillsides of all Ireland, including North-East Ulster. Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins have the national vision to sense that people. They see and know the country as it is—the old women by the fireside, the young men working in the fields and the girls in the shops, the Orange working-man of Sandy Row and the Molly Maguire of South Armagh, the men on city tram cars, all types and classes, good, bad or indifferent; and they stand for them all. Remember those people are Ireland. Ireland is not a formula but a fact.[62]

Béaslaí's taxonomy of the Irish people critiqued the kind of abstraction of Irish identity into the

[60] Michael Collins, *Dail Debates* T.6 (19 December 1921), col. 35.
[61] James Joseph Walsh, *Dail Debates* T.10 (3 January 1921), 187.
[62] Piaras Béaslaí, *Dail Debates* T.10 (3 January 1921), col. 178.

romantic visions of republican Ireland. But even while he was mounting this critique, his unifying vision of the people rhetorically relied upon the geographical coordinates of the rural and the urban – the cities and hillsides – in constructing his vision of what and where Ireland was. His unifying view of the nation was no less abstract, formulaic, or deterministic than those which he critiqued; no less divisive than those of Éamon de Valera or Thomas Sinclair. The divisions which Béaslaí's speech recorded between north and south, and rural and urban, were constantly echoed in later political and cultural visions of Ireland.

The use or repudiation of the rural-urban binary in these repeated imaginations of Irish identity is one of the central reasons why the novel became an ideal platform to scrutinise these constructions. This is because the novel is 'popular' according to the description of Colin Mercer, in that 'it engage[s] and technically elaborate[s] the distinctive procedures by which people are held together within a delimited space'.[63] Though Mercer is specifically writing of the novel before the twentieth century, it holds true for the ways in which fiction operated in the years of state construction after partition in Ireland. As Franco Moretti summarises, one of the ways in which the form assumes this function of elaborating an identity, is by narrating its most polarising aspects: 'the novel functions as the symbolic form of the nation-state… and it's a form that (unlike an anthem, or a monument) not only does not conceal the nation's internal divisions, but manages to turn them into a story'. Indeed as Moretti's *Atlas of The European Novel 1800-1900* (1999) argues, the nation-state poses a particular geographical conundrum for definitions of identity:

> A modern reality, the nation-state – and a curiously elusive one. Because human beings can directly grasp most of their habitats: they can embrace their village, or valley, with a single glance; the same with the court, or the city (especially early on, when cities are small and have walls); or even the universe – a starry sky, after all, is not a bad image of it. But the nation-state? "Where" is it? What does it look like? How can one see it? And again: village, court, city, valley, universe can all be visually represented – in paintings, for instance: but the nation-state? Well, the nation-state... found the novel. And vice versa: the novel found the nation-state. And being the only symbolic form that could represent it, it became an essential component of our modern culture.[64]

Despite the many descriptions, explanations, and genealogies of Irish writing structured by the country and the city, the novel's use as an essential elaboration of that division is often lost. This thesis attempts to recover the various ways in which the rural and the urban functioned in the novels written in the aftermath of the Irish revolution, focusing mostly on texts which derived ontological security from the country and the city.

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[63] Colin Mercer, 'That's Entertainment: The Resilience of Popular Forms', in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woollacott, eds, *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Milton Keynes, 1986), 177-195: 190.
[64] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London, 1999), 20, 17, Moretti's emphasis.

Chapter Summaries

In offering some of the examples in which the city and countryside have framed readings of Ireland as a political and cultural entity after the Revival, this introduction has perhaps posed more questions than answers. Although there is a general chapter summary included before this introduction, and the endings of each chapter offer a more sustained comment on how novelists represent the rural and urban in response to their own contexts, it is useful to note the frequency of the thematic divide here, even as an early reminder that the country and the city are laminated onto a wide range of social and political developments in Irish fiction. Chapter one examines the literature which was published in the first years of Saorstat Éireann alongside the monumental constructions of a state identity after partition. In the aftermath of the violent revolutionary period, the novel form was deployed as a powerful riposte to the burgeoning construction of a separate 'Free State' identity. Eimar O'Duffy's dystopian narrative *King Goshawk and the Birds* (1924), the first of a trilogy, rewrites the aesthetics of his earlier, heavily autobiographical novel *The Wasted Island* (1919). While the earlier realist novel attempted to explain the ruin of Dublin by the Easter Rising as a clash between rural and urban forces, his later novel projected this ruin into the future of an Irish state dominated by a band of capitalist oligarchs, who hide in the countryside from the total ruin of inner-city Dublin. By contrast, representing the contemporary Dublin of pubs, cinemas, brothels, and tenement houses, the Aran Island writer Liam O'Flaherty's psychological novels *The Informer* (1925) and *Mr Gilhooley* (1929) portray the titular protagonists as out of their natural habitat in the city. These texts offer a pessimistic attitude towards the new state, a critique mounted – like O'Duffy's – from the capital. The republican socialist writer Peadar O'Donnell's *Islanders* (1927), *Adrigoole* (1929), and *The Knife* (1930) synonymise Dublin with the ruling government, an image which has clearly negative associations for the author. These realist novels, set on an island, and in the Laggan district of Donegal, offer the communities on the margins of the Free State as a site of authenticity in contrast to the brutality of the new government.

Continuing in this vein, the second chapter analyses the most coordinated critique of the founding principles of the new state which was mounted by Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin, both of whom used the realist novel as a bulwark against the rhetorical manipulation of the rural and the urban during the 1930s. The publication of *The Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* in 1931 marked both the first decade of independence and the takeover of the state by de Valera's Fianna Fáil party, revising the distant history of Ireland again as a clash between the continuity of a rural Gaelic civilisation and the trauma of the island's colonisation by supposedly external urbanists. This contrast also found voice in the fiercely contested culture

wars which asked which 'direction' the new Irish state and its culture were headed. Throughout O'Faoláin's output in the 1930s, Ireland's development characterised as a clash between the country and the city, and consequently rural and urban Munster are posited as alternative sites of formation for the protagonists of his *bildungsroman* novels *A Nest of Simple Folk* (1934) and *Bird Alone* (1936). The decade is also bookended by the publication of O'Connor's *The Saint and Mary Kate* (1931) and *Dutch Interior* (1940), which are less explicitly involved in critiquing the appropriation of the countryside, and instead seek a more realistic and apolitical portrait of provincial Irish life. The later novel in particular employs an experimental form in search of a European model for the Irish novel, awkwardly laminating the aesthetic of Jan Vermeer onto his portrait of Cork in the 1930s.

The northern novels published after partition – a neglected body of Irish fiction – are discussed in the following chapter alongside the hasty construction of a northern identity in the 1920s and 30s. Ulster unionism's appropriation of an urban aesthetic to create a powerful myth of the state's origin has rarely been discussed in correspondence with the corresponding appropriation of the rural by Irish nationalism. As I argue, although these constructions were in existence for decades before partition, the ways in which they were consolidated by each state after partition have had profound impacts on literature and its interpretation. Shan F. Bullock's *The Loughsiders* (1924) offers a portrait of Fermanagh life at the turn of the century as a contrast to the ravages of the revolutionary period. St John Ervine, a zealous convert to Ulster unionism, repeatedly dichotomises Irish identity according to his schemata of the rural south and the urban north, and what he extrapolates as their attendant differences in character. His *The Wayward Man* (1927) dramatises the emergence of a new civic identity in Belfast through the journeys of its central protagonist, Robert Dunwoody, and his marriage to Brenda, an embodiment of the burgeoning city. Agnes Romilly White's *Gape Row* (1934) continues this project of partitioning Ireland along the lines of the rural and urban in fiction, from the vantage point of a village community which is disappearing in the face of the growth of Belfast. The island narratives of Olga Fielden and Michael McLaverty, *Island Story* (1933) and *Call My Brother Back* (1939) respectively, represent characters that are both politically and spatially dislocated from the history and culture of northern unionism.

The fourth chapter reconsiders the Irish novel during the Second World War as testament to the interconnections between English and Irish culture, particularly given the penchant for nostalgia which was evident in both countries. Building on recent work that has expanded the portrait of culture in Ireland during the Second World War, this chapter begins by considering Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices* (1941) as an historical novel which offers a European alternative to the strictures of Irish identity. O'Brien's assertion of a bourgeois

cosmopolitan past for Ireland uses space in a much more orthodox way than has been perceived previously, reflecting some of the inherited traditions and perceptions that were dominant in Irish literature and culture before the war. These traditions are also present in Maura Laverty's 1943 novel *Never No More: The Story of a Lost Village*. Laverty's novel contributed to a flourishing culture of 'rural' nostalgia in Ireland and Britain during the time of 'the Emergency', titularly recognising the impending loss of the connection to the rural past. This same ambition of preservation of a site of memory propels both Michael McLaverty's *Lost Fields* (1941) and Mary Lavin's later *The House in Clewe Street* (1945), which feature three generations of a family to construct a complex portrait of rural to urban migration. Although there are different political and artistic motivations behind these depictions of Irish life – not to mention different locations and senses of geography – these novels helped to construct the sense of 'Deep Ireland' which was prominent during the war years.

The final chapter turns towards the north again, arguing that after the war, the consolidation of the two states led to a renewed sense of confidence in the unionist project. This confidence manifested itself in the cultural output of northern unionism during the immediate post-war years, with the 'urban' identity of the 1920s and 1930s being replaced with a decidedly 'rural' outlook. However, the analogous moves towards a pastoral regionalism by John Hewitt and Roy McFadden, amongst others, were not always validated by the northern novel, and the sense of cultural cohesion that Hewitt sought in the landscape belies the diverse uses to which it was put by Irish novelists in the period. Benedict Kiely's *Land Without Stars* (1946) asserts a northern nationalist trajectory away from a rural town in the six counties and towards Dublin, which is semaphored as a site of modern life. In the novel, the Dublin-based but Tyrone-born Kiely was more concerned with the trauma of partition than the Second World War. Anne Crone's *Bridie Steen* (1947) is an old-fashioned tale in which the pastoral tranquillity of life in Fermanagh is troubled by sectarian divisions, establishing a form of Ulster fatalism present in other treatments of Ulster in fiction. Joseph Tomelty's fatalist debut *Red is the Port Light* (1948) deploys a strategy of geographical dislocation to match the social alienation of his protagonist, with the administrative gloom of Belfast offering little consolation from the grim coastlines of the Ards peninsula. Sam Hanna Bell's *December Bride* (1951), the last novel analysed in this thesis, offers a village on the same peninsula as a Hardyesque narrative of development, fundamentally connecting to wider moves towards enshrining a rural past in Ulster by their contributions to the Festival of Britain. However, Bell's narrative is much more complex than this association with the state suggests, critically examining modernisation from the perspective of the villagers who make sporadic forays into the expanding industrial enclave of Belfast.

Apart from the omission of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) there are, of course,

many other writers excluded from the analysis in this thesis: Elizabeth Bowen, Flann O'Brien, Samuel Beckett, Norah Hoult, Kathleen Coyle, amongst many others. This is not to mention several other novels by writers who did make it into the analysis as well. Some of these omissions have not been for the lack of trying, but the general rationale has been to choose those novels which most directly engage with the concept of the Irish nation through the paradigm of the country and the city. These are mostly a group of texts that do not radically alter the dominant sense of geography in Ireland, but operate within an already existing discourse which divides the country and the city to stake a claim for the 'reality' of their account. I have thus focussed on those novels which deploy a detailed representation of space to equate their narratives with 'immediate lived experience'. This criteria limits this study to writers whose narratives are propelled by that division rather than those who attempt to complicate or ignore it. Although I have been constrained by time and space in the course of this study, these criteria have led me to discovery of novelists like O'Duffy, Fielden, Ervine, and Crone, whose inclusion will hopefully be as invigorating and fresh to the reader as they have been to me. The overarching method throughout this thesis is to examine the Irish novel not just alongside other works of fiction, but also in light of the wider representation of Ireland and its rural and urban landscapes in the years after partition.

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‘prototypes of all later disillusion’: the novel as an alternative vision of Saorstát Éireann, 1922-1930

Utopia and failure after the Irish revolution

Fredric Jameson has suggested that ‘Utopias have something to do with failure and tell us more about our own limits and weaknesses than they do about perfect societies’. As Jameson elaborates, ‘there is surely a dimension of any image of a longed-for future which must vanish when [it] becomes a present’.[1] Despite the subsequent triumphalism about ‘independence’ in the Irish Free State, a sense of failure was widespread in some quarters during its first years. Histories of the period make occasional reference to the incapacity of the state to realise the utopian promises of the rebellion. In its opening paragraph, Terence Brown’s *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922-2002* (2004) claimed that Patrick Pearse’s vision of a Free Ireland was a ‘vibrant flight of not entirely unrealistic idealism’, quoting the following passage:

> A free Ireland would not, and could not, have hunger in her fertile vales and squalor in her cities. Ireland has resources to feed five times her population; a free Ireland will make those resources available. A free Ireland would drain the bogs, would harness the rivers, would plant the wastes, would improve the agriculture, would protect the fisheries, would foster industries, would promote commerce, would diminish extravagant expenditure (as on needless judges and policemen), would beautify the cities, would educate the workers (and also the non-workers, who stand in dire need of it), would, in short, govern herself as no external power – nay, not even a government of angels and archangels – could govern her.[2]

By foregrounding his account with this speech, Pearse’s utopian rhetoric becomes a yardstick by which Brown measures the growth of the Free State in its formative years. Its full context, however, bears more consideration. Pearse’s utopian vision was the rhetorical culmination of a detailed examination of Ireland in comparison to America and England, which were places of ‘[p]overty, starvation, social unrest, crime’. For him, these were urbanised and capitalist states ‘where immense masses of people are herded into great Christless cities and the bodies and souls of men are exploited in the interests of wealth’. Making a distinction from the urban

[1] Fredric Jameson, ‘Utopia and Failure’, *Politics and Culture* 2 (2000) <http://www.politicsandculture.org/2010/08/10/utopia-and-failure-by-fredric-jameson-2/. accessed 3 August 2017.

[2] Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922–2002* (London, 2004), 3; Padráic H. Pearse, *From a Hermitage* (Dublin, 1915), 180.

centres of what he perceived as an Anglo-American capitalism, Pearse believed that Ireland could offer a balance between the country and the city: '[w]e have not great cities; we have not dense industrial populations; we have hardly any ruthless capitalists exploiting immense masses of men'.[3] As Michael Rubenstein comments, the Easter Rising leader was 'deeply invested in the promise of development while at the same time insistent that such development need not capitulate to the modern state system'.[4]

Mary Daly's *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity 1922-39* (1992) outlines the ideals which haunted the operation of the state in its early years, arguing that the nationalist 'economic desideratum' was set on a collision course with market forces. In her words, the incipient southern state inherited

> a confused baggage of ideals: a desire to protect rural society and its values and to stablise the rural population; a vision of industrial development minus the evils of capitalism, materialism, and urbanisation; a desire to redress previous disadvantages suffered by Irish businesses; an expectation of material progress without state welfare provisions; the restoration of the Irish language and culture; and, though not explicit until the 1920s, the enshrining of Catholic social teaching… Except for hopes that electricity and motor cars would help to create this economic idyll, no account was taken of the dictates of the market economy.

There is more than a passing resemblance of this economic laundry list to Pearse's programme for an angelic government. Perhaps what crucially links the two is a model for the cooperation of the country and the city, and a sense that an Irish city could be something radically different to the English and American dystopias. As Daly explains, the costly and traumatic Civil War, as well as Arthur Griffith's death of heart failure in August 1922, were key factors in the adoption of a more 'conciliatory economic policy' than that which had fomented revolution.[5] Thus the status quo was maintained instead of a comprehensive social and economic programme for fulfilling the promise of the revolution. According to its first Agriculture Minister Patrick Hogan, the economic development of the twenty-six counties became 'practically synonymous with agricultural development'.[6]

Yet as Brown describes, the 'economic nationalism of the prerevolutionary period gave way to a staid conservatism that did little to alter the economic landscape'. Without a comprehensive transformation of the economic landscape, there was little prospect of a transformation of the relationship between the country and the city either, and wide-scale

[3] Pearse, *From a Hermitage*, 179.
[4] Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (Notre Dame, 2010), 34.
[5] Mary E. Daly, *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity 1922-39* (Dublin, 1992), 11, 14, 15. Griffith was perceived to be the most advanced economist in the government.
[6] Patrick Hogan, Minister for Agriculture, 'An Analysis of the Economic Aspect of Agriculture in the Irish Free State', Memorandum to the Cabinet of the Irish Free State, 25 January 1924, University College Dublin Archives, The Papers of Patrick McGilligan, P35/B2; qtd. in Daly, *Industrialism*, 16.

infrastructural reorganisation was easier realised in literature and rhetoric than in reality. The fictional output of the Irish Free State has therefore been frequently read as a body of narratives that signposted the general failure of the nationalist project, with their opposition to the state often described in the light of its draconian censorship policy. Brown generally laments the 'social and cultural pusillanimity' which resulted from 'Irish Grundyism' in the post-Treaty era, a malaise which privileged the national interest over self-expression.[7] Edna Longley has also described how Irish literature writ large was 'at odds' with the 'failed conceptual entit[y]' of the national project from its outset.[8] As Joe Cleary states, however, the diagnosis of an intellectually impoverished 'de Valeran' Ireland is 'now commonly attributed… mainly to censorship, poverty and isolationism', and yet all of these were evident before de Valera came into power.[9] Derek Hand, in his history of the novel in Ireland, claims that post-independence fiction was a 'move towards realist modes in an effort to deconstruct the illusory romanticism of the Revival and the romanticism of Irish nationalism particularly'.[10] A common blind-spot in these analyses is that the narration of an identity by the state and the novel utilise many of the same descriptive processes, a closeness which was visible during the 1920s in Ireland. After the violent political struggle for statehood reached its partial conclusion in 1922, the Irish Free State, in the throes of a Civil War, projected and narrated an Irish identity. This was set against what it characterised as an irrational body of disenchanted republican ideologues whose 'greatest support' came from the 'small farmers of the west of Ireland'.[11] This precipitated an identarian struggle which was, in part, enacted on the axial lines of the rural and the urban in the rhetorical narratives of the state and the utopian fictions of its enemies.

The cultivation of a Free State aesthetic

This chapter focuses on how the country and the city were deployed in this era in fiction and politics, common thematic concerns which have held a continuing valence in the political culture of the twenty-six counties. David Lloyd, for example, characterises the subsequent dominance of Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil as a consequence of their respective pandering to 'urban and rural bourgeoisie'.[12] In his study of the Irish novel, Gerry Smyth similarly identifies

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[7] Brown, *History*, 6.67.
[8] Edna Longley, 'From Cathleen to Anorexia', in *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle, 1994), 173-195: 173.
[9] Joe Cleary, 'Distress Signals: Seán O'Faoláin and the Fate of Twentieth-Century Irish Literature', *Field Day Review* 5.1 (2009), 49-74: 69.
[10] Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2011), 172.
[11] Daly, *Industrial Development and Irish National Identity*, 14.
[12] David Lloyd, 'Pap for the Dispossessed: Seamus Heaney and the Poetics of Identity', in *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin, 1993), 13-40: 18. Fine Gael was the party which resulted from Cumman na nGaedheal's merger with the National Centre Party and the National Guard in 1933.

one of its main thematic concerns as the 'opposition between the city and the country'.[13] While the two main parties had yet to emerge in name in the initial years of the Free State, this pandering and thematic concern were presences in the literature and politics of the era. A proliferation of alternatives to Saorstát Éireann were offered by Irish fiction in this period, with novels often intensely critical of the state precisely because it failed to live up to the utopian promises of the national project. These alternatives were often ideated in terms of a specifically elided or misrepresented geography, frequently enacting symbolic incursions into the rhetorical territory of a state which has, retrospectively, been misrepresented as relying heavily upon the countryside for authenticity. The perception of a ruralist government has often been articulated from the anachronistic vantage point of a 'modern', urbanised contemporary Ireland. The historian Kevin Whelan exemplifies this anachronism in describing a 'spatial imaginary' in post-treaty Ireland which

> elevated landscape into a crucial component of national identity. The rural west was projected as the authentic Ireland, a materialisation of an unsullied primordial past, a living core of indigenous society that embodied time as well as space… The west therefore became an outdoor therapy centre for the recuperation of national authenticity. By contrast, the capital city, Dublin, was allowed to moulder, an unwanted architectural remnant of a discredited colonial dispensation.[14]

Here the mouldering ruins of Dublin are specifically identified as a residual symbol of the former Anglo-Irish and British regimes rather than the administrative imperatives of the state. Whelan's characterisation thus, like Brown and Longley, conflates nation with state, with the legacy of Saorstát Éireann and Irish nationalism both plotted in terms of a psychotic projection of ruralist values which left the capital city to rot.

While Pearse's programme did not suggest the reductive constraints of a rural utopia which has been retrospectively attributed, it still demonstrated the need for rebuilding in the state even before the damage of a violent revolution. As David Dickson notes, a post-revolution policy of centralisation was undertaken in the face of military realities and, specifically, the substantial costs arising from the Civil War. Far from Dublin being ignored by the state, the period of post-war reconstruction by the ruling Cumann na nGaedheal party 'concentrated the organs of government and Parliament in the capital as cheaply as possible'.[15] Nicholas Mansergh observed as early as 1934 that the new state was one of the most administratively centralised in Western Europe.[16] Andrew Kincaid, in his study of Dublin's post-revolution

[13] Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation* (London, 1997), 58.
[14] Kevin Whelan, 'The Revisionist Debate in Ireland', *boundary 2* 31.1 (2004), 179–205: 201.
[15] David Dickson, *Dublin, The Making of a Capital City* (London, 2014), 478.
[16] Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Free State: its Government and Politics* (London, 1934), 190-1.

reconstruction, argues that 'the urban environment was not ignored by state officials; rather, Dublin and its population lay at the centre of energetic debates about power, history, memory, and the shape of independence'. Kincaid rejects the received image of a 'rural, Catholic country in which an agrarian way of life not only predominated but precluded all other possibilities'.[17] Perhaps tellingly, these energetic debates would appear to have been in Dublin Corporation rather than the Dáil's chambers. But either way, a few lasting effects of these debates were to be found on the former Sackville Street, renamed for Daniel O'Connell and reconstructed from a thoroughfare of unionist statues to 'commemorate instead the rich and varied sources of the nationalist tradition and their role in the birth of modern Ireland'.[18] This reconstruction of Ireland's central thoroughfare particularly demonstrates that the projection of a ruralist national identity only amounted to 'lip service… to rural Ireland and its culture in official statements'.[19] As such, Declan Kiberd muses that a possible means of interpreting 'the story of Irish independence' is that it was 'not so much as a narrative of national self-determination but rather as an account of the transfer of responsibility for the management of the crisis in a rural civilisation'.[20] A ruralist image was achieved on the level of language and culture rather than legislation or coercion, a narrative of speeches and statues which imaged the countryside as the ideal Ireland alongside a quieted local development of its capital's infrastructure. For all the scars of rebellion which it bore, Dublin was a comparatively well-kept urban centre which was distinct from the rest of the island.[21]

This emphasis upon the regeneration of the capital thus arguably increased the dichotomy between Irish settlements rather than alleviating it. It was also not merely a case of the urban triumphing over the rural. Cork, for instance, was described by one contemporary commentator as being 'left in a condition of dirt which would disgrace a native village in Central Africa'.[22] But as Lionel Pilkington argues, centralisation – at least in terms of a national identity – was a necessary corollary of the takeover:

> Maintaining the counter-state of the first Dáil Éireann while fighting a guerilla war of independence in the years 1919-21 may well have necessitated a form of politics that was rhizomic, clandestine, and decentralised, but the reforming agenda of the new post-Treaty Irish Free State (or Saorstát Éireann) demanded a wholly opposing set of priorities. The challenge facing the nation builders of the new state was that of engendering a form of Irish identity that would be

[17] Andrew Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin, Imperial Legacies and the Built Environment* (Minnesota, 2006), xii, xi.
[18] Colm Lincoln, *Dublin as a Work of Art* (Dublin, 1992), 72.
[19] Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin*, 48.
[20] Declan Kiberd, 'The City in Irish Culture', *City* 6.2 (2002), 219-228: 221.
[21] Tom Garvin, 'The Dáil Government and Irish Local Democracy 1919-1923', in Mary E. Daly, ed., *Country and Town: One Hundred Years of Local Government in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), 24-34: 33.
[22] John J. Horgan, 'Comments on the Foregoing Article: No. II', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 12.47 (1923), 356–60: 359.

transparent, centralised, and constitutional.[23]

The triple requirements of this Irish identity were manifestly difficult to fulfil in the aftermath of the Civil War. Brian P. Kennedy argues that in the face of the various problems that the state had inherited, through tourist imagery it propagated 'the clean, untrammelled, quaint image of a country untouched by urban difficulties'.[24] A burgeoning tourist industry saw Paul Henry's depopulated landscapes become a ready-made image of the state's ideal state of peace, with nationalism and tourism forming a similar ideological function. As Yvonne Scott summarises, 'at this time the western seaboard landscape was projected to characterise Ireland generally: not the west *of* Ireland so much as the west *as* Ireland'. The Free State thus frequently utilised the pastoral mode as a distraction from the difficulties of the present, with the continuance of Westminster laws paralleled by an adherence to the inherited iconographies of Irish antiquarianism and the Revival. Perhaps the most prominent example of this continuity was the side of the pound bank note circulated in 1928 which featured a 'Ploughman' detail by Dermod O'Brien, President of the Royal Hibernian Academy and painter (the other side, more famously, featured Lady Lavery as the symbol of Mother Ireland).[25]

Emblems of progress

The retention of the rural aesthetic cultivated by the Revival not only distracted from the violence of the recent past, but also rhetorically underlined a commitment to the large agrarian section of the economy which remained after partition.[26] In advertisements for the Empire Marketing Board and its commonwealth audience, Saorstát Éireann sought 'straightforward depictions of a landscape emphasising [a] rural agrarian identity' from artists like Seán Keating, Paul Henry and Margaret Clarke.[27] However in the 1920s the state was simultaneously undergoing a qualified form of industrial modernisation, which was perhaps most obviously signposted by the Shannon Scheme. The carefully choreographed literary and cultural reportage of this undertaking have been described by Andy Bielenberg as an attempt to 'wea[ve] an icon of industrial progress into the fabric of a nation supposed to be rural and anti-modern'.[28] One

[23] Lionel Pilkington, *Theatre and the State in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Cultivating the People* (London, 2002), 86.
[24] Brian P. Kennedy, 'The Irish Free State 1922–49: A Visual Perspective', in Raymond Gillespie and Brian P. Kennedy, eds, *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin, 1994), 132–52: 140.
[25] Yvonne Scott, 'Landscape', in Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall, and Peter Murray, eds, *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V* (Dublin, 2015), 257-264: 259, 261; Scott's emphasis.
[26] Mary E. Daly details that agriculture accounted for 670,000 of the employed in a total labour force of 1.3 million in 1924; Daly, *Industrial Development*, 15.
[27] Mike Cronin, 'Selling Irish Bacon: The Empire Marketing Board and Artists of the Free State', *Éire-Ireland* 39.3 (2004), 132–43: 135.
[28] Andy Bielenberg, 'Seán Keating, the Shannon Scheme and the Art of State Building', in Andy Bielenberg, ed., *The Shannon Scheme and the Electrification of the Irish Free State: An Inspirational Milestone* (Dublin, 2002),

means through which this icon was represented was the paintings of Keating, who had earlier sketched an extremely pessimistic view of Ireland in *An Allegory* (1924), with the background detail of a ruined Big House foregrounded by the burial of a coffin draped in a tricolour. *An Allegory* abounds in images which resembles Antonio Gramsci's description of an interregnum, with its funeral scene, wrecked mansion, and juxtaposition of an emaciated young family with two wealthy old men: 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born'.[29] This dystopian scene is antithetical to Keating's *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* (1929), which commemorated the construction of Ardnacrusha Power Station in Clare. Keating explicitly described his later painting as a narration of the state's journey towards a modernised utopia: 'the dim candlelight of surviving medievalism in Ireland is fading before the rising sun of scientific progress'.[30] Andy Bielenberg describes *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* as a direct sequel to *An Allegory* in which 'the roles of the key characters has been completely reversed', with one significant alteration to the portrait found in the detail of a young family pointing towards Ardnacrusha to signal industrial endeavour as the way forward.[31] This narrative of a progress from the domestic and national chaos of the revolutionary period to the achievement of a stable and family-friendly modernity epitomises the carefully coordinated narrative of the construction as an achievement for the new state.

Read in this way, *Night's Candles Are Burnt Out* becomes a transparent imaging of how the state wanted the project to reflect upon their emergence from Civil War, and indeed it was something of a success in this regard, enjoying cross-party support. While disagreeing with the way in which the Shannon Scheme was implemented, Éamon de Valera stressed how it could alleviate deprivation in the cities of Ireland:

> the development of electricity power will give an opportunity of bringing power to the people in the country, instead of bringing human beings up from the country and putting them in the slums of the large cities to starve… we are glad that an effort has been made to utilise the water power of the country and build up electrical power, so that we may be able to ruralise life and our industries generally.[32]

As these references to the slums signalled, a hegemonic geography became a crucial facet of the postcolonial identity of Saorstát Éireann. De Valera's approving comments, which referenced the Fianna Fáil party constitutional pledge '[b]y suitable distribution of power to promote the ruralisation of industries essential to the lives of the people as opposed to their concentration in cities', still offered the criticism that redevelopment should redress the

114-137: 115.
[29] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks Volume 2* (New York, 2011), 33.
[30] Seán Keating, qtd in Hugh Butler, 'Ireland's Industrial Renaissance', *The Sphere* (9 May 1931), 5.
[31] Andy Bielenberg, 'Keating, Siemens & the Shannon Scheme', *History Ireland* 5.3 (1997), 43–47: 47.
[32] Éamon de Valera, *Dail Debates* 21.5 (26 October 1927), cols. 398-399.

problems of a heavily signified 'rural' hinterland.[33] The slums were thus deployed as tangible proof of the state's failure to do so. The rural-urban divide was continually evoked in critiques of the state, even from more radical perspectives. The socialist activist and novelist Liam O'Flaherty, for example, believed that 'before the Shannon Scheme and the Hospitals' Sweepstake turned us into a Big Business Community, we lived to talk, and that was the origin of our wit'.[34] Something of this sentiment is echoed in Mark Maguire's critique of Ardnacrusha as an 'altar of progress', which considers the intended 'monumentality' of the structure as 'a topographical reference point for the co-ordinates of national consciousness', which led tens of thousands to travel 'great distances to see this icon of modernity and post-Civil War development'. However, as he describes, later the power station also had a devastating effect on the local fishing economy, resulting in a battle between the local Abbey Fishermen and the police force in 1932 which became known as 'The Battle of the Tailrace'. This is read by Maguire as the state, by then controlled by Fianna Fáil, seeking 'to destroy the very kind of group which its nationalist rhetoric celebrated… in the name of the nation'.[35]

Looking back to two of the consecutive clauses in Pearse's aforementioned utopian vision, an Ireland that would 'protect the fisheries' while also committing to 'foster industries' seemed to be an ideal well beyond the reach of the Free State. Colin Graham offers the Battle of the Tailrace as proof that 'lived and recent ideas of the rebellious nation had a suddenly awkward, dislocated relationship to the nation itself'. Thus, for Graham, 'the onward march of the nation into statehood actually closed the space of one subset of the people while erecting a modernised space for the nation'.[36] The national project of modernisation was not to the benefit of the urban working classes either, since as Emmet O'Connor's long-view of labour and politics in Ireland argues, 'while farmers, agricultural labourers and merchants all received something in return for their nationalism, urban workers got nothing'.[37] As such, Graham also makes an instructive link between the development of Ardnacrusha, and the Round Tower which was temporarily erected in College Green in 1932 for the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. In contrast to the Shannon Scheme, the Round Tower was a 'more passive rendition of a non-modern Ireland made to seem anomalous in the events of state formation and religious affirmation'. However, as Graham warns, the 'analogy between the tower and the history of

[33] Fianna Fáil, C*orú agus Riaclacha / Constitution and Rules* (rev. edn; Dublin, 1983), 4. Originally included in its first iteration of 1926, this clause survived until 1995.
[34] Liam O'Flaherty, qtd in [Anon.], 'If the Irish should cease to be Witty' in *The Literary Digest* (9 January 1932), 18.
[35] Mark Maguire, 'The Space of the Nation: History, Culture and a Conflict in Modern Ireland', *Irish Studies Review* 6.2 (1998), 109-119: 119, 114.
[36] Colin Graham, *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh, 2001), 10.
[37] Emmet O'Connor, 'Labour and Politics, 1830–1945: Colonisation and Mental Colonisation', in Fintan Lane and Donal Ó Drisceoil, eds, *Politics and the Irish Working Class, 1830–1945* (London, 2005), 27-43: 27.

Ardnacrusha is only a partial one, and the blankness of the tower as symbol in comparison to the attempts at agency by the Abbey fishermen is crucial to bear in mind'.[38] The tower's blankness also stood in contrast to the historical space of College Green, replacing the William of Orange statue which had been blown up on various occasions by republicans in November 1929 and subsequently removed. As a statute which had already 'survived several explosions', the presence of William of Orange on College Green could certainly not be accused of the neutral 'blankness' of a Round Tower.[39]

The King Billy statue and the antiquarian tower both operated as monuments of stability and continuity with the past in being located in the economic and administrative centre of the country. Ardnacrusha Power Plant was deployed as a radical break from this hegemony, becoming more than its practical function as a symbol of modernity situated in the remote village west of the Shannon. Yet a central contradiction in this representation of Ireland as a peripheral economy developing on rural lines was that the countryside was rapidly declining because of urbanisation and emigration.[40] But Southern society was also in recovery from a bitter Civil War which was, in its latter stages, fought between the citified Free State and rural guerrillas of the lost Republic.[41] The popular commemoration of that conflict in rebel songs tended to focus upon the guerrilla phase of the Irregular IRA's campaign, exemplified by Patsy O'Halloran's 'The Galtee Mountain Boy': 'We tracked the Dublin mountains, we were rebels on the run | Though hunted night and morning, we were outlawed but free men'.[42] In republican song, then, the revolution was often figured as a conflict in which the government controlled the cities and the insurgents hid in the countryside, establishing the latter within a continuum of historical legitimacy with previous rural-based insurrections such as 1798.[43] But while the landscape was being written into national history, its own microhistory was being written out of it. Frances Flanagan writes that in the popular biographies of pro- and anti-treaty ex-combatants after the revolution, '[t]here was little or no reference to agrarian grievances in the West that provided much of the impetus to land agitation in the spring of 1920'.[44] In the face of their enemies' ruralist posturing, Saorstát Éireann also claimed the national terrain or 'soil'

[38] Graham, *Deconstructing,* 10.
[39] Christine Casey, *Dublin: The City Within the Grand and Royal Canals and the Circular Road with the Phoenix Park* [Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of Ireland] (London and New Haven, 2005), 61.
[40] For a more detailed analysis of urbanisation, see: Desmond Gilmour, 'Land and People c.1926', in J. R. Hill, ed., *A New History of Ireland Volume VII: Ireland, 1921-84* (Oxford, 2010), 452-486; and Mary E. Daly, *Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1922–1973* (Madison, 2006).
[41] Bill Kissane, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (Oxford, 2007), 81.
[42] Patsy O'Halloran, 'Galtee Mountain Boy', qtd in Joe Ambrose, *Dan Breen and the IRA* (Cork, 2006), 193-94.
[43] R. F. Foster, 'Remembering 1798' in Ian McBride, ed., *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), 67-94: 73.
[44] Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Free State* (Oxford, 2015), 22.

for authenticity. This state of disrepair partially explains the need to project a postcolonial identity upon the rural environment while simultaneously ignoring the deep-rooted problems of emigration and poverty in the communities that lived there. The countryside thus became the rhetorical location of the moral and spiritual Ireland, a space nationalised to legitimate the state's narrative of progress.

Disillusionment and dissent in the post-treaty novel

Post-treaty novels mimicked the same mapping of space which was undertaken by Saorstát Éireann in constructing portraits of disillusionment, as well as offering hope for a return to the utopian past. This proliferation of dissent reflected the character of a divided Irish society, with the state's utopian narrative more of a dystopian nightmare for anti-treaty republicans. In its associations with futurist science fiction, the term 'utopian' literature may not seem to obviously apply here, but a recent and more broadly conceived school of 'utopian studies' argues for 'the variations in form, function and content to the conditions of the generating society'.[45] One aspect of the twenty-six counties which played into corrective utopian visions of the nation was that the country was largely in ruin. Quite apart from any romantic notion of the city being a colonial imposition upon Ireland, or the imperatives of consolidation, it should also be remembered that chaos was a prevailing feature of the urban environments of the twenty-six counties in its early years, with Dublin and Cork both suffering severe damage. This was often represented in literature by the symbolic dilapidation of the rural Anglo-Irish Big Houses, or the domestic, civic or administrational architecture housed throughout Dublin. As suggested above, the capital city, in which the vast majority of the new institutions of the state were located, had been irrevocably changed from its pre-revolutionary character. In a 1924 letter addressed to James Joyce, W.B. Yeats pleaded for the exile to return to Ireland on this basis: 'You will find a great many admirers of your genius in Dublin and altogether a very different city from the city you remember'.[46] Yeats was essentially urging him to return to attend the Tailteann Games, itself a celebration for a racial conception of Irish identity which looked back to 'a golden age in the Celtic past when there were "no heavy rains in Ireland, the land being watered chiefly by nocturnal dews"'.[47] Such lavish pageantry which celebrated the new state aside, *Ulysses*'s magisterial record of Dublin on 16 June 1904 would have been unrecognisable from the state of the capital in 1924. In the twenty-year interim between Bloomsday and Yeats's letter, the city had felt the effects of a World War, the War of

[45] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (1990; Oxford, 2010), 10.
[46] W.B. Yeats to James Joyce, 1 July 1924, *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* (InterLex electronic edition, Oxford, 2002), accession letter 4579.
[47] Joan FitzPatrick Dean, *All Dressed Up: Modern Irish Historical Pageantry* (Syracuse, 2014), 193.

Independence and an internecine Civil War. That variously quoted boast of Joyce, that *Ulysses* could serve as the definitive – even utopian – template for rebuilding the city is often overlooked in terms of how much of Dublin actually had been destroyed during the revolution.

For the politically ostracised writers Eimar O'Duffy, Liam O'Flaherty, and Peadar O'Donnell, the image of the state as set against their view of Irish life engendered a literature of dissent. These ex-combatants and republican ideologues modulated their political activity into cultural representations using the novel form. Their frustration with the political system was signposted by this transfer of their idealism into literature. In this light the cities and countrysides of the Irish novel can be viewed as direct interventions into the aesthetic formulations of the Free State, as well as incursions into the idealist hinterland of *Nights Candles Are Burnt Out*, or the occluded slums neighbouring the centralised government offices of inner-city Dublin. Unsurprisingly given each writer's active involvement in the polemics of the day, in their conscious undoing of the state's nationalist geography these novels were symptomatic of a wider cartographical impulse in the culture and politics of Ireland in the 1920s. For instance, in political pamphlets written by a body of disenfranchised Republic women, Cumann na mBan's Ghosts, the symbol of a map was utilised in order to emphasise the artificiality of post-Treaty state formation, in a campaign which 'constitut[ed] a riposte to the political and cultural formations of the postcolonial state'. The sense of being misrepresented by the government was again registered in topographical terms, with partition a traumatic erasure of any coherent sense of national identity for Cumann na mBan:

> Our country, Ireland, has been wiped off the face of the map. In its stead we are misrepresented by the "The Irish Free State" and "Northern Ireland". The two British-imposed governments operating in Ireland do not represent the Irish people. They function by force, by means of "Safety" Acts and "Treason" Acts.[48]

Like these pamphlets, fiction was a means of elaborating upon an identity which threatened that of the state. Novelists set about exposing the rift between what they saw as the tawdry administrative entities on the island and its possible utopian alternatives.

Oona Frawley has described how, in Irish literature, 'nature and landscape become signifiers, lenses through which it is possible to examine cultural and historical developments'.[49] Given the prominence of the rural and urban as signposts in this period's debate about the past and future of the nation, this was particularly true for the Irish novel in the early years of the Irish Free State. Novels may have been rejoinders to the reductive state

[48] Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, 'Seeing Ghosts: Gothic Discourses and State Formation', *Eire-Ireland* 47.3/4 (2012), 37–63: 53; Cumann na mBan, 'Ghosts', National Archives Ireland, Department of An Taoiseach Files, S 5864A.
[49] Oona Frawley, *Irish Pastoral: Nostalgia and Twentieth-century Irish Literature* (Dublin, 2005), 1.

identity of the counterrevolutionary government, but they were rejoinders which also deployed the rural and urban as the axial lines upon which their imagined communities would be charted. Whether legitimating or critiquing the claims of the state, these texts are intensely concerned with the rural and urban. A common theme, trope, or device which is utilised by these writers was an elaborate mapping of the geographical terrain which a novel occupies. As Edward Said has described, this 'elaboration aspires to the condition of hegemony, with intellectuals playing the role of what Gramsci calls "experts in legitimation"'. The intellectual aspiration to the condition of hegemony – to an aesthetic which legitimates its imagined community – is very much evident in the novelistic responses to Saorstát Éireann, which elaborated upon their social and moral vision via the same narrative strategies as the circumscribed vision of the state. However, this is a much more nuanced, hegemonic relationship, since as Said explicated, 'all intellectual or cultural work occurs somewhere, at some time, on some *very precisely mapped-out and permissible terrain*, which is ultimately contained by the state'.[50] That the identity of Saorstát Éireann was rhetorically mapped out upon its 'permissible terrain', the rural landscape, is a significant backdrop to novels written by men who were, at one time or another, closely involved in political life in Ireland. Here the context of a fractured post-war Free State is important. Nicholas Allen argues that the Civil War continued to influence cultural production even after the cessation of violence, with 'revolutionaries of all types of political commitment… propos[ing] competing versions of the state to be'.[51] A dissident energy manifested itself in these alternative versions of the state which were constructed in fiction, offering a revision of the state's representation of rural and urban space by novels of the 1920s.

Eimar O'Duffy and the ruin of Dublin

In the representations of Dublin which followed the Easter Rising, destruction was a pervasive presence, and even in the mid-1920s this reflected its contemporary state of disrepair. In the immediate aftermath of the Easter Rising, James Stephens lamented in *The Insurrection in Dublin* (1916) that 'the finest part of our city has been blown to smithereens, and burned into ashes… the ruin of this quarter is more complete than anything… seen at Ypres'.[52] The 'finest part', referring to the Dublin 1 and 2 areas, housed many of the institutions of the excessively centralised new state. As Ruth MacManus notes, this meant they were surrounded by decay: 'the city centre was in ruins, many of her major public buildings had been damaged or

[50] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, 1983), 172, 169; emphasis mine. For a detailed account of how this relationship developed in late twentieth century Ireland, see Conor McCarthy's *Modernisation, Crisis and Culture in Ireland, 1969-1992* (Dublin, 2000), 38-41.
[51] Nicholas Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge, 2009), 15.
[52] James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (Dublin, 1916), 73.

destroyed, and unsettled political conditions persisted'.[53] Those buildings associated primarily with Ascendancy Dublin, particularly those designed by James Gandon, became a spectral presence throughout writing of the twenties. Thomas McGreevy's poem 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' expressed a common lament: 'Poor inns o'court | to be all but all of Gandon left!'.[54] This literary conflation of political and architectural instability was fitting, but also selective, privileging state institutions or Anglo-Irish Big Houses as opposed to smaller domestic tenements or suburban middle-class homes, more of which had been destroyed during the 1916-1923 period.[55] Furthermore, the majority of architectural damage during the 'revolution' actually occurred 'outside the capital'.[56] This era's overrepresentation of the dilapidated central inner-city of Dublin was thus in keeping with David Lloyd's definition of ruins: 'fragments of an archaic past that continue to work in and on the present'.[57] Ruination in the capital was a social and political symbol of both the past and the present, the Ascendancy and Saorstát Éireann, a sense of decay or dilapidation which the narratology of the State wished to deflect. The narrative of progress under the Free State can be considered as oppositional to, and even distracting from, the fragmentary ruination of the inner city. It was intended as a corrective to such disrepair and often as an appeal against the violence which caused it.

While Norman Vance's description of an 'undifferentiated rural Ireland' located between the poles of the capital city and the islands was gradually complicated by the accumulation of regionalist novels in the 1930s, this was only achieved by a thorough deconstruction of his Dublin-West binary in the fiction of the previous decade.[58] Frances Flanagan's *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (2015) describes how '[t]he middle years of the 1920s were indeed notable for the range of narratives expressing disillusionment with the revolution that were published, particularly by men who were or had been committed Republicans'.[59] Writing in *Studies* in December 1920, the poet and novelist Katharine Tynan considered the charge which a 'young man', Eimar O'Duffy, had made through one of his characters, that 'the brief, sudden, sharp appeal of the poem, the play, the speech, are more to the Irish intellectual liking than the spadework of the novel'. Tynan judged this national longing for performance to be of 'some truth'. For her, '[t]he

[53] Ruth McManus, *Dublin, 1910-1940: Shaping the City & Suburbs* (Dublin, 2002), 68.
[54] Thomas McGreevy, 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' in *The Collected Poems of Thomas McGreevy: an annotated edition*, ed. Susan Schreibman (Dublin, 1991), 17.
[55] Gemma Clark, 'The Fiery Campaign: New Agendas and Ancient Enmities in the Irish Civil War: A Study of Arson in Three Munster Counties' in Brian Griffin and Ellen McWilliams, eds, *Irish Studies in Britain: New Perspectives on History and Literature* (Newcastle, 2010), 72-84: 81.
[56] Dickson, *Dublin*, 471.
[57] David Lloyd, *Irish Times: Temporalities of Modernity* (Dublin, 2008), 15.
[58] Norman Vance, 'Region, Realism, and Reaction, 1922-1972' in John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2006), 153-170: 154.
[59] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 23.

Irish novel, as it stands, is the creation of the Anglo-Irish rather than the Celtic-Irish writer: Irishmen have not yet taken, except in scattered instances, to the writing of the novel'.[60] Again, the Revival conception of an *ex nihilo* literature is repeated, and with the exception of Joyce, a distinctly Irish novelistic tradition had yet to arrive. However, thirty-two years later, the Fintona poet John Montague's survey of Irish fiction in *The Bell* documented a coherent tradition of 'the average Irish novel of sensibility' in what he considered as the previous generation of writers, which often ended 'in some kind of uneasy stasis or accepted defeat, or some *deus ex machina* gesture of emancipation'. Though he wished to locate this tradition within the time of the past fifteen years, on further consideration Montague, writing of the 'heavy, almost neurotic shadows' which were cast over Irish writing of the period, and the novel in particular, suggested that 'it would almost be fair to trace this canker as far back as the post-Civil War period, to the work of that embittered and brilliant young man… [the] prototype of all later disillusion', Eimar O'Duffy. [61]

O'Duffy's work exemplifies the development of a critique of the revolution in the novels of the 1920s, with the centralisation of the state in the capital, and the recent memories of the revolutionary period at home and in Europe, forming key contexts for the representation of the city. A literature of decentralisation developed to counter the spatial narratives of the state administration, and Eimar O'Duffy's Dublin novels were an important signpost at the beginning of this emerging critique. His dystopian novel *King Goshawk and the Birds* (1926) foreshadowed Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), a link which exemplifies a writer who was, in many ways, an unwelcome interloper in Irish cultural and political discourse. As a former subaltern of the Irish Volunteers aligned with Bulmer Hobson, who personally called off the Belfast manoeuvres of the 1916 rebellion, he was also an active cultural figure before and after the revolution. As Greg Dobbins comments, he was one of the first reviewers of *Ulysses*, considering it as the 'foundational text for modern Ireland'. [62] This description sheds some light on the model for his own post-treaty writing. In his appraisal of the novel for *The Irish Review*, these foundations were specifically linked with a reconstructionist project. Owing to his personal experience of the revolution, and embitterment as a result, O'Duffy was afraid that 'certain Irishmen may yet get their way, and leave to posterity nothing of Ireland but what is enshrined in the pages of *Ulysses*'.[63] This contemporary reading of Joyce's novel recalls Fredric Jameson's description of the text as 'a

[60] Katharine Tynan, 'Recent Irish Novels', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 9.36 (1920), 521-533: 521.
[61] John Montague, 'The Young Writer', *The Bell* 17.7 (1951), 5-12: 11-12.
[62] Gregory Dobbins, *Lazy Idle Schemers: Irish Modernism and the Cultural Politics of Idleness* (Dublin, 2010), 123.
[63] Eimar O'Duffy, 'Ulysses', *Irish Review* 1.2 (1922), 22-23.

memorial to the pre-war colonial metropolis in general', with both readings referring to the Easter Rising and the First World War.[64] O'Duffy lost a family member in both conflicts – his grandfather in the Rising and his brother at Suvla Bay – and the destruction of Dublin during the revolution was another source of his embitterment, understandably, since he had grown up in Merrion Square.[65]

In the fantastical narrative of *King Goshawk*, Dublin and its suburbs are the only discernible Irish places, and although the inner-city in particular has been changed utterly by successive revolutions, the capital is still familiar to an Irish reader. While Dublin's nomenclature is left intact in *King Goshawk*, it subverts the spatial narrative of his early fiction. One of O'Duffy's previous novels, *The Wasted Island* (1919), was a semi-autobiographical account of the Easter Rising from the viewpoints of two characters. The first, Bernard Lascelles, is indoctrinated in the cosmopolitan affluence of inner-city South Dublin, and another, called Stephen Ward, is brought up in the comparative isolation of the Wicklow mountains. Ciaran O'Neill considers the novel in the tradition of Joyce, as 'a [*b*]*ildungsroman* narrative based for the most part in Dublin city'.[66] The *bildungsroman* structure is significantly altered by the paralleling of the lives of Stephen and Bernard, and a subtle link between both characters is their reading of H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905). The patently autobiographical protagonist, Bernard, is an idealist whose utopian vision dominates his early childhood:

> as he grew older [h]is mind became less political and more constructive. He thought less of warfare and more of building and law-making. He envisaged beautiful cities, pleasant villages, roads, bridges, harbours and fortifications. Formerly he had drawn for himself maps, physical and political, of his island, colouring the different states as in a map of Europe. Now he took to making plans of cities[.]

This controversial debut, which was revised and republished for a more international audience in 1929, established the wider impulse of O'Duffy's fiction, which was often concerned with plotting the broader picture of Ireland in terms of its social, political and moral character through the charting of a vast geographical expanse. Even though the novel was fiercely critical of Patrick Pearse, it reciprocated his aforementioned dream of a revolutionised Ireland, albeit without the more religious, mythopoeic or Gaelic elements. The painstaking detail with which the text documents the trauma of the Easter Rebellion is also a fictional counterpart to Stephens's *The Insurrection in Dublin. The Wasted Island* emplaces that text's perspective of the citizen into the humanising narrative of the realist novel: 'To those who listened it seemed

[64] Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London, 2013), 151.
[65] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 58-59.
[66] Ciaran O'Neill, 'The Irish Schoolboy Novel', *Éire-Ireland* 44.1/2 (2009), 147-168: 162.

that the whole city must inevitably be destroyed'.[67] The breakdown of Lascelles' potential marriage significantly coincides with the actual ruination of Dublin from what is characterised as the insurrection of a psychotic nationalist elite, the personal denouement inextricably linked with the encroaching chaos of the national rebellion.

O'Duffy, however, was not an eyewitness of the rebellion, and his account is merely 'an assemblage of images appropriated from written accounts of the week', as Flanagan points out.[68] His borrowing from the contemporary reportage means that the elegiac regret with which the property of Dublin is treated in the newspaper accounts after the rebellion is retained in the novel. O'Duffy's post-treaty fantastical literature was, however, distinct from his early tendencies towards almost documentary realism, a turn enacted by the ongoing horrors of the revolution. As Greg Dobbins suggests, 'the instability and social fragmentation that characterised the period of the Civil War demanded new representational forms', a demand which led O'Duffy to abandon *The Wasted Island*'s 'realist aesthetic'.[69] Even after this abandonment in the face of such instability and fragmentation, his later novel still interrogated the new state's spatial narrative. *King Goshawk*, which was partially written on the Department of Labour headed paper from O'Duffy's day job, modulated the previous rhetorical juxtaposition of rural and urban by predicting a future of successive rebellions and reactionary governments in Ireland. In an early transparent set-piece, the novel introduces the mythopoeic warrior Cuanduine along with the reader to the ruination of the long-established metropolitan centre of Ireland:

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

Trinity and the Bank of Ireland were both relatively untouched in the revolution, so stood mostly intact in 1926. The ruin which Stephens's account of 1916 had described is here both exaggerated and extended throughout the centre, as the logical outworking of the violent fractures in contemporary Irish society. It is also a fictional realisation of the claim of Padraic Pearse to a schoolboy in St Enda's, that he would have 'rather see[n] all Dublin in ruins than that we should go on living as we are at present'.[70] When Cuanduine and the philosopher move out towards the countryside there is consequently 'something of improvement'.[71] This

[67] Eimar O'Duffy, *The Wasted Island* (1919; New York, 1920), 46-7, 511.
[68] Flanagan, *Revolution,* 60.
[69] Dobbins, *Lazy Idle Schemers*, 114.
[70] Dennis Gwynn, 'Patrick Pearse', *Dublin Review* 172.344 (1923), 92-105: 94.
[71] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk and the Birds* (London, 1926), 159.

privatisation of rural space, however, was also a more specific reaction to the closure of the King's Inns Gardens, Merrion Square, and Fitzwilliam Square to the public in the 1920s, in what a contemporary commentator called a 'monopoly of city pleasure grounds'.[72] At the fringe of the city are the mansions of a capitalist elite intent on purchasing all of the birds, flowers and woodlands of the earth, with 'an immense triple-arched gateway, surpassing in its proportions even the greatest triumphal arches of the Romans and the French'.[73]

Flanagan asserts that *King Goshawk* is structured around 'the ironic juxtaposition of heroic values (in this case, those of the ancient Irish warrior, Cuchulain) and the everyday Free State realities'.[74] The novel operates by the very same spatial logic that the Round Tower on College Green did, but *King Goshawk* is arguably much more globalised than she suggests. Cuanduine's entry into a rustic suburbia precipitates a key moment in the novel, leading to a confrontation with the titular capitalist antagonist, King Goshawk, which develops into a critique of capitalist land exploitation. Goshawk's monopoly upon the dystopia, which the above set-piece describes, is an inevitable consequence of the revolution. This origin is later unveiled in a satirical account of a debate between the post-Treaty 'Greenyallo' and 'Yallogreen' parties in Dáil Éireann, which suggests the future vapidity of an Irish politics stuck in the particulars of the violent past:

> Mr. Grady: Where was your grandfather in 1916?
> Mr. Thady: Under the bed…[75]

As Flanagan notes, after the revolution 'accusations of disloyalty were rife and the question "where were you in 1916?" was ubiquitous in public life'.[76] Dobbins argues that the 'most radical, utopian form' of republicanism exposes the 'narrower valorisation of a particular form of identity identified with the interests of the state'.[77] Here the narrow valorisation of a 'republicanism' by the state, which is interchangeably under the control of Greenyallo or Yallogreen, is figured as the cause of the urban decay and economic exploitation of the countryside to which the novel continually refers. The manipulation of country and city throughout *King Goshawk* engenders a vision of the negative potential for Ireland, along with the rest of the world, to devolve into a globalised oligarchy which controls the production of all major industries: 'In return for a rebate of one penny on sugar, they have surrendered to [Goshawk] all the wild flowers of the world; which his henchmen are even now uprooting and

[72] M.C.P., 'Our Dublin Exclusiveness', *An Phoblacht* (2 April 1926), 6.
[73] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk*, 160.
[74] Flangan, *Revolution*, 70.
[75] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk*, 149.
[76] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 4.
[77] Dobbins, *Schemers*, 4.

transplanting to his gardens'.[78]

The escapist rural elite are exemplified by Goshawk, an oligarch who acquired his wealth and title by monopolising the global production of wheat, and consequently holding the inept governments of the world to the ransom of its natural resources. As such, rather than being contained within Ireland, *King Goshawk and the Birds* also describes the situation of the country in terms of a wider post-war instability, foreshadowing the subsequent numbers in the trilogy which are much more outward looking. In the first novel, however, this internationalism is reflected in its representation of a globally war-torn landscape, with the aforementioned scorched earth of metropolitan Dublin and the commodified rural hinterland merely microcosms for a dystopian capitalist oligarchy which is extended throughout the Western world. Through an ecocritique of liberal capitalist notions of progress, *King Goshawk* envisages a kind of proto-Fukuyaman settlement in which all of the world's governments are controlled by liberal 'democracies'. The United States, for example, is figured as a dystopia of mass mechanisation, a place where 'they've whole towns out there that can only say one word, like our friend here. … every blessed man, woman, and child is making, or being trained to make, Party Umpty-um of some blamed thing they've never seen entire'. In London, Cuanduine is presented with a scene similar to Dublin:

> THIS is the way London was when Cuanduine came to look upon it. All that portion of the city that lay south of the Thames was in ruins, as was also a broad belt stretching from Buckingham Palace to Shoreditch, with large isolated areas at Paddington, Hendon, and Hackney. Besides, there was scarcely any region that had not some scar to show… most of the bridges crossing the Thames were shattered, with wooden structures spanning the gaps. On a broken arch of London Bridge dozens of young artists from New Zealand were always to be seen, sketching the ruins of St Paul's.[79]

As stated, Dobbins identifies that O'Duffy's formal departure resulted from the trauma of the Irish revolutionary period. However, this is also positioned within the wider context of European upheaval by the narrative's move to London. In O'Duffy's nightmarish vision, the city as a concept has been reconstructed as a site of exploitation by a suburbanised *nouveau riche* class, an inversion of the state of affairs in the contemporary capitalist world.

The novel retains its focus on contemporary Ireland, however, and this dystopian Ireland is particularly juxtaposed with the present when the novel evokes the live issue of land. Aping the style of *Ulysses*'s 'Aeolus', it diverges into a newspaper format, featuring the following satirical advertisements which play on urban and rural land value:

> Perfect house. Situated in own grounds. Beautiful scenery. Healthy climate. Five bedrooms, four reception. Day and night nursery. School-room. Large flower garden.

[78] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk*, 134.
[79] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk*, 244, 204, 220.

> Playing field, with goal-posts, etc. Tennis-court. Suit married couple. No children.
>
> Pigstye to let. 10s. weekly. Suit large family.
>
> Victorian mansion. Beyond repair. Situated in formerly fashionable quarter in heart of city. Reasonable rent. No objection to dogs, cats, poultry, canaries, tortoises, goldfish, axolotls, or even children.[80]

The 'formerly fashionable' urban Victorian mansion of the last advertisement is juxtaposed with the 'perfect [country] houses' of the elite, suggesting that the ruin of the upper-middle class Dublin neighbourhoods that O'Duffy himself grew up in are now left to the working-classes. This excerpt's zoomorphic representation of children even apes Joyce's 'A Little Cloud', in which the 'vermin-like' children are found 'under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions in which the old nobility of Dublin had roystered'.[81] However, O'Duffy's take on this mimicked a contemporary fascination with the commodification of land holdings, and the upper-class flight from the ghettoised inner-city is a transparent intervention into the aforementioned debates around the ruined state of Dublin. It also reflected the ongoing process of bourgeois suburbanisation in the city, which had been well in train by O'Duffy's time.[82] As the narrative trilogy develops in *The Spacious Adventures of the Man in the Street* (1928) and *Asses in Clover* (1933), the utopian counterpart to Earth's dystopia, Rathé, is revealed, a place which is both a grammatical and representational inversion. This is a 'world just like our own, with hills and rivers and green fields', as experienced through the eyes of a Dublin shop assistant who attempts to rationalise cosmopolitan capitalism to the Rathéans. Rathé, however, is also a place with an ugly landscape which cannot be reified or idealised by its inhabitants, without any 'sense of urban land values' for exploitation.[83] For O'Duffy, the ideal lay somewhere between the egalitarian ugliness of Rathé and the commodified beauty of the Earth.

'happenings in a saxon town': The Informer *and* Mr Gilhooley

O'Duffy's Cuanduine series demonstrates a left-leaning internationalist concern which was shared, albeit with more emphasis on socialism, by the extremely prolific Aran Islands writer Liam O'Flaherty. O'Flaherty's island upbringing and city education are considered by Patrick Sheeran to be the fundamental aspects of his life: 'the first provided him with his subject matter, the second, a point of view'.[84] The background and trajectory of his life differed dramatically

[80] O'Duffy, *King Goshawk*, 150.
[81] James Joyce, *Dubliners*, ed. Terence Brown (1914; Harmondsworth, 1992), 71-72.
[82] For an account of this growth, see Susan Galavan, *Dublin's Bourgeois Homes: Building the Victorian Suburbs, 1850-1901* (London, 2017).
[83] Eimar O'Duffy, *The Spacious Adventures of the Man in the Street* (London, 1928), 6, 109.
[84] Patrick F. Sheeran, *The Novels of Liam O'Flaherty: A Study in Romantic Realism* (Dublin, 1976), 12.

from the urban-centric writing of O'Duffy, who was brought up in the city but educated in a private Catholic school in the English countryside. But there are still some similarities. In his writings on literature, O'Flaherty consistently attacked the Revivalist focus on the rural peasantry: 'Our writers… exalt the peasants by ascribing to them virtues that demoralise and degrade them, just because our towns are a disgrace to civilisation'. This sombre quote came from his satirical work *A Tourist's Guide to Ireland* (1930), which was in effect an anthropological study of the post-revolutionary country. Elsewhere in the work, O'Flaherty ridiculed the reconstruction of the city as a signal of progress for humanity:

> Peasants, as compared to civilised human beings, are children. All civilised races have begun by scraping the earth, and it is only when they stop scraping the earth and build cities that they grow up and become responsible, thoughtful citizens, that are not surprised at natural phenomena and that struggle to obtain mastery over nature by the construction of machinery… by a continual accumulation of knowledge, and by learning to offer to culture and to art the respect that was formerly given to spooks and fetishes by savage men and peasants.[85]

O'Flaherty's disenchantment with this improvement project was engendered by the state's reconstruction. This was specifically related to the regeneration effort of Ardnacrusha, with the Irish peasantry 'too hopelessly sunk in intellectual barbarism to be capable of being saved by a single man. The Shannon Scheme appeared to me to be more capable of doing the job'.[86] As discussed earlier, he was entirely dismissive of the scheme, considering Ireland as 'on the road to becoming an unattractive lunatic asylum, in which there is only room for machines and mechanical noises; even to the extent of abolishing conversation in favour of the radio'.[87]

As he later wrote of the broken promises of post-revolutionary Ireland: 'All things of that *fin de siècle* have become so nostalgic, but most of all the common belief in an ultimate utopia! Now it seems to us disillusioned people THAT THE UTOPIA WAS THEN'.[88] Sharing O'Duffy's pessimism, O'Flaherty was concerned with critiquing the state by using similar strategies of geographical dislocation. As Brian Donnelly writes, the force of O'Flaherty's critique was directed towards what he saw as a 'degenerate country in which the people had broken their life-giving roots with the natural world and that this degeneracy was characterised by the movement of a large number of countrymen from the land to the towns and cities'.[89] This is a prominent concern in his novel *The Informer* (1925), published in the same year as the Shannon Scheme commenced. Flanagan describes the text as 'a novel-length exposition of the

[85] Liam O'Flaherty, *A Tourists' Guide to Ireland* (London, 1930), 113-114.
[86] Liam O'Flaherty, 'To the Editor of the *Irish Statesman'*, 17 December 1927, in A.A. Kelly, ed. *The Letters of Liam O'Flaherty* (Dublin, 1996), 348.
[87] Liam O'Flaherty, qtd in [Anon.], 'If the Irish should cease to be Witty', 18.
[88] Liam O'Flaherty, 'To Kitty Tailer', 25 May 1955, *Letters*, 311.
[89] Brian Donnelly, 'A Nation Gone Wrong: Liam O'Flaherty's Vision of Modern Ireland', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 63.249 (1974), 71–81: 72.

pathological dimensions of radical nationalism that was the antithesis of the pietistic and morally superior revolutionary lives portrayed in mainstream accounts'.[90] In letters to his mentor Edward Garnett, the author discussed his disenchantment with the fact *The Informer was* 'to [be promoted] as a literary book, and not a sensationalist one'.[91] This emphasis on revising the mainstream account of the revolution demonstrates his awareness of the contemporaneous popularity of accounts of the Irish revolution. Quoting one of these, Dan Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1924), Flanagan describes how

> Acts of killing were rendered with a cartoonish quality. The death of a constable who was shot through the heart just as he was about to pull the trigger on his prisoner, for instance, was recounted as a mere prelude to an "episode in comparison with which a Wild West show would grow pale".[92]

There is more than a passing resemblance here both to O'Flaherty's representation of violence and his portrait of post-revolutionary Dublin, which is, in much the same way as Baudrillard's description of Disneyland, 'presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real'.[93] In *The Informer* the city is represented as inauthentic or virtual, while the countryside is an unreachable space which is both natural and vitiating.

Dublin's sensationalisation substitutes the real for the hyperreal, and unlike *King Goshawk* there are few recognisable street-names in the novel, with some even redacted: 'B — Road on the south side of the city'.[94] In mimicking the journalistic sensationalism and the cinematic style of collage, O'Flaherty purposely abandoned realism in the novel in order to 'have all the appearances of a realistic novel' but 'hardly any connection with real life'.[95] His fragmented representation of the city resembles Luke Gibbons's description of *Ulysses*, in which an 'incessant collision of images simulated the disorientation and fragmentation of life'.[96] The first passage of the novel depicts the murder victim of the novel, McPhillip, who returns to Dublin after a period of being on the run 'in the mountains with… brigands, criminals and political refugees'. His betrayer, Gypo Nolan, negotiates what is called the 'maze of slum streets' in Dublin's north inner-city from the start. In this maze, Gypo is constantly pursued by his former comrades in the 'Revolutionary Organisation', an urban socialist paramilitary group. This motif of urban imprisonment and rural liberation continues throughout, with Gypo imaging his escape from the city onto the surrounding mountains: 'he longed for the mountains and the wide undulating plains and the rocky passes and the swift-flowing rivers, away to the south *in*

[90] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 23.
[91] O'Flaherty, 'To Edward Garnett', 20 January 1925, in *Letters*, 112.
[92] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 21; Dan Breen, *My Fight For Irish Freedom* (1924; Tralee, 1964), 88.
[93] Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', *Selected Writings* (Stanford, 2001), 169-187: 175.
[94] Liam O'Flaherty, *The Informer* (1925; Dublin, 2006), 1.
[95] O'Flaherty, 'To Edward Garnett', *Letters*, 112.
[96] Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996), 165.

his own country. Freedom and solitude and quiet'. The countervailing sense of paranoia which pervades Gypo's walks through the dark city is frequently emphasised by the narrator:

> It was the slum district which he knew so well, the district that enclosed Titt Street, the brothels, the Bogey Hole, tenement houses, churches, pawnshops, public-houses, ruins, filth, crime, beautiful women, resplendent idealism in damp cellars, saints starving in garrets, the most lurid examples of debauchery and vice, all living thigh to thigh, breast to breast, in that foetid morass on the north bank of the Liffey.

This composite of splendour and ruination is encapsulated within this vision of the 'foetid morass' of the slummed inner-city. Ruin is projected onto its former state of grandeur, a place where stretch 'the long, low streets of brothels, entwined like web work among the ruins of what was once a resort of the nobility of eighteenth-century Dublin'. It is precisely within one of these ruins that Gypo is judged and condemned by the Revolutionary Organisation, in a 'Bogey-hole' which had 'once been the winecellars of a nobleman… [a]bove it the ruins of the house still remained'.[97]

For Liam Lanigan, *The Informer* offers 'an Eliotian vision of modern social degeneration superimposed upon the now irretrievably lost (yet still hauntingly present) grandeur of the city's Ascendancy past'.[98] At the same time as being haunted by the remnants of this past, the city is also riven with tantalising memories of the countryside. This countryside, which is the mountainous Gypo's natural habitat, is repeatedly imaged as a return to the 'protect[ive]…environment of his youth, the Tipperary village'. Where Gypo scrambles for socioeconomic survival among the Dublin crowds, this rambling existence is the inverse of the idealised subsistence lifestyle upon a mountainside of 'little sheep… that he could catch and kill!'. Commandant Dan Gallagher, the primary antagonist, has also supposedly come from the rural hinterland, descended from a 'small peasant farmer in Kilkenny' according to his newspaper profile. Unlike Gypo, the extent to which his background is authentic can certainly be considered questionable, since an overlooked aspect of Gallagher's identity is that he 'came out of obscurity in a night *as it were*', immediately after the government 'overlap[s]' the Communist organisation. He confesses that he 'believe[s] in nothing fundamentally', suggesting the moral and doctrinal pragmatism of an informer himself. In these 'sarcastic' newspaper editorials and survey articles which elevate the status of the Commandant from unknown to outright celebrity and leadership, he is presented as the 'flower of Irish manhood [that] grew on an obscure dunghill, in the daily practise of all these virtues, which are

[97] O'Flaherty, *The Informer.* 1, 193, 194, 106, 130; emphasis mine.
[98] Liam Lanigan, *James Joyce, Urban Planning, and Irish Modernism: Dublins of the Future* (Basingstoke, 2014), 207.

indigenous to the Irish soil'.[99] The sense of aporia in the narrative of the Commandant's life—his unexplained eight-year trip to America, for example—only adds to this aura of instability, with more than a hint of collusion with the government in the narrative. Where Gypo's escape is pictured as catastrophic for the 'Organisation', this in itself casts aspersions about what exactly he knows about Gallagher—is he, himself, an informer for the state? Gallagher's celebrity has been generated within the journalistic culture O'Flaherty wished to parody, his identity inextricable from that culture: 'his photographs appeared in all the newspapers both in this country and in England and in America'.[100] The commandant is thus an embodiment of the falsity of the mainstream representations of the republican volunteers who sought celebrity after the revolution.

Though he is from a similar background to Gallagher, Gypo's longing for a return to rural anonymity is the antithesis of the revolutionary's cultivation of his celebrity status. Where Gallagher is at ease in the city, Gypo's discomfort in the Dublin environment is precisely what makes his crime so knowable to the community. His hulk-like appearance is synonymised with his rural background: 'His body was immense… like excrescences of the earth breaking the expected regularity of a countryside'. His attempted escape to the mountains at the novel's close is foreshadowed by its most strikingly idealistic prose passage:

> Into his resting mind please memories came, distant pleasant memories like day-dreams on a summer day, dreamt on the banks of a rock-strewn river, among the flowering heather… the little farm, the big red-faced healthy peasant who was his father, his long-faced kind hearted mother…

The utopian construction of the Irish landscape lies in opposition to the urban squalor of Dublin's north inner-city, a construction reminiscent of *King Goshawk*. This is undercut, however, when it appears that the hidden countryside is the chosen location for the execution of Gypo by the Revolution, in the mountain road 'about half-way between Killakee and Glencree'.[101] The freedom of the countryside is merely a mirage to Gypo. Eventually he is murdered in the supposed sanctuary of a church on the fictional Mount William Crescent, where he attempts to atone by confessing his sin to McPhillip's mother. The fatalistic ending thus reaffirms not just the claustrophobia of the city but also the impossibility of escape from it. As such, Joe Cleary has observed a tendency of Irish naturalist fiction, and particularly in *The Informer*, to 'conceive of the social either in terms of quasi-anthropological investigations of discrete social sectors', naming 'the urban ghetto' as one of these sectors.[102] O'Flaherty may

[99] O'Flaherty, *The Informer,* 106, 193, 59, 58, 108, 59; emphasis mine.
[100] O'Flaherty, *The Informer,* 58.
[101] O'Flaherty, *The Informer*, 8, 32, 163.
[102] Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 123.

focus *The Informer* on the working-class sections of the inner-city in his naturalist examination of counter-revolutionary Dublin. But Gypo also walks around a space which was, in contemporary terms, heavily embedded with the signifiers and institutions of the revolution, the literary revival, and the state. As a countryman out of his natural habitat, he is abandoned by the state on its doorstep. *The Informer* thus records the dissonance O'Flaherty envisaged between the rhetoric of state construction in the countryside and the realities of life in Dublin after the revolution.

This sense of disillusionment is particularly emphasised by *The Informer*'s assimilation of the cinematic form, which privileges a disruptive, non-linear imagism rather than the narrative progression of a realist novel. For Cleary, this non-linearity, when mixed with the 'animal-like' protagonist's 'very limited comprehension', renders *The Informer*'s 'diagnostic ambitions on any socio-historical level… nugatory'.[103] But O'Flaherty was deeply committed to a literature and an aesthetics of dissent and a form of satire, and it is in the wider context both of the state's rhetoric and the popular image of the rebellion that didactic message of *The Informer* operates. As O'Flaherty wrote in his memoir, *Shame the Devil* (1934),

> I would treat my readers as a mob orator treats his audience and toy with their emotions, making them finally pity a character whom they began by considering a monster… The literary critics, almost to a man, hailed it as a brilliant piece of work and talked pompously about having at last been given the inside knowledge of the Irish revolution and the secret organisations that has brought it about. This amused me intensely, as whatever "facts" were used in the book were taken from happenings in a Saxon town, during the sporadic Communist insurrection of about nineteen twenty-two or three.[104]

This invective against print culture and literary criticism exemplifies what Flanagan describes as his 'instinctive opposition to establishments of all kinds and disregard for commercial success and the expectations of the literary establishment'.[105] As Gerry Smyth summarises, the main interest in *The Informer* lies 'in what it reveals to us as a number of discursive categories and affects that were abroad and active within contemporary Irish life'.[106] The sensationalising of the countryside and the inner-city Dublin by *The Informer* ironises one of these dominant discursive categories: the rural-urban divide.

The novel is also only one part of a number of representations of Dublin in his fiction of the 1920s, with perhaps the most contrasting example being *Mr Gilhooley* (1927). This later novel is a much more cross-sectional view of the social life of the city than *The Informer*, but equally as critical of it. John Hildebidle considers *The Informer* as a 'disillusioned novel', with

[103] Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 144.
[104] Liam O'Flaherty, *Shame the Devil* (London, 1934), 189-190.
[105] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 25.
[106] Gerry Smyth, *The Judas Kiss: Treason and Betrayal in Six Modern Irish Novels* (Manchester, 2015), 109.

Mr Gilhooley, along with the later *The Puritan* (1932), instead a record of 'the process of disillusionment'.[107] The 1927 novel was indirectly involved in the rejection of a Harry Clarke stained-glass window commission by the government as a gift for the International Labour Office of the League of Nations in Geneva. Yeats, who was asked for suggestions by Clarke, was a prominent supporter of O'Flaherty's inclusion, having privately written to Olivia Shakespear about *The Informer* and *Mr Gilhooley* that: 'I think they are great novels & too full of abounding natural life to be terrible despite their subjects. They are full of that tragic farce we have invented'.[108] The window, which featured fifteen scenes from recent works by Irish writers, including Lady Gregory, George Bernard Shaw, J.M. Synge, W.B. Yeats, and James Joyce, was personally rejected by President Cosgrave in a letter, and the inclusion of O'Flaherty's *Mr Gilhooley* was the sole reason for the refusal. As Cosgrave's communication to Clarke explained, 'the inclusion of scenes from certain authors as representative of Irish literature and culture would give grave offence to many of our people'.[109] O'Flaherty was clearly considered a *persona non grata* by the highest elements of Saorstát Éireann, since his later novel *The House of Gold* (1929) was also the first book banned by the Irish Censorship Board.

Like the *Informer*, *Mr Gilhooley* attacks the foundations of the new state by representing its capital, an attack which is mounted from the perspective of the titular Gilhooley and aimed towards him. Larry Gilhooley is a comparatively well-to-do engineer, recently returned from a prosperous couple of decades in South America and living in 'absolute idleness'. Through both his perspective and that of the narrator, O'Flaherty caricatures various classes, interests, and tensions that appeared in the post-revolutionary Irish capital from his bourgeois viewpoint. Gilhooley is described on a number of occasions by the narrator as a 'voluptuary', a characterisation which the action of the novel repeatedly affirms. *Mr Gilhooley* begins with his leaving the Bailey Restaurant on Duke Street 'having eaten a heavy dinner and finished two bottles of red wine', and eventually making his way to the cinema, attracted 'by the prospect of a subtle amusement to which he was addicted'. This amusement is not the cinema itself, however, but the opportunity for Gilhooley to prey on women. In a manner heavily indebted to *Dubliners*, the centre of Dublin is thus fleetingly presented as a cornucopia of modern attractions, but then this is undercut by the encounter which follows, as he gropes a woman sitting next to him, and upon her escape descends into a state of pronounced anxiety about being

[107] John Hildebidle, *Five Irish Writers: The Errand of Keeping Alive* (Cambridge, 1989), 35.
[108] W.B. Yeats to Olivia Shakespear, 13 March 1927, in *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* (InterLex electronic edition, Oxford, 2002), accession letter 4982.
[109] William Cosgrave to Harry Clarke, 26 September 1930, qtd in Lucy Costigan and Michael Cullen, *Strangest Genius: The Stained Glass of Harry Clarke* (Dublin, 2010), 258.

arrested. This leads to a mental escape imagined upon similar lines to Gypo, which has an extremely soothing effect on Gilhooley:

> with a grovelling joy he formed a picture of the life he would like to lead in the future, of the life he *would* lead in the future. Something simple, an innocent country wife, children, a house in the country, pigs, cows, ploughed land, the music of a river, birds, new-mown hay, everything. He thought of the rabbit-farm which he had contemplated recently during similar fits of penitence.

As with Gypo's ideal of a return to his roots, this vision is never realised in the pages of the novel. Instead, as Gilhooley returns to reality, he looks through his cab window at 'the queer, deserted-looking buildings, at the stretches of whitish streets, utterly deserted and vast-looking, at the comic-looking monuments in O'Connell Street', the narrator lampooning the reconstruction of the street by the new state.[110]

As in the earlier work, constant references are made to the dilapidation of the city, such as Gihooley's lodging house which is located on 'a square which was falling into decay'. While to all intents and purposes, this is the same exterior of Dublin as the earlier novel, the society of *Mr Gilhooley* reveals a different side to the city than *The Informer*, and not just in terms of the entertainments which briefly offer respite. The reader is instantly made aware of the disillusionment within this almost cartoonish city setting, but it is only gradually linked in the action to a political dissatisfaction with the post-revolutionary dispensation of Saorstát Éireann. Larry Gilhooley's trajectory both socially and economically in the novel is downward, and he is gradually ostracised by the various groups to whom O'Flaherty introduces to the reader. This is mostly because of his entanglement with Nelly Fitzpatrick, a young woman born of an Irish immigrant in America, who was then put up for adoption. Again, the sense is of characters who are out of their natural habitat, as the narrator puts it 'like a fish left on the shore after the retirement of a wave'. Macaward, a cantankerous drinking associate of his, echoes this theme when he is offered money by a hapless Gihooley:

> "I understand you, though you don't understand me. I live a lie. So do you. Do you think I like this life? No. My proper place is out there," he waved his stick towards the country. "There is life growing out there. New life." He waved his stick again. "Here there is only death. Corruption. You'll rot here. Living in a lie... Not corruption like this. We're Irish. We were made for the hillsides and the fields… and the sea. That's our life".

The disillusionment with the new urban Ireland controlled by a corrupt government is forcefully articulated by Macaward in this passage as a national characteristic. Gilhooley demonstrably internalises this when, speaking after an argument with Nelly, he states that he has 'strayed a

[110] Liam O'Flaherty, *Mr Gilhooley* (Dublin, 1927), 25, 16, 30-31, 53.

long way from the root' into the 'bloody foolishness of these big towns'.[111] His sense of displacement is such that he even feels more comfortable in the Andes of Chile than in the new capital, and as with Macaward and a number of the other characters in the novel, his only remedy for this homesickness is alcohol.

Fintan O'Toole considers the novel, like *The Informer*, as reflecting how the 'outsider from the country faces corruption and destruction in the city'.[112] However, the shadowy element of the corruption in the earlier novel is eschewed for a fuller diagnosis of inertia in an exploitative Dublin. One group which symptomatise this inertia are the former mercenary Free State soldiery, who are described as 'the Irish Black-an'-Tans', which when Irish society sought 'to civilise itself... found that it must rid itself of these uncouth barbarians, whom in a desperate moment they had used as military heroes'. The marriage plot also deliberately sets the state against the main character, who is seemingly initially part of a growing Dublin bourgeoisie, but is spurned by both the *disjecta membra* of the revolution and the established middle-classes in the course of the novel. But the major complication to the doomed domestic arrangement between Gihooley and Nelly comes in the form of the arriviste letting agent Michael Friel. Although he is the 'third son of a prosperous middle-class family that had lately become rather high officials in the new government', Friel has now been brought to disgrace in his own class. As Nelly becomes more involved with him, it is revealed that she is trying to trick Gilhooley into paying for her way out of the country to chase another former lover. The confrontation that this discovery engenders is figured along a country-city binary, as Friel states to Gilhooley: 'Yer not a Dublin man. Yer a country bastard. A South American whore master. I'm a Dublin man. Every Dublin man is a gentleman. We play the game. We got a heart in us'.[113] This succinctly embodies the social centralisation of Dublin, self-projected by its citizens as the one true city in Ireland as opposed to the rural barbarity of the remainder (with the exception of the north). By the novel's end, Gilhooley strangles Nelly in a fit of paranoia and misogyny, and then drowns himself in the Liffey, a symbolism which unsubtly refers back to the 'fishes out of water' phrase and evokes Gypo's own death in *The Informer*. Indeed, these novels demonstrate a unity of purpose. Both reveal a fatalistic attitude towards the emerging society of Dublin and the state which inhabits it, deploying varying techniques and viewpoints to come to the same conclusion: that the city is a place of death and the countryside is synonymous with a lost innocence.

[111] O'Flaherty, *Mr Gilhooley*, 54, 34, 133-4, 183.
[112] Fintan O'Toole, 'Going West: The Country versus the City in Irish Writing', *The Crane Bag* 9.2 (1985), 111-16: 114.
[113] O'Flaherty, *Mr Gilhooley*, 211, 137, 257.

Peadar O'Donnell's radical West

This rejection of the city in *The Informer* and *Mr. Gilhooley* is paralleled by the Donegal writer and radical republican socialist Peadar O'Donnell's writing. These unrepentant republican socialist writers, and indeed allies, are often discussed in relation to each other given their strong biographical and ideological links. While O'Flaherty's Council of Unemployed attempted and then aborted the occupation of the Rotunda Concert Room in Dublin during January 1922, O'Donnell was involved in the later and more famous incident that had instigated the Irish Civil War. Richard English considers O'Flaherty's pessimistic novels as 'starkly different from that brighter atmosphere which pervades O'Donnell's writings'.[114] However, despite this marked difference in mood, similarities remained. In composing *Islanders*, his 1927 novel, O'Donnell claimed that he wanted to demonstrate to the Irish peasantry that they were 'too blasted patient; muling along carrying manure on their backs, draining bogs, blasting stones, while out beyond is their inheritance'. O'Donnell's stated aim was to 'put words' on the 'mass of the folk in rural Ireland', suggesting that they had been given voice by neither the state nor in literature.[115] This was somewhat oddly made a matter of public record in 1932 as O'Donnell took an unsuccessful libel case against Father Casey as editor of *The Irish Rosary*, who had made allegations, amongst other things, about his connections to Russia. The case was heard in the Four Courts itself, out of which the defendant's counsel made much joy:

> Mr. Fitzgerald—You were one of the people responsible for costing the country £1,000,000, due to your action in this very building?
> [O'Donnell]—I was not. The fire started from outside. What about the mines you had here to blow it up?
> [Mr. Fitzgerald]—We did not blow It up. You think that you had power to turn Gandon's masterpiece into a barracks for a political ideal?
> [O'Donnell]—We did not blow it up. The people you supported blew it up.
> [Mr. Fitzgerald]—In trying to get you out? (laughter).
> [O'Donnell]—To roast us out.[116]

O'Donnell was captured and imprisoned by the Free State in Mountjoy Jail for twenty-one months in the aftermath of this earlier Four Courts episode.[117] As the exchange above suggests, he was a constant thorn in the Free State's side, and the military reputation he had obtained during the revolution preceded him.

One way of comparing the two writers is to consider O'Flaherty as a republican socialist, and O'Donnell a socialist republican. In a related way, O'Flaherty came to be seen in the 1920s as a polemical literary figure, whereas O'Donnell was more often considered as a

[114] Richard English, *Ernie O'Malley: IRA Intellectual* (Oxford, 1999), 137.
[115] Peadar O'Donnell, *The Gates Flew Open* (London, 1932), 167, 74-75.
[116] [Anon.], 'Peadar O'Donnell's Libel Action', *The Irish-American Advocate* (2 July 1932), 4.
[117] Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork, 2001), 50.

literary polemicist. O'Donnell was elected TD for Donegal in 1923, and became a recurring contributor and later editor to the left-leaning republican weekly *An Phoblacht*. As he put it in a letter to his publisher, Jonathan Cape, '[m]y pen is just a weapon and I use it now and again to gather into words scenes that surround certain conflicts'.[118] This stated aim forms a crucial difference in terms both of the agency of their subjects and the literary styles that each employed. O'Flaherty's experimental exposition of urban inertia was countermanded by O'Donnell's realist portraits of western characters with demonstrably greater social and political agency. While he did publish his prison novel, *Storm: A Story of the Irish War*, in 1926, his literary reputation 'was established with *Islanders*', his 1927 novel.[119] There was little separation between literature and politics for O'Donnell, since his fiction had first been published in *An Phoblacht*, offering his writing as a gloss on his politics. Indeed the paper's own review of *Islanders* deemed the novel 'powerful propaganda'.[120] *An Phoblacht* seemed to provide an ideal platform and readership to mount this attack on the state, and its articles coincided with the political attacks that his stories made. For example, opinion pieces often lamented urban deprivation in the face of what was characterised as a governmental focus upon land and the small farmer: 'the government was driving people out to make way for bullocks… there was not a thought shown for people crawling in rags through city slums'.[121] A focus upon either rural or urban communities was a standard ploy of the weekly, which could also use the ineptitude of the city-based Department of Agriculture to care for small farmers as a point of attack against the state.[122]

The same tactic is retained in the realist novel *Islanders*, which was also began during the author's spell in Mountjoy Jail, a nostalgic tale of island life written from the political imprisonment in the city.[123] The novel only quietly introduces the War of Independence into the marriage plot through the antagonist Sean Friel, a mainland IRA volunteer. In electing to use the island as the setting for his novel, O'Donnell was concerned not with poetic depictions of landscape but actual socioeconomic degradation, as the islanders are constantly threatened in the novel by nature, fate, and a disinterested Dublin government. The novel's hero, Charlie Doogan, is introduced to the reader as a 'twenty-two-year-old' who eventually develops into the champion of the island, Inniscara. The initial chapters detail the various misfortunes of

[118] Peadar O'Donnell qtd in Richard English, *Radicals and the Republic: Socialist Republicanism in the Irish Free State 1925-37* (Oxford, 1994), 66.
[119] Ó Drisceoil, *O'Donnell*, 54.
[120] Anon, 'Review of *Islanders*', *An Phoblacht* (28 January 1928), 5, qtd in Donal Ó Drisceoil, '"My Pen Is Just a Weapon": Politics, History and the Fiction of Peadar O'Donnell', *The Irish Review* 30 (2003), 62–70: 64.
[121] Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2010), 311.
[122] [Anon.], 'No Department of Agriculture: A Couple of Clerks Run the Country', *An Phoblacht* (19 March 1926), 3.
[123] Ó Drisceoil, *O'Donnell*, 50.

Charlie and his widowed mother's struggles to feed and clothe their large family, dealing both with the starvation of the family and the tragedy of the sister Nellie's death in Strabane on the mainland. When the life of his eldest sister Peggy is subsequently also threatened during labour, Charlie's race by boat to the mainland for a doctor is couched in unambiguously mythic terms: 'plying his paddle with grand stroke, and god-like confidence… [he] laughed when he broke the face of a crumbling wave'. This rush to the doctor also leads to the first sustained exposition of a mainlander in the novel, with the citified Ruth Wilson entered into the narrative as a potential wife for Charlie, whom she calls her 'big, wild man of the sea'. As this description demonstrates, Ruth is represented as an educated, cosmopolitan woman who idealises the Irish peasantry, 'a dream born of the Abbey Theatre'. There seems here to be an initial concern with critiquing mainland accounts of island life in the novel, as evinced by Ruth's discovery of Irish peasant life through the Abbey and her leisurely 'trips to Kerry and Connemara'.[124] This suggests that the novel's general impulse is against these reifications of rural life, with Ruth's speech and cultural education serving as a foil for the self-sufficient islanders. But there are contradictory impulses at work here. As John Brannigan contends, it is her 'Abbey Theatre-inspired vision of the islanders in mythic terms which the novel allows, albeit perhaps curiously, to win out against the more cynical depictions of material deprivation and encroaching modernity'.[125]

Brannigan also notes that there are various allusions to the island's location within the 'uneven processes of capitalist modernity'.[126] In light of these allusions, and given the generally negative ambivalence towards the mainland which is registered in the novel, the expectation is perhaps that Ruth would be quickly spurned by the community. But *Islanders* offers an often-confusing portrait of island life, and in its attempts to dramatise the rural-urban divide through the marriage plot the novel is only partially able to reject Dublin as a cultural and political centre of authority. The initially proposed marriage between Charlie and Susan Manus in the novel is complicated by the interventions of the mainlanders, Ruth and Sean Friel. Her courtship with Charlie, and the paralleled courtship of Susan and Friel lead to the potential move of Ruth to the island and Susan to the mainland. As the latter puts it, demotically, 'wan woman can't fit into an island; another's afraid she wouldn't fit out if it'. Susan's apprehension at this move makes her prospective destination even clearer: 'how could I live away in a city?'[127] This prospect of emigration is present in much of the narrative, specifically lamented in an earlier

[124] Peadar O'Donnell, *Islanders* (1927; Cork, 2006), 13, 66, 67.
[125] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh, 2014), 156.
[126] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, 160.
[127] O'Donnell, *Islanders,* 67, 120, 118, 76, 122.

dialogue between Charlie and Neil Rodgers in which the island is described as 'only a nursery for foreign parts'. However, despite the brief entertainments of a marriage between country and city, Ruth's willingness to move to Inniscara is undercut by Charlie's refusal to let her do so, solely on account of its harshness. Their eventual parting is couched in repetitive terms by the mainlander: 'Good-bye, my big, wild man of the sea'. Thus she is both introduced to the narrative and removed from within the terms of Revivalist depictions of the Irish peasant. The successful completion of the original marriage-plot between Charlie and Susan encloses them into a continuation of the same way of life upon Inniscara, a supposedly authentic and pacifist existence which is a symbolic retreat from the synthetic drama of Ruth's Dublin (and yet characteristic of it).

Derek Hand writes that the structural failures of O'Donnell's novels are demonstrative of 'the difficulty of finding a genre that would contain his critique of the inadequacies of the Free State'.[128] But O'Donnell persisted with the novel form, and his symbolic and narrative rejection of the capital and the government is made clearer in his later novels *Adrigoole* (1929) and *The Knife* (1930). Heavily reliant on recent republican history, these expressly identify Dublin with the state and the rural landscape with a natural form of settlement. The former begins with a history of how the titular community was established after the peasantry come down from the mountain to 'The Lower Hills', and 'one by one cottages sprang up, crops grew in warm pockets, a road came, a schoolhouse was built down at the bridge'.[129] Again, the expectations of a narrative about the periphery are reversed through the intrusion of the centre. While the novel appears to be about the struggles of an emigrant with the odd intrusion of politics, complications spring from bad harvests, the Civil War, and the outstanding Land Annuities from the Anglo-Irish Treaty (which were collected from small tenant farmers). All of these were a great source of frustration for O'Donnell in the 1920s.[130] The tension that these developments bring out between the state and this organic community comes to a head when Hughie Dalach, the main character, is caught on a poteen run and imprisoned. Even aesthetically, the first sight of the Free State police in the description of this development is heavily embedded with an anti-state agenda:

> On the far side of the grey patch the mountain shaded off in a darkened blotch. Black spots came into the dark edge. Suddenly Hughie tensed. The black spots had only now happened. They were something new in that setting, and they were too suddenly black; they didn't shade with the other pieces of heather. And as he looked they swept into the light and took shapes: men, policemen.

[128] Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel*, 160.
[129] Peadar O'Donnell, *Adrigoole* (London, 1929), 13.
[130] For a more detailed discussion of O'Donnell's crucial role in the Land Annuities disturbances, see Timothy M. O'Neil, 'Handing Away the Trump Card? Peadar O'Donnell, Fianna Fáil, and the Non-Payment of Land Annuities Campaign, 1926–32', *New Hibernia Review* 12.1 (2008), 19-40.

The visual dissonance between the mountain and the policemen symbolises the unnatural intrusion of authority in the area. This is named by place as a centralised authority, with the 'police-sergeant… wording the report he would send next morning to Dublin'.[131] Dublin, in effect, becomes a synonym for the government in O'Donnell's 1920s novels, and the government is repeatedly characterised as uncaring and incompetent towards the rural community. The grim ending of *Adrigoole* sees Hughie return home from six months in prison, only to be taken away to an asylum when he finds his wife and two children dead from starvation. With his surviving children described as '[f]aces without flesh or colour, only eyes', without any help from the state, his helpless family were unable to subsist while he was imprisoned by them.[132]

Reading the novel solely as a criticism of the Land Annuities Campaign, Frances Flanagan argues that the '[g]raphic images of emaciated children walking around the frozen bodies of their dead mother and siblings were included to illustrate the point'.[133] However, the ending of the story is a barely fictional recreation of an incident at Adrigole, West Cork in 1927, in which a family of four were found dead, including the husband, wife, and two children. O'Donnell retained this tragic ending, but repositioned it within a narrative of rebellion against the state and translocated it from Cork to the familiarity of his own Donegal community. As Diarmaid Ferriter writes, the incident 'seemed to prove that many of the social and class tensions which the land gave rise to were still raw and divisive', and *Adrigoole* was 'as powerful a depiction as any of the challenges facing the Free State'.[134] But in O'Donnell's reappropriation of the tale, it is made to echo with the oppositional aesthetics of his other novels too. Such tensions between the state and its periphery also arise in O'Donnell's portrayal of a borderland community of the Lag[g]an in *The Knife*, a text written 'of the IRA — For the IRA' according to its serialisation in *An Phoblacht*.[135] This narrative focuses on the struggle for independence and resulting Civil War, mostly from the viewpoint of its eponymous character. The community, which is again meticulously constructed as an organic, close-knit unit of belonging in the opening chapters of the novel, is gradually interrupted by events which occur in the capital city. The Easter Rising, unsurprisingly, forms a critical juncture: 'one day a couple of hundred Dublin workmen, a couple of score of students, a handful of intellectuals, came out into the streets of Dublin, and proclaimed an Irish Republic'. O'Donnell's summary account of the events of Easter Week in this central part of the narrative is couched as one of national

[131] O'Donnell, *Adrigoole*, 281, 282.
[132] O'Donnell, *Adrigoole*, 314.
[133] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 33.
[134] Ferriter, *Transformation*, 299.
[135] Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell*, 56.

significance in a hostile urban environment, with the significant ending: 'But meantime, down in the Laggan'.[136] This 'meantime' is what Benedict Anderson considers a kind of national 'homogeneous-empty-time', a temporal coincidence which seeks to unite the country and the city in a national framework.[137] *The Knife*'s dual status as both a novel and a newspaper serial thus speaks to Anderson's description of those forms as constituting the cultural aspect of the nation. *An Phoblacht* certainly emphasised this link, with contemporary articles often commemorating what O'Donnell called 'the entire tradition of struggle' from 1798 to the Civil War, as living memories in republican discourse.[138]

Clare O'Halloran, in *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism* (1987), complains that *The Knife* 'is riddled with stereotypes, of noble anti-Treatyites and corrupt pro-Treatyites at war in the Laggan, an area of west Ulster which became part of the Free State'. Yet this dismissal of the novel aids her argument that 'there was insufficient literary evidence for any major sense of public trauma over partition'.[139] As he said in the aforementioned court case, he was 'dealing with the bitterness of men's minds in 1922' in the novel.[140] *The Knife* develops into an account of how the Laggan is taken over by the treatyites after the war of independence: 'The talk that we heard from Dublin is… not Irish talk; it's bailiff's talk'.[141] Apart from a record of a community before and after partition, *The Knife* is an important signpost for how the rural and urban are located within a political framework in this era, explicitly identifying the Dublin with the Free State and its attendant atrocities (a distinction scarcely needed for the readership of *An Phoblacht*). The representation of Dublin in subsequent passages is of a city-state which imposes its will upon the countryside: 'That was the order Owen [sic] O'Duffy gave when he was makin' the split in Dublin'. This incorporation of the real-life O'Duffy in particular, who was Garda Commissioner from 1922-33 and later the first leader of Fine Gael, invoked a longstanding *bête noire* in republicanism. But again, it suggestively associated him with Dublin rather than his native Clones in Monaghan. The treaty, particularly in its partitioning of the island, is figured as O'Duffy's urban imposition on the dual periphery of the Laggan district, which is caught in the no-man's-land both spatially and politically between the Orange and treatyite states. More generally the gradual consolidation of Saorstát Éireann encroaches upon the novel as the chapters develop, with its takeover of villages, towns and cities a panoptic

[136] Peadar O'Donnell, *The Knife* (1930; Dublin, 1980), 93, 95.
[137] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev edn, London, 2006), 25.
[138] Peadar O'Donnell, *The Bothy Fire and All That* (Dublin, 1937), 10.
[139] Clare O'Halloran, *Partition and the Limits of Irish Nationalism* (Dublin, 1987), 43, xiv. For a more sustained response to this claim, see Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and The Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, 2001), 104-106. The third chapter of this thesis also contests this claim.
[140] [Anon.], 'Peadar O'Donnell's Libel Action', 4.
[141] O'Donnell, *The Knife*, 152.

intervention into the Laggan community: 'The village was in the hands of the treatyites. They would be in the town… and she must get away without being followed'.[142] In the ending, the fate of the Knife is left uncertain, as he escapes from capture into the bogs and mountainsides. This ambiguous escape is as much from the forces of the state as into the aforementioned unbroken sense of rural legitimacy which was sought by the republican movement's cultural aesthetics.

In *The Country and the City* Raymond Williams wrote in more general terms about socialism and communism as movements, stating that while they may be 'the enemies of capitalism… in detail and often in principle, in matters of the country and the city' they continue and intensify 'some of the same fundamental processes'.[143] Although articulating many different political viewpoints, the range of symbols and narratives about the rural and the urban in these novels written in the years of the Free State – as well as texts like *Nights Candles Are Burnt Out*, 'The Galtee Mountain Boy', *An Allegory*, even Pearse's utopian vision – can only operate within an already imagined, hegemonised, and commonly perceived geography of the country and the city. All of these narratives, with the exception of *King Goshawk*, which was still recognizably of its time and place, were located in the contemporary or the recent past. Thus, while critiquing the manipulation of the peasant figure and the rural landscape by the state, the novels written in its first years do little to radically alter that vision. Instead the landscape is restated as an essential characteristic of the culture and society that emerged in the south after the revolution. The internal dynamic of the Irish novel in these years is thus energised by the same oppositional constructions of the country and the city that proved useful to the state as yardsticks of progress. O'Duffy, O'Flaherty, and O'Donnell may have dissented from the state's appropriation of this model, but they were each committed to a politics which relied upon the same inherited sense of geography. The common denominator is the outward trajectories of the Irish novel in the Free State years: the inversion of the country-city framework in *King Goshawk*; *The Informer* and *Mr Gilhooley*'s failed quests for escape to the countryside; Ruth Wilson's botched attempts to unite the nation through the marriage plot in *Islanders*; the state's capture of Hughie Dalach in the mountains of *Adrigoole*. However, above all of these, *The Knife* marks an embryonic decentralising impulse of Irish fiction north and south, which in the 1930s attempted to gravitate away from the capital(s) and towards a more dissident geography.

[142] O'Donnell, *The Knife,* 217, 205.
[143] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Frogmore, 1975), 363.

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Towards a dissident geography: Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin's novels of the culture wars, 1930-1940

The cultural politics of the 1930s

The *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* was published in 1932 to commemorate the first decade of 'independence'. A colourful miscellany about the new state which was introduced by the Irish Republican Brotherhood veteran Bulmer Hobson, the guide included artworks from Seán Keating, Paul Henry, and Harry Kernoff. As Dermot Keogh writes, the new state was represented in *The Handbook* with a misleading sense of self-confidence.[1] Stephen Gwynn's chapter, written for visitors, heralded the 'improvements in administration introduced by the Free State', which he called 'a motorist's paradise: "Roads as good as man need desire lead from Dublin to Belfast, to Derry, to Sligo, to Galway, to Limerick, to Cork, Waterford, Wexford; and these are nobly supplemented"'.[2] However *The Handbook* was less self-congratulatory on other subjects, overlooking the events of recent history, and completely ignoring the recent trauma of the Civil War. Eunan O'Halpin describes Eoin MacNeill's contribution to the 'decidedly tentative' volume, by way of a 'History' chapter, as a 'compressed account, which made no reference to his or any other politician's revolutionary activities'. MacNeill's essay instead covered Ireland from Roman times to the Free State 'in less than twenty-two pages', dating 'the Anglo-Irish truce to June 1921, and abruptly closed his text just a sentence later with "the Treaty to which the Irish Free State owes its existence"'.[3] Other contributions to the *Official Handbook* found safer ground in summarily attacking the island's colonisation by Britain and the trauma of partition. George O'Brien's account of 'Industries' in Ireland began rather abruptly with the claim that 'the history of Ireland exhibits the most remarkable example of industrial repression of one nation by another… Ireland was practically destitute of industry in the age of the industrial revolution'. The first section of O'Brien's predominantly statistical piece outlined a loose history of industry in the previous

[1] Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland* [New Gill History of Ireland] (Dublin, 1994), 35.
[2] Stephen Gwynn, 'Ireland for the Visitor', in Bulmer Hobson, ed., *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Dublin, 1932), 305-313: 305.
[3] Guy Beiner and Eunan O'Halpin, 'Epilogue: Remembering and Forgetting', in Eugenio F. Biagi and Mary E. Daly, eds, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 586-603: 595.

two centuries, suddenly ending with the statement that 'Ireland's most important industrial area is excluded from the area of the Irish Free State'.[4] Joseph Hanly's chapter on Agriculture similarly employed a forthright opening, claiming that '[i]n Gaelic civilisation Ireland was entirely rural'.[5]

Peter Murray argues that, by the time of the *Handbook*'s publication, '[t]he realities of self-government, coupled with a worldwide economic depression, combined to drain away much of the poetic inspiration that had sustained the Irish Free State in the first decade of its existence'. Although the *Handbook* was ideated and commissioned by W.T. Cosgrave's Cumann na nGaedheal government, its publication had come after Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fáil had assumed power. For Murray, this takeover by Fianna Fáil led to 'a more regressive cultural phase, dominated by a conservative business and political vision'.[6] This view was not, it seems, shared by the electorate at the time. In his analysis of de Valera's 1932 victory, John Regan argues that the Irish public had become bored with the rural symbolism of the ruling government: 'For all the nostalgic rhetoric about a pastoral Ireland, Fianna Fáil was prepared to embrace the future while the treatyites remained attached to their own vision of the *status quo ante* revolution'.[7] Mark O'Brien also argues that Cumann na nGaedheal severely under-emphasised the cultural identity of the Irish people' in formulating its 'vision of Irishness' during the 1920s, and their 'inability to play cultural politics' led Fianna Fáil 'to exploit the hunger for cultural cohesion'. A prominent platform for this exploitation was the *Irish Press*, founded and directed by de Valera. This paper was not only circulated 'to every village and crossroads in the country', but also featured a rambling 'Roddy the Rover' column by Aodh de Blácam which 'thrilled people to see their small village mentioned in a national newspaper'. This regional reportage was the product of a centralising impulse, published in and mediated through Dublin. In the political columns, however, the opposition of the rural and the urban was a constant rhetorical device in a paper which

> urged the ruralisation of industry while the urban concentration of industry was castigated for dehumanising the population… the varied life of a rural setting would be the source of a culture and a happiness for the people which concentration in the cities must always deny them.[8]

The rival *United Ireland* weekly, set up in 1933 to argue the case for the new Fine Gael party,

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[4] George O'Brien, 'Industries', in Bulmer Hobson, ed., *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Dublin, 1932), 137-148: 137.
[5] Joseph Hanly, 'Agriculture', in Bulmer Hobson, ed., *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Dublin, 1932), 115-127: 115.
[6] Peter Murray, 'Politics in Irish Art 1900–2000', in Andrew Carpenter, Catherine Marshall, and Peter Murray, eds, *Art and Architecture of Ireland Volume V* (Dublin, 2015), 359-368: 364.
[7] John Regan, *The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921-1936* (Dublin, 1999), 381.
[8] Mark O'Brien, *De Valera, Fianna Fáil and the Irish Press* (Dublin, 2001), 8, 36-7, 46.

also adopted a consistent rural stance as a platform of attack against the state, with articles accusing the government of an 'Industrial Obsession'.[9] The new dispensation was largely engaged in the same statist process of identification with the land, albeit intensifying this process by stressing the future potential of development in the country while retaining an authenticity rooted in the past.

While retrospectives on this period are often dominated by the signal moment of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (1937), the Constitution of the Free State is rarely given any mention. Yet, as Nicholas Mansergh pointed out in 1934, it had become 'increasingly evident that in certain aspects the government of the Irish Free State [stood] in sharp distinction to its Constitution', a text which 'while suitable for a static polity based on a rural economy, [wa]s at variance with the spirit and the needs of a modern progressive state'.[10] In other words, the constitution of the Free State was interpreted in some circles as inflexible to the demands of a modernising economy, and de Valera's later version was considered a potential redress to those strictures. Before he gained power, he was also considered as a radical. Leading up to the Dáil election in February 1932, the new ruling party was perceived to be so left-wing that the *Irish Independent* 'raised the prospect of communist style rule under a Fianna Fáil government'.[11] The flexibility of their image was arguably a strength of de Valera's party. As Tom Garvin comments, the party's 'traditional rural support base' was 'supplemented by an extraordinary cross-class *urban* base' which was built up steadily in the years before they ruled the state.[12] Diarmaid Ferriter suggests that de Valera's greatest achievements came in the 1930s, with a modernising programme of rural and urban slum clearance (with success measured by achievement in both), and moves towards greater sovereignty amidst a wider backdrop of European instability. The retrospective characterisation of the 1930s as a backwards time for Ireland arguably owes far more to the contemporary than it does to the past. Terence Brown, for instance, writes that '[a]t the heart of his policy changes was a vision of what he hoped Ireland might eventually become – a genuinely independent, self-sufficient rural republic'.[13] This ideal was arguably more prominent in republican rhetoric than in actual policy, demonstrated by De Blácam's anti-communist stance in the Spanish Civil War: 'State farms worked by servile labour would be established. This would mean the end of rural joys, rural virtues, rural family life… that the small, independent craftsman and shopkeeper would go; and the town population would be made servile'.[14] While he blamed urbanisation for the rise of

[9] P. Heskins, 'Agriculture Sacrificed For Industry', *United Ireland* (7 April 1934), 8.
[10] Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Free State: its Government and politics* (London, 1934), 331.
[11] O'Brien, *Fianna Fáil*, 47.
[12] Tom Garvin, *Ireland in the 1950s: News from a New Republic* (Dublin, 2010), 14.
[13] Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (London, 2004), 131.
[14] Aodh de Blácam, *For God and Spain: The Truth about the Spanish Civil War* (Dublin, 1936), 19.

communism, this was not necessarily a completely anti-European outlook. The city was the focus of his anger which, since the 1900s, had been linked in the press 'with moral degeneracy, socialism, atheism, and the horrors of communism'.[15]

O'Faoláin and O'Connor in the 'culture wars'

Fianna Fáil's rhetorical commitment to 'rural Ireland' received its fullest elaboration in the 1935 edition of the popular Franciscan periodical *The Capuchin Annual*, in which de Blácam again delivered an excoriating critique of what he saw as the development of urban cosmopolitanism in Europe. 'The Age Lasting Peasant' outlined a utopian vision of an uncontaminated Ireland whose historical and spiritual integrity was a rural vanguard against the terrors of an urban present: 'We see the European urban civilisation going down to-day in corruption of body and mind, in merciless warfare, and in unbelief. It is the price of a wrong philosophy, a wrong set of values'. The countryside provided an antidote to this wrong turn in its historical continuity to an 'old, Homeric, self-sufficient life', where the peasantry 'are the least spoilt of the old race, because they are farthest from lowland traffic. They… are glad that they are not townsmen, living under that pall of mist and smoke'. This was not a solely Irish vision: 'Only "green" Europe, the peasant lands behind the big cities, promises to live on after the ruin'.[16] A more nationally-inflected ideological commitment to the peasant lands came in James Devane's 1936 article in *Ireland To-day*, 'Is an Irish Culture Possible?', which claimed that 'Ireland stands today at the cross roads. Guides beckon her to differing ways. One invites her to the land of cosmopolitan culture. The other to hidden Ireland'.[17] The Cork writer and former Irregular IRA volunteer Seán O'Faoláin's riposte to Devane's article charged that its author 'hated the truth' that all Irishmen are clothed 'in European dress, affected by European thought, part of the European economy'.[18] In public debates 'Europe' was often heavily associated with the cosmopolitan and the urban, figured for O'Faoláin here as a place that could lead to a liberalisation of Irish politics rather than what was characterised as the bigotry of a nativist conservatism. This implied an alternative direction for Irish life – not to the hidden Ireland but to the land of cosmopolitan culture. While the dissident energies of the 1920s had often found expression in dislocation, the 1930s saw a committed group of realist writers like O'Faoláin and Frank O'Connor offer an alternative history which countered the ruralist vision of de Blácam with a modernising teleology.

[15] David Dickson, 'Town and City', in Eugenio F. Biagi and Mary E. Daly, eds, *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 112-128: 115.
[16] Aodh de Blácam, 'The Age-Lasting Peasant', in *The Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, 1935), 251-257: 257, 253, 257.
[17] James Devane, 'Is an Irish Culture Possible?', *Ireland To-Day* 1.5 (October 1936), 21-31: 21.
[18] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Commentary on the Foregoing', *Ireland To-Day* 1.5 (October 1936), 32.

Writing of the 'Emergency' years in Ireland, Clair Wills argues that Ireland's culture wars 'had long been fought on a native versus foreign axis'.[19] Perhaps the most amplified example of this conflict was the BBC radio broadcast in Belfast featuring Louis MacNeice and F. R. Higgins, in which the latter claimed that 'Irish poetry remains a creation happily, fundamentally rooted in rural civilisation, yet aware and in touch with the elementals of the future'.[20] Tom Walker notes that, while this has been retrospectively read as a moment that encapsulated the strictures of a purportedly Irish Ireland purview, the broadcast 'actually marked the beginning of a friendship between the two poets'.[21] As with this broadcast, the culture wars which Wills perceives were actually much more centralised in the cities, with camps also being formed between writers who were ex-combatants in the revolution (a criteria for inclusion which led to the frequent exclusion of women). As such there is an important distinction to be made here, because de Blácam's articles were not anti-Europe, but anti-urban. It was the country and the city which consistently offered strategic locations for an increasingly centralised culture and politics in this period. Many of the participants in the 'urban' side used fiction to critique forms of identity which were invested in what they saw as a backwards form of ideology rooted in a fetishisation of an 'entirely rural' Gaelic culture. Fiction played an active role in these culture wars. The first book length publications of Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin – *Guests of the Nation* (1931) and *Midsummer Night Madness* (1932) respectively – drew on their own experiences of the revolution to rectify what they saw as its romanticisation. Their stories faithfully recorded the war as a time of homesickness for Cork city, with the Civil War in particular spent within remote hideouts in its rural hinterland. The rural-urban divide evident in these culture wars is even recorded in how the short stories of O'Connor came to be reinterpreted. As Nicholas Allen notes, Denis Johnston's 1935 film adaptation of 'Guests of the Nation' was furnished with an imagistic opposition between the bog in the countryside and the Yeatsian Georgian houses in Dublin. As the comments of one attendee at the premiere suggest, this spatial dichotomy was neatly replicated in its reception: 'we found ourselves divided into two camps: The Blasket Islands and Mount Street Bridge – the Blaskets winning on weight'.[22]

But the frequent location of culture in the rural landscape as figured against the city, especially by their former mentor and IRA recruiter Daniel Corkery, was a major source of O'Faoláin and O'Connor's disillusionment.[23] Both *Guests of the Nation* and *Midsummer Night*

[19] Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), 263.
[20] Louis MacNeice and F.R. Higgins, 'Tendencies in Modern Poetry' (transcript), *The Listener* 22.550 (27 July 1939), 185-186.
[21] Tom Walker, *Louis MacNeice and the Irish Poetry of His Time* (Oxford, 2015), 48.
[22] Nicholas Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge, 2009), 106.
[23] Patrick Maume, *Life that is Exile: Daniel Corkery and the Search for Irish Ireland* (Belfast, 1993), 118-120.

Madness inhabited the spaces in which Corkery had located 'the living pieties of life' in his *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931): 'travelling the roads of the land, then the white-walled houses, the farming life, the hill-top chapel, the memorial cross above some peasant's grave'.[24] However, the experience recorded in the heavily autobiographical stories of the former soldiers was not of living pieties or continuity with the past, but of a traumatic dislocation from the landscape, as typified by Frank O'Connor's title story, 'Guests of the Nation'. In 1936, O'Faoláin forcefully directed his anger at Corkery, an attack couched in terms of the country and the city: 'Corkery knew his lane-people, his city-types, far better. Alas, he chose to write… about the farmers and fisher-folk, in a mood and in a manner and with a preconceived approach that tended to falsify all he wrote'. For him, Corkery's novels and criticism offered an inauthentically romantic portrait of rural life which was later rewritten by 'young men who had begun to compare romance with reality'. These young men amounted to a new school of Irish realists:

> the more we saw of revolution, the less we liked Corkery's lyric, romantic, idea of revolution and revolutionaries… The realistic novel and the realistic story were in the making. O'Casey was scratching out his first efforts: so, no doubt, were O'Flaherty, O'Donnell, O'Connor… These young men might know about the revolution, about blood, cowardice, fear, and horror, and courage. For wandering in and out of the hillside cabins, travelling by night, taking backroads, sleeping in a different bed every night, they might even boast that they had come to know the country-folk as no would-be writers had ever chanced to know them before.[25]

O'Faoláin's attack here unexpectedly resembles the 'where were you in 1916' which Frances Flanagan notes as a refrain in Irish life after the revolution.[26] But this charge associates realism with lived experience with the country-folk and, by extension, the back streets which Corkery ignored. O'Faoláin and O'Connor's traumatic representation of the revolution in the living pieties countryside queried the direction – if not the integrity – of the national project.

These *ad hominem* slights also illustrated how O'Faoláin frequently located what he saw as backwards values in the rural communities and set these against his own form of urban or cosmopolitan realism. As Flanagan comments, O'Faoláin 'constructed the cultural battle line as marked by himself, O'Casey, O'Connor, O'Flaherty, and O'Donnell on the one hand, opposing Devane, Tierney, and Corkery on the other'. The silent presence in the latter side was Éamon de Valera, with whom he often associated Corkery's brand of romanticism.[27] In contrast to the connections he made between de Valera and Corkery's ruralist outlooks, O'Faoláin's all-

[24] Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Cork, 1996), 24.
[25] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Daniel Corkery', *The Dublin Magazine* 11.2 (April-June 1936) 49- 61: 54, 54.
[26] Frances Flanagan, *Remembering the Revolution: Dissent, Culture, and Nationalism in the Irish Free State* (Oxford, 2016), 4
[27] Flanagan, *Revolution,* 44, 44-47.

male vanguard was more coherent regarding its dissidence from the state, and particularly its representation of the countryside, than any shared ideology or politics. His 1932 article about 'Celts and Irishmen' characterised Corkery's view as 'the extreme, left-wing, ultra-nationalist Irishman's attitude'.[28] But though O'Faoláin dismissed Corkery both as his writer and his mentor, they shared an ontological commitment to the space of the nation, merely differing regarding where to find the 'real Ireland'. Despite their entrenchment in the particular polemics of the 1930s, O'Faoláin's heavily spatialised views on Irish literature in this period and beyond have been repeatedly syndicated by later studies, particularly with regards to his comments on the novel form. But as opposed to his later repudiations of nationalism and the novel, his concern with representing the space of the nation in fiction was demonstrated in his criticism of Elizabeth Bowen's Big House novel *The Last September* (1927). In a letter to Bowen, O'Faoláin expressed disappointment that she could not be 'at least aware of the Ireland outside... regret[ing] the division enough to admit it was there'.[29] In some ways this faithfully represented the novel's self-expressed detachment from the Irish nation, in which the protagonist Lois Farqhuar cannot conceptualise 'her country emotionally: it was a way of living, an abstract of several landscapes, or an oblique frayed island, moored at the north but with an air of being detached and washed out west from the British coast'.[30] Yet O'Faoláin's concern with the lack of an 'Ireland outside' in *The Last September* also implies his attempt towards uniting the diverse elements of Irish society within a realist mode.

In 1949 O'Faoláin's theorisation that 'the novelist... loses himself in the general amorphism, unthinkingness, brainlessness, egalitarianism and general unsophistication', set the idealising tendencies of an amorphous national vision in the novel against the domestic materialism of his short fiction.[31] Similarly, looking back over his career, Frank O'Connor more succinctly suggested that 'without the concept of a normal society the novel is impossible'.[32] In other words, both writers placed the blame for his novelistic failure at the feet of Irish society rather than their own incapacities. But in these years, they demonstrated a fierce commitment to the stability of the novel over other more radical forms of expression, and this later rejection of the novel as a form was not necessarily reflective of their ambitions during this decade. As Gerry Smyth describes, the novel and the nation were 'effects of the same matrix of intellectual and material developments'.[33] O'Faoláin and O'Connor's novels emerged from the matrix of

[28] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Celts and Irishmen', *The New Statesman and Nation* (23 July 1932), 93-94: 93.
[29] Seán O'Faoláin to Elizabeth Bowen, qtd in Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (Harmondsworth, 1985), 120-121.
[30] Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (1929; London, 1998), 34.
[31] Seán O'Faoláin, 'The Dilemma of Irish Letters', *Month* 2.6 (1949), 366-79: 375-76.
[32] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice* (London, 1965), 17.
[33] Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation* (London, 1998), 18.

contestation and fissure that dominated political and cultural life in the Free State, and during this decade they were committed to a definition and circumscription of the nation through the axial lines of the rural and urban. Indeed as O'Connor later explained, 'O'Faoláin, O'Flaherty and I wrote in the period of disillusionment which followed the Civil War, though with considerable respect for the nationalism that gave rise to it'.[34] The use of the novel form allowed O'Connor and O'Faoláin to undertake an elaborate mapping of Irish society according to their moral and political coordinates.

Irish Modernism or Cork Realism?

Writing specifically of James Joyce, Declan Kiberd has offered a recovery of a regional or national Irish modernism in this period, arguing for a 'recognition that Irish modernism may not be at all the same thing as English modernism… [a]nd French and American modernisms may be something else again'.[35] Kiberd's evocation of a modernism which is unique to an Irish consciousness is made in terms similar to his later claim that the Revivalist representation of the city was 'an attempt to imagine an Irish alternative'.[36] The closeness in these two arguments is characteristic of Kiberd's attempts across his career to issue Irish literature with a form of national distinctiveness, but there is also an important link between the urban and modernism. As Lauren Arrington writes, the city is considered 'essential to the modernist movement', with 'Irish modernism… no exception'.[37] W.J. McCormack's aforementioned theorisation of an 'early primitivist version of modernism' in Ireland is a notable exception, but even then, he states that 'the situation… altered in 1920/21'.[38] Other critical relocations of modernism in Ireland after partition have tended to stress the centrality of an urban and cosmopolitan milieu. This response aligns Irish modernist writing with other treatments of European modernism, which John Marx notes can give the impression that

> country writing is modernism in a minor key, a body of work that pales in comparison to the urban literature at the canon's core. That we persist in thus dividing the field signals an assumption that a stark opposition between rural and urban remains an organising principle in the twentieth century.[39]

In Ireland, this organising principle is especially evident regarding the political corollaries of a

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[34] Frank O'Connor, 'The Irish Short Story' [Introduction], in *Modern Irish Short Stories* ed. Frank O'Connor (Oxford, 1957), ix-xv: xiv.
[35] Declan Kiberd, 'Joyce's Ellmann', *Classic Joyce: Joyce Studies in Italy* 6 (1999), 53–68; repr. in Declan Kiberd, *The Irish Writer and the World* (Cambridge, 2005), 235-249: 247.
[36] Declan Kiberd, 'The City in Irish Culture', *City* 6.2 (2002), 219-228, 220, 221.
[37] Lauren Arrington, 'Irish Modernism', *Oxford Online Bibliographies.* <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846719/obo-9780199846719-0069.xml> Accessed 30 Oct. 2014.
[38] W.J. McCormack, 'Austin Clarke: The Poet as Scapegoat of Modernism', in Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis, eds, *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s* (Cork, 1995), 75-102: 76; McCormack's emphasis.
[39] John Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge, 2005), 167.

modernist aesthetic. Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis, for example, describe the 'coercively nationalist, ruralist, and bigoted ideology' of the Free State which some modernist writers perceived during the 1930s. The triumvirate of inadequacies was rejected by modernist writers based in Dublin, who shared 'an admiration for the anti-realist and internationalist writing of Joyce', including Thomas MacGreevy, Brian Coffey, and Samuel Beckett.[40]

The city, in this configuration, allows greater contact with a European consciousness and, just as importantly, less contact with the strictures of the Irish state. However, more recently, Mark Quigley has argued that a regional and post-colonially inflected 'late modernism' developed in Ireland, which was 'temporally and stylistically out of phase with the more established modernist practices with which it coincides'. For Quigley, this late-modernism had the potential 'to express itself in forms other than the pyrotechnic stylistic displays and inscrutable fragmentary arrays' of '"high" modernism'. He argues that Seán O'Faoláin's 1930s novels, along with other texts including Tomás Ó Criomhthain's *An t-Oileánach* (1928) and Beckett's fictional trilogy, eschewed the loaded and silencing markers of 'provincialism' and 'cosmopolitan' in order to 'unveil the development of modernist practice and thought on its distinctive terms'.[41] However, this reading contradicts the project of cosmopolitanising Ireland that both O'Faoláin and O'Connor began in the 1930s, and obscures their deep attachment to a realism defined as contradictory to modernism. As Brad Kent summarises, the most important influences on the O'Faoláin circle were realist or naturalist: 'the Russians Chekhov, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky, and the French de Maupassant and Flaubert'. While Joyce was certainly an influence on them, 'it was the more grounded naturalist of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, not the high modernist of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*'.[42] O'Faoláin in particular was continually frustrated with the direction of Irish writing after the Revival, including that of Joyce. Joe Cleary remarks that in his criticism, 'again and again, O'Faoláin will conclude in dispirited vein with what he sees as the post-Revivalist generation's failure to produce the great realist art that the country requires'. Cleary thus interprets O'Faoláin in the mould of an Irish Georg Lukács, in his 'wistful hankering for the classical realist novel.[43] This is a fitting comparison given the Hungarian critic's rejection of the modernism that Joyce exemplified in his 1938 essay 'Realism in the Balance'. As Lukács's invective against modernism asserted, 'in the case of the major realists, easier access

[40] Patricia Coughlin and Alex Davis, 'Introduction', in Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis, eds, *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s* (Cork, 1995), 1-23: 1.
[41] Mark Quigley, *Empire's Wake: Postcolonial Irish Writing and the Politics of Modern Literary Form* (New York, 2012) 5, 20, 4, 14.
[42] Brad Kent, 'Introduction: On Polemical Essays and the Public Intellectual', in *The Selected Essays of Seán O'Faoláin* ed. Brad Kent (Montreal, 2016), xi-xxxvi: xxvi.
[43] Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), 147-148.

produces a richly complex yield in human terms, the broad mass of the people can learn nothing from avant-garde literature'.[44] O'Faoláin himself had earlier written that Joyce's *Work in Progress* 'comes from nowhere, goes nowhere, it is not part of life at all. It has one reality only – the reality of the round and round of children's scrawls in their first copybooks, zany circles of nothing'.[45]

O'Faoláin's rejection of Joyce is consistent with Frank O'Connor's later excoriation of the writer as stuck in adolescence, an interpretation which, as Carol Taaffe contends, was a general 'cultural ethos of post-revival, post-independence Ireland'.[46] This criticism of Joyce as a writer detached from a reality associated with adulthood is instructive as to the intended developmental trajectories of their literary projects over the course of the 1930s, which were actively involved in a polemic about the direction of Irish culture. But there is also a significant difference between the Marxism that Lukács espoused and O'Faoláin's political attachments. Quigley's theorisation specifically relies upon what he constructs as 'a left-wing republican perspective' which interpreted 'the Irish Free State as an illegitimate or incomplete product of the anticolonial revolution both regarding its acceptance of Northern partition and its failure to address the profound material disparities within Irish society'.[47] Yet O'Faoláin's earlier left-wing republicanism came into question during the 1930s, with his political attachments more frequently resembling a Whiggish liberalism to match his penchant for the classic nineteenth-century realism that would rescue the country from its deteriorated political and intellectual state of disrepair. Paul Delaney has shown that other treatments of the writer have often been confined in this way to a caricature of the writer as a liberal, but that actually 'one of the great sources of tension in O'Faoláin's work… was his attraction to, and simultaneous repulsion from, the codes of Irish life'.[48] As stated, O'Faoláin and O'Connor's chosen group of all-male writers was not a politically coherent one. It was, however, coherent in its frustration with the misrepresentation of Ireland through the lens of romanticism, which both had a demonstrable effect upon his novels and their representation of the country and the city. But while O'Connor and O'Faoláin shared Beckett, MacGreevy, and Coffey's alienation towards what they perceived as a dominant ruralist, conservative, and bigoted ideology in Ireland, they did not share their admiration for anti-realism.

As such, Cleary argues that the dissipation of radical political energy in this era led the

[44] Georg Lukács, 'Realism in the Balance' [trans. Rodney Livingstone], in Fredric Jameson, Georg Lukács. Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetics and Politics* (1977; London, 1980), 28-59: 37
[45] Seán O'Faoláin, 'The Cruelty and Beauty of Words', *Virginia Quarterly Review* 4.2 (April 1928), 208-225: 224-225.
[46] Carol Taaffe, 'Coloured Balloons: Frank O'Connor on Irish Modernism', in Hilary Lennon, ed., *Frank O'Connor: Critical Essays* (Dublin, 2007), 205-217: 206.
[47] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 70.
[48] Paul Delaney, *Seán O'Faoláin: Literature, Inheritance and the 1930s* (Dublin, 2014), 33.

previous literary experimentalism to be refracted by the thirties into a less 'cutting-edge' political literature, with the reinforcement of the existing state structure on the island coterminous with the 'consolidation of naturalism and the major domestic counter Revivalist aesthetic'.[49] However, he does little to bring out the tension between the 'naturalist' writers he identifies and the state's consolidation effort which was manifest in the realist novels of O'Faoláin and O'Connor. Their novels did not display the submerged ambitions of their short fiction, but were attempts to elaborate an alternative sense of Irish history and identity through the development of a representative individual in a realist novel. O'Connor and O'Faoláin instead remodelled Irish life along the lines of realism, a project which re-centred the cultural and intellectual life of Ireland in Munster, their home province. As Niall Carson writes of their attachment to their hometown, they felt that 'criticism of [them] was tied to their presence in Dublin as interlopers from Éire's [sic] second city'. Carson suggests that O'Connor and O'Faoláin shared the burden 'to produce something of a national literature but at an international standard'. O'Connor put this most succinctly when he mused to John Kelleher that

> At least we are not a mere negation of Yeats; we are like Paul and the apostles, poor devils who do the best we can to make intelligible the preposterous ideas of that Sligo Christ, adopting them to history and to Cork.[50]

One of the preposterous ideas that they adapted from Yeats was the representation of the country and the city as spaces with added social and political values. However, for the Cork version of Paul and the apostles, these spaces were not circumscribed in the way of Yeats's poetry. Instead, their novels of the 1930s adapt the rural and the urban to history and to Cork, subsuming these values within a literature of alternative possibilities that was propelled by the disappointments of the revolution. In the absence or rejection of Dublin, this dissident Irish national consciousness is located instead in the provincial town or city. Munster and Cork thus formed an important milieu for both these writers and their protagonists, often represented as a foil to the new capital city.

While they each took varying approaches to elaborating their visions of Ireland in fiction, their novels reveal a consistent drive towards the representation and indeed sponsorship of an urban identity. As such, O'Faoláin and O'Connor did not just share Cork as a setting, but both represented the city through a series of totalising images. Whether facilitated by an omniscient narrator, free indirect discourse, or from a first-person viewpoint, the recurrence of these set-pieces throughout their novels reveal their equally abstracting valorisation of the city

[49] Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune*, 107, 108.
[50] Niall Carson, *Rebel by Vocation: Seán O'Faoláin and the Generation of The Bell* (Manchester, 2016), 3; Frank O'Connor to John V. Kelleher, 26 February 1952, John V. Kelleher Correspondence, Boole Library, University College Cork, Bl/JVK/179 qtd in Carson, *Rebel*, 3.

as the locus of a modern Irish consciousness. Furthermore, in often being figured as a metaphor for the social or political state of Ireland, these views of Cork offer a wider connection to the construction of a dissident form of intellectual endeavour throughout the 1930s. But they also reveal a fundamental contradiction in their shared modernising teleology. As Fredric Jameson has described of similar moments in the writings of the nineteenth-century realists Honoré de Balzac and Charles Dickens, prolonged descriptions of the landscape constitute 'the opposite of the narrative impulse as such'. As Jameson explains further, 'the most inveterate alternative to narrative as such reminds us that storytelling is a temporal art, and always seems to single out a painterly moment in which the onward drive of narrative is checked if not suspended altogether'.[51] Even as they run counter to the territorial romanticism of Corkery and his allies, these painterly moments in the historical novels of O'Connor and O'Faoláin suspend the action in a snapshot of Irish society, thereby eliminating the agency of their central characters. A general historical sense of socio-political ruination and fracture is evident throughout these texts, marked either during or immediately after crucial points of Irish history: the Irish Civil War in *The Saint and Mary Kate* (1932); the successive rebellions in *A Nest of Simple Folk* (1934); and the fall of Parnell in *Bird Alone* (1936). This project of representing Ireland within a realist mode finally culminated in *Dutch Interior* (1940), with a portrait of an inert Cork that abandoned any narrative progression. While the didactic messages of these novels were deeply connected to the culture wars of the period, their novels did not model the urban, cosmopolitan ideals they argued for. Instead they offered case-studies of provincial or rural melancholy, with the literal and figurative moves of their protagonists often resembling the zany circles of nothing which O'Faoláin saw in *Work in Progress*.

Deconstructing Dublin in The Saint and Mary Kate

Frank O'Connor's debut novel, *The Saint and Mary Kate*, was set in a period only identified as occurring sometime after the Irish Civil War. The plot revolves around the relationship between its main protagonists, Mary Kate McCormick and Phil Dinan, initially signalling towards a romantic melodrama primarily dealing with the themes of sexuality and religious piety. Situated in Cork, *The Saint and Mary Kate* is structured around a working-class tenement house, which Fintan O'Toole describes as the 'classic location for Irish urban writing... an urban version of the rural setting'. O'Toole also located his and O'Faoláin's success in the short story as deriving from a national

> dominance of the notion of the peasant-as-child… the fact that the direction of the myth of the countryside was firmly towards the past is surely related to the

[51] Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London, 2013), 8.

> dominance of the short story in the literature of independent Ireland. The short story, as practised by Frank O'Connor and Seán O'Faoláin, is above all the form *for childhood and remembrance*.[52]

In O'Faoláin and O'Connor's novels, however, the perspective of a child coming into maturity offered a dialectic between the ambition of youthful imagination and the disappointing constraints of maturity. This is certainly true for *The Saint and Mary Kate*, which – apart from being set in a city – gradually abandons its early melodramatic structure to take the form of a *bildungsroman*. The novel's shift from its early melodrama to a coming-of-age narrative is complemented by a developing awareness of the landscape on the part of Phil and Mary Kate. As opposed to the supposedly nostalgic trajectories of O'Connor's short stories, the novel sketches the contours of a contemporary post-revolutionary society. As such, *The Saint and Mary Kate*'s tenement house is also, like Seán O'Casey's setting for *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), a former home of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy now fallen into the hands of the urban poor, the 'Ireland outside' come to the interior of the Big House. Peter Hart more accurately located O'Connor's novel within 'Broad Lane', a '"rough", overwhelmingly Catholic neighbourhood… looked down on my more respectable working-class and middle-class areas'.[53]

While the novel initially focuses on this working-class district of Cork, even the first line hints at a possible escape to the capital: 'Mary Kate's mother was going away to Dublin'.[54] This anticipated move does not happen, as the narrative at initially cuts short any development of spatial complexity in what John Cronin calls its 'claustrophobic' first phase.[55] *The Saint and Mary Kate* instead concentrates in the early chapters upon the developing consciousness of Mary Kate in the tenement house, as well as her early encounters with Phil. The first description of the landscape beyond the streets of Cork comes in picturesque form, via the comparatively minor character of Mary Kate's mother and her 'friend', a young man from Oxford. While their visit to Killarney provides some colour to the monotony of the first section of the novel, even this is particularly vague: 'the scenery is so original and elevating and the lakes and the boats and the Eagle's Nest or whatever they calls it'. This kind of reportage continues until, at the midpoint of the story, the romance plot is complicated by Mary Kate's move to Dublin to reunite with her hitherto absent alcoholic father. In this move, the capital is explicitly compared to her hometown: 'Mary Kate's first impression of Dublin was that it wasn't sufficiently like Cork'. Thus in the midst of her initial alienation in the capital, Mary Kate moves towards a

[52] O'Toole, Going West: The Country versus the City in Irish Writing', *The Crane Bag* 9.2 (1985), 111–116: 114, 113; emphasis mine.
[53] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford, 1999), 11-12.
[54] Frank O'Connor, *The Saint and Mary Kate* (London, 1932), 1.
[55] John Cronin, *Irish Fiction 1900-1940* (Belfast, 1992), 185.

'process of identification' in mapping Cork onto the streets of Dublin. This is figured as a clash between the geographical mentalities of father and daughter:

> it is difficult to take seriously a daily discovery of some likeness which does not in the least enter into your calculations... as to be told that the postman is the dead spit of someone that collects the pennies at the side door of Saint Peter and Paul's... or that the road into Milltown reminds your young daughter of another road from Barrack Street to Pouladuff.

Cronin considers this journey to Dublin as a '[James] Stephens-like picaresque', but also a means by which to develop the central character, with Mary Kate 'going forth in a cruel world to confront its terrors'.[56] The narrator's suggestion of her constant comparisons precipitates a more general mapping of Ireland by the novel, as Mary Kate progressively develops an awareness and then critique of the city: 'Dublin, they said, was so many times the size of Cork, and one would expect that subjects of general interest would accordingly be more numerous'.[57]

Only a few pages after she moves to the capital, her devout Catholic love interest Phil follows her to entice her away from what he perceives as 'no place for any young girl'. This act leads him to 'rescue' her from the Dublin of her father, and back to her mother's tenement house in her home-city. Seeking a route back to Cork on this journey, the couple hitch a lift from a stranger, in a transparent *reisemotif* which precipitates a homogenous image of the Irish midlands:

> Little flat ungracious towns were every tiny shop seemed crushed by a heap of masonry, so that it spawned half its stock on to the broken flagstones outside; towns without one leisurely building; towns of water-tight beliefs... Mary Kate thought the highways were rather like towns, for every turn brought another dull stretch of road and another deceptive turn that seemed to promise a mystery but gave none.

Shorn of any specific geographical referents, this is as much a map of Mary Kate's lack of interest in the landscape as it as a map of Ireland. But this is indelicately linked to the rest of the action. Shortly after this rejection of the midlands, Phil and Mary Kate find themselves in an abandoned barn, which oddly becomes both the site of a murder cover-up and a strange encounter with an ailing peasant sidhe and her daughter. As they seek help, this sidhe informs them that: 'You won't get [a priest or a doctor] any nearer than the town, and that's four long miles away'. The couple's eventual move towards the town is again registered regarding alienation, as they view a fair day 'with a cityfied [sic] wonder', noting 'the parade of creels and ass-carts in the midst of which frightened animals reared and plunged'. However, and significantly, '[i]t was Phil who paid most attention, he who first commented upon the

[56] Cronin, *Fiction*, 185.
[57] O'Connor, *The Saint and Mary Kate,* 35, 149, 150, 156, 157.

difference between town and city'.[58] The spiritual difference which is developed between both characters is also registered here regarding how they can interpret the rural-urban binary, but importantly it also suggests the deep structural divisions within the new state. As such, none of these relatively rapid plot developments – the encounter with Mary Kate's 'father', the hitchhiking, the discovery of a body, the peasant woman and daughter – seriously affect the story: they are, instead, expositions of a national geography. Landscape is a palimpsest upon which O'Connor's social and political attitudes are encoded, a kind of fictional 'Roddy the Rover column' which emplaces this regional novel in a national context.

The Saint and Mary Kate enacts a form of decentralisation here in the middle part of the novel, which is only undertaken to reassert the dominance of the initial setting. While revealing the divisions between Dublin and Cork, it also uncovers the weirdness of the midlands. The incongruity of these places leads to an awkward and inconsistent narrative in which the differences between the Munster and Leinster town are told to the reader before they are shown. Such heavy-handedness is also evident when, in the coda of the novel, Phil and Mary Kate go on a walk up the hills of Cork. This further journey results in a stereotypical view of the city, which has been abstracted as a picture of aesthetic beauty:

> the city glowed beneath them, its thousand roofs a steely glitter, its river a dull ribbon of slate and brown, spires washed, everything clear cut like a child's drawing, from the bars on the cell windows of the jail to the grey thread that spanned the river and carried an insect-like procession of vehicles and figures.

This reified vision of O'Connor's home-town is patently more vivid than the 'dull stretch' of the midlands, but like the earlier journey to Dublin, the walk to the hills only functions as a means to totalise the city from that viewpoint. Again, the difference between the rural and urban is made plain to the reader in this journey: 'Her mood had changed suddenly with the change of scene from city to countryside. Darkness crept in about them'. This is then directly followed by an argument between Mary Kate's aunt and the 'bitterly disillusioned' Peter, conducted on the battle-lines of the Irish Civil War. However, Phil and Mary Kate are 'too young to remember the passions of the Civil War', signalling a move away from the trauma of recent history, and towards an innocence which facilitates the unified vision of Cork that the hillside offers.[59] The ignorance of the youths with regards to the geography of the island is counterparted by a similar lack of knowledge of recent history. As such, in rejecting Dublin and the midlands before dwelling on the totality of the provincial city in this late passage, *The Saint and Mary Kate* re-emphasises Cork as a place of modernity. Contradicting O'Toole's description of the short stories of his and O'Faoláin's novels as dealing with 'childhood and remembrance', there is a

[58] O'Connor, *The Saint and Mary Kate,* 175, 185-6, 212, 221.
[59] O'Connor, *The Saint and Mary Kate*, 276, 279, 280, 280.

constant emphasis in O'Connor's first novel upon both coming of age and obliviousness to the past.

The spatial project of modernisation in A Nest of Simple Folk

Despite Mary Kate and Phil's disinterest in the Civil War, an identifiable turn in Irish fiction and biographical writing in the thirties was a revision of Irish history through the novel, with a dominant focus on the revolution. As Flanagan notes, the contributions of O'Connor and O'Faoláin to this reassessment in their biographies of major figures came at the same time as 'the paradigm shift wrought by the historians T.W. Moody and R.D. Edwards, in ushering in a "scientific" approach to the study of Irish history'.[60] Writing of this collective collapse into historical reportage, Nicholas Allen also argues that there was a revisionist impulse in the state's historiography: 'The birth of the state compelled a revisionist chronology by which to understand Irish history, the failed rebellions of the past now re-ordered as successful steps in the evolution towards independence'.[61] O'Faoláin wrote a series of novels covering the period from the 1798 rebellion to Easter Week in 1916, alongside biographies of Hugh O'Neill, O'Connell, Countess Markievicz, and Éamon de Valera. The biographies were positioned at the junctures between political epochs, and are often marked by the scattered remnants of the former order either in settings for key moments of plot development, or even *mise-en-scène*. As an early passage of O'Faoláin's biography of Daniel O'Connell *King of the Beggars* (1938) suggests, 'the history of the O'Connells is... like a geologist's map'. Redeploying this simile in the later stage of the biography, he also claimed that O'Connell 'had moulded an Irish Atlas carrying a world on its back'.[62] This image suggests how he countered the revisionist chronology of the Free State with a thematic revision, rearranging Irish history not with the republican chronology that Allen describes, but towards a vision of the country and the city as respective spaces of tradition and modernity. Such rearrangements were also undertaken in O'Faoláin's construction of an Irish literary tradition. The revisionist literary history of the prefatory 'Proem' in *King of the Beggars* mounted a direct attack upon Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland* (1924), which had stated that one could find 'hidden Ireland' merely by 'leaving the cities and towns behind, ventur[ing] among the bogs and hills, far into the mountains even'.[63] Setting Corkery's commentary against the valorisation of the modern order which the citified O'Connell represents, the Proem's avowedly realistic portrait of Gaelic life was a clear

[60] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 6.
[61] Allen, *Civil War*, 35.
[62] Seán O'Faoláin, *King of the Beggars* (1938; Dublin, 1986), 42, 232.
[63] Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin, 1925), 19-20.

intervention into contemporary politics. What he saw as the need for 'modernisation' in the post-revolutionary era led O'Faoláin's to champion a multifaceted Irish identity, which married elements of both the rural and the urban. This also led him to reframe the history of Ireland, across biographies and novels, as a battle between realist modernisers and diehard romantics.

Mark McNally argues that the writer had 'already mastered… rhetorical techniques of employment through his creative fiction before he began to challenge the nationalist canon in late 1930s Ireland'.[64] O'Faoláin was primarily concerned in the 1930s with the moralising didacticism of the novel. Quigley's assertion that the writer 'deploy[ed] an anachronistic realism' implies the writer's ambitions towards a twentieth-century version of the nineteenth-century realist tradition.[65] His epic novel *A Nest of Simple Folk* is ordered into three books: 'Country', 'Town', and 'City'. Thus the novel's reliance on the intertwined historical backdrop of rural to urban migration and the spatial development of Ireland in the post-famine period is formally enshrined. The historical timeframe of *A Nest of Simple Folk*, beginning in the 1840s and ending at the Easter Rising, is also teleological, embodying what R.F. Foster terms 'the elision of the personal and the national, the way history becomes a scaled up biography, and biography a microcosmic history'.[66] Leo Foxe-Donnel, the protagonist, is a complex hybrid as the son of an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and an Irish peasant, who blends the respective 'Foxe' and 'O'Donnell' names into his double-barrelled surname. As Quigley writes, Leo 'stands at the nexus of two histories and two rival social formations'.[67] While he demonstrates some deviations from this tendency towards insurrection, he is more of a diehard romantic than a realist moderniser. The novel's move from a peasant Fenian rebellion just before the famine to the urban 1916 Rising demonstrates the protagonist's collapse into a microcosm of Irish history. Leo is implicated throughout the lengthy narrative in some major nationalist historical events, beginning with the Fenian Rebellions of the 1860s. It is also heavily implied that he dies in the Easter Rising. 'Rising in the World' forms the title of two chapters, and the family tree which prefaces the novel reads: 'LEO FOXE-DONNEL 1840-1916'.[68] Thus the urban birth of the state is also the death of the hybrid republicanism of Leo, a pointed dissimilarity to the quieted politics at the end of *The Saint and Mary Kate*.

Given the epic size of the novel, a total interrogation of how it represents the rural and urban would be beyond the scope of this chapter.[69] While there are other protagonists and sub-

[64] Mark McNally, 'Countering the Hegemony of the Irish National Canon: The Modernist Rhetoric of Seán O'Faoláin', *Nations and Nationalism* 15.3 (2009), 524–544: 530.
[65] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 20.
[66] R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland* (Oxford, 2001), xi.
[67] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 89
[68] Seán O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk* (New York, 1934), [front matter; no page number].
[69] *Empire's Wake* offers a much more comprehensive reading of the novel as a blend of different perspectives, but I focus here on Foxe-Donnel's narrative as it relates both to the biographies which O'Faoláin wrote in these years,

plots, *A Nest of Simple Folk* primarily focuses on Leo's individual development as set against the epic backdrop of Irish political history, reordering his life as a struggle between the country of his childhood and the city of his maturity. The exposition of Foxe-Donnel's upbringing constructs him as an unwelcome interloper who flits between the Foxe and O'Donnell houses of his mother and father. Unlike O'Connor's characters, he is initiated into the rural-urban binary from an early age, as in his childhood he moves between the farmlands he grew up in, the town of Rathkeale, and the city of Limerick. When he is eventually sent to this last destination in the third chapter, the narrator notes: 'Sometimes he would say that journey was the beginning of his life'. In an early passage where a 'land-song' about 'the cause' is demanded by a group of his O'Donnell uncle's friends, his entry into political consciousness coincides with his move to the city. Leo's experience of the city is initially one of alienation, however, and his memories characterise it as such:

> And as far as almost all the rest of his memories of Limerick were concerned he might never have woken from that sleep, so dim and faint were they. Every spring he went from Foxehall to stay there, but it was not Limerick with its streets and its houses and its quays that burned themselves into his mind, but the countryside to which he always returned.[70]

Here the recourse to a slumbering rural memory rather than an objective narration of factual events is perhaps why Quigley argues that 'in its lyrical guise, then, Irish rural space – and subsequently urban space – is one that lies wholly outside of historical time' in the novel.[71] The countryside certainly becomes a site of lyrical memory for Leo. However, the fact that the book gradually moves towards the urban environment from which he gains his political consciousness suggests that the city is where the individual becomes emplaced within a national and historical narrative, and comes to understand his relation to it. Even the word 'country-*side*' suggests that the rural is peripheral to an urban-based national politics mostly mediated through newspapers; when Foxe-Donnel eventually moves to Cork his newspaper-shop is often 'as crowded as a pub with the drainings of the political clubs'.[72]

Further conforming to Foster's description of the slippage between biography and national history, O'Faoláin was also concerned in his debut novel with his process of identity formation. In his later biography, he called it 'a historical novel, or family chronicle, based on everything I had known, or directly observed in the countryside, of my mother's people, and the city life of my mother and father away back, some twenty years ago'.[73] As this modelling

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and the general project of revising Irish history according to the rural and the urban. Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 84-104.

[70] O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk,* 80, 105, 124.

[71] Quigley, *Empire's Wake,* 87.

[72] O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk*, 288.

[73] Seán O'Faoláin, *Vive Moi!* (London, 1993), 29.

on the family chronicle suggests, *A Nest of Simple Folk* is a multi-layered narrative which adopts some different perspectives. The text is also heavily interlaced with comments about the 'city life', often describing the social and visual aspects of rural and urban life in contrast. The promise of urban America is present as a possible escape from the strictures of Irish identity to the modern city, but its general representation as a place of freedom is undercut by an early passage figuring emigration as a form of death:

> What happened to them, in the end, no one ever knew. One is said to be buried in Boston, Mass., killed in an elevated-railway smash... after the old mother died those at home never heard from them. They did not even have their addresses...

But it is through the character of Leo, who is imprisoned in two separate rebellions and dies in another, that the complex narrative of Ireland's recent history is examined. The sense of being removed from history in emigration is reminiscent of these incarcerations, during which he is 'no more thought of than an old stone pillar in a field' by his family and community. When he eventually leaves the penal system for good, he relocates from Rathkeale to Cork, a place where 'the people knew nothing of him, except that he was a Fenian and had been in jail'.[74] Cork in *A Nest of Simple Folk* is a hybrid, 'half-rural' city, a place which approximates the character of Foxe-Donnel himself: 'more than once looking down over the chimneys from his attic window, he said the city was like a bouquet spread along the valley'. Its narrative journey is of interlinked personal and societal development, the trajectory as much from the historical irrelevance of the countryside to the critical endpoint of the Easter Rising. But as a counter to the history of rebellion with which Leo's life is interchangeable, the development of a burgeoning Catholic middle-class from the Foxe-Donnel family tree is continually in evidence, with the gradual accumulation of judges, policemen, soldiers and shopkeepers encapsulating the 'modernising trend' that Quigley describes.[75] These figures also emplot the rise of the police state and coterminous establishment of prisons, barracks and asylums. Donnel's nephew Johnny Hussey's study of the 'geography of the British Empire' for the police exams is loaded with meaning, his patrols through the city a distinct representation of a watched space.[76]

While the vast majority of the novel resists totalising of rural and urban space, this is undercut in the last book by Johnny's son Dennis, who provides an obvious representation for O'Faoláin himself. As Quigley notes, Dennis Hussey is 'a largely autobiographical portrait informed by [O'Faoláin's] own experience as the son of a fiercely imperialist and anxiously striving R.I.C. father'.[77] Both he and the character whose perspective the last chapter of the

[74] O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk*, 165, 280, 290.
[75] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 85.
[76] O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk*, 299, 85 193.
[77] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 99.

novel gradually assumes are the sons of Royal Irish Constabulary men, offering a point of contrast with the unrepentant dissidence of Foxe-Donnel. Dennis provides some of the most sustained visions of the city in the novel as what are eventually revealed as the preparations for Easter Week are occurring in the shadows:

> The city he had known built of light and loveliness sank before his eyes as into a pit. Dark and tawdry he saw it now, old and deformed, crutched with piles, scabrous, bulged as with a goitre, empty, dark, and, as if to torment him, he found, flickering in the recesses of his mind, bright images of the beauty he had lost, a torch walking with him through the dim, dusty streets of Cork… Still, he kept wandering about the city, searching patiently for what had never been. He would deceive himself for a week with some such fragment out of that reliquary of decay, as a bellied shop window left by the nineteenth century; or an old slum rookery, once a gentleman's town house, standing like a jail out of a welter of roofs; or it was a church, that had actually been a city jail, now so black and ugly and unfitting in its conversion that its stones, its ancient purpose, its new tenant, would hold him for long spells of wonderment.[78]

Quigley considers this passage as a modernist disruption of the realist mode which the novel inhabits, with its 'odd combinations and contrasts'.[79] But whatever the style being adopted here, the repeated emphasis is on Dennis attempting to recover the former glory of the city. This search is heavily ironised by the fact that the impending revolution will fundamentally disrupt the society and environment of the city. As the last comprehensive image of Cork in *A Nest of Simple Folk*, it also commemorates the city before the onset of this revolution, which arrives as the last act of the novel in the form of the Easter Rising in which Donnel dies.

Revising Corkery in Bird Alone

The portrait of a radical on the fringes of a conservative society in O'Faoláin's first novel was paralleled by the domineering presence of the Catholic Church in his later *Bird Alone*. There are significant formal and thematic departures, as *Bird Alone* is narrated by its central protagonist Corney Crone, who is of Cork's middle-class. The development of the city is still an active concern here, with the Crone family reliant on state and church contracts for their construction business. In a novel about religious restrictions, where the Bishops and Priests have a strict control upon society, one of the central ironies is that Crone's father's business relies upon this Catholic hierarchy for his burgeoning business: '"It's the most go-ahead city in the United Kingdom," he leaned to the canon to say. "Spreading on all sides. Why there's no-one knows the size of Cork. Trade Flourishing. Ship-building, house-building, tanneries"'. With this inside knowledge of the city's architecture, Corney is able to narrate the development

[78] O'Faoláin, *A Nest of Simple Folk*, 358-359.
[79] Quigley, *Empire's Wake*, 100.

of Cork City with a level of expertise over the course of the novel. As such, he is concerned throughout with its aesthetic character, in an early passage admiring 'one of the few lovely Georgian houses that we still retain in Cork'. This seemingly peculiar fascination with the beauty of the city is given greater importance by the end of the novel, where the exiled Crone is symbolically looked upon 'as if [he] were no more than one of the ancient red bricks' which make up its houses. In keeping with O'Faoláin's earlier novel, the architectural preoccupations of Crone's interior monologues are often focused upon a castle or ruin, a church-spire or a factory, offering an urban counter to Corkery's rural schemata of living pieties. Vantage points of the city from the family home are often in evidence here, particularly as it boasts 'an elegant long attic under the slates from whose window you could see all Cork and its harbour'. The novel thus appropriately begins with 'two walks out of the city that I love', establishing this spatial bias of the protagonist, as well as taking up where the poetic representation in the final chapters of the earlier novel had left off. [80]

Readings of the novel have focused on its inadequacies as a piece of literature, or its evisceration of conservative Ireland (which eventually saw the book banned).[81] But as a historical novel, the fortunes of the city are inextricably linked to the burgeoning desire for Home Rule in its 1890s timeframe. A panoramic view of the city is given after the death of Parnell, a seminal event in the novel, when Corney looks over a now desolate Cork, perceiving that 'it was right it should all be dead, when he was who might have brought it all to life... fitting that along those quays the eyes could trace ruin upon ruin'. Ruination again is imaged onto the city at a time of nationalist disappointment, having a contemporary resonance with the dissipation of utopian energy after the revolution. A band paying tribute to the dead leader circles these urban ruins, suggesting the circuitous movement of Irish history as a Sisyphean nightmare: 'They were circling the city in their misery, unable to return home; to be silent; to think'. While the novel's structure and plot are tighter than the often confusing ensemble of *A Nest of Simple Folk*, it is more spatially ambitious in its mapping of an alternative city by a journey to London. This movement to the colonial grandeur of the British capital, which Corney and his lover Elsie visit both in search of his exiled family and in an attempt to plead for the release of a Fenian prisoner, again offers a contrast to the portrait of Cork. As the couple walk along the Thames, they compare London with Cork 'in every way... our minds dilating with the image of a world's trade and the vastness of an empire of which this was the very heart and

[80] Seán O'Faoláin, *Bird Alone* (1936; Oxford, 1985), 17, 107, 303, 8, 7.

[81] Recent examples of this dismissal have come in general overviews of the novel form, e.g. John Wilson Foster, 'Introduction', in John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2006), 1-21: 17; and Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2011), 169.

centre'. This trip is also heavily laden with literary and cultural referents: Corney mentions that he 'wanted to see the docks Dickens wrote about in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and so we went in a horse-bus (that as not half slow enough for me) down to Tower Hill and London Bridge'. This walk through London culminates in Corney and Elsie having sex and unknowingly conceiving a child, a location which, in a novel whose major theme is the sexual restrictions in Catholic Ireland, initially becomes a geographical register of freedom. However, the initial focal point of this encounter in London is when they happen across his uncle. After a few drinks, the exiled Irish sing: 'Come back to oul Ireland both sudden and soon, | And build up again – the Ould Ivied Ruin'. This both evokes the ruination of Cork which Corney had envisaged after the death of Parnell, and forecasts his eventual turn towards his family trade at the end of the novel (albeit that this happens in exile from both his familial home and the city of Cork).[82]

When they return to Ireland and discover Elsie's pregnancy, Corney conceals her in an isolated cabin near the seaside town of Youghal. In a pique of shame and fear, she attempts suicide, and although she is briefly rescued, her and the child die during a subsequently premature childbirth in which the isolation of the town from medical care is underlined: '"I never heard of e'er a doctor around this part of Youghal"'. The total opposition to the development of the rural town and the urban centre is forcefully signified by Elsie's death, which also seals Corney's ostracisation from his community and consequent departure from the city. In this grim ending to *Bird Alone*, the exiled Corney rejects his home city as 'merely a country town' which is 'filled with half-rich and pauper poor, and small merchants and petty tradesmen who like my people fatted the priests, and kept the monks and nuns and starveling beggars alive, and made those half-rich happy in their half-wealth'. This renders the narrative itself circular, referring back to its turn towards a quasi-naturalist description of Cork which rejects the city in its first pages:

> An hour before dawn in winter, if the weather is good, an hour after it in summer, I go down along the river where I can see the formless fan of daylight upspreading below the lochs of the Lee, while about me the mist is barely beginning to move from the sluggish mudflats that dull, whispering, sheeny mirror to the houses across the water, to the limestone castle, to the ball of light risen for another day's toll. There I turn and look up the stinking river at the cold chimneys of the city, where two spires of a triad – broken trident of a cathedral – catch the light.[83]

As with *A Nest of Simple Folk*, *Bird Alone* emphasizes the provincial stasis of a fallen Cork, with similar even language deployed: 'sluggish', 'dull', 'stinking' and 'formless'. Richard Bonaccorso considers this passage as 'his revision of *The Threshold of Quiet'*, Corkery's first

[82] O'Faoláin, *Bird Alone,* 141, 142, 175, 174, 186.
[83] O'Faoláin, *Bird Alone,* 272, 297-298, 3.

novel, which O'Faoláin perceived as a romanticisation of the Irish landscape.[84] But in figuring the novel as a retrospective, O'Faoláin also offers *Bird Alone* as an explanation of how Corney's love of his home city descends into a hatred of a conservative Irish society, the built environment a synecdoche for the social state of the country.

The provincialism of Dutch Interior

Frank O'Connor's 1940 novel *Dutch Interior* was the culmination of his and O'Faoláin's project of representing Ireland in the novel form through nineteenth-century realism, with his title also referring to the seventeenth century Dutch Golden Age tradition of painters such as Johannes Vermeer. However, the novel is dismissed by John Cronin as a portrait of Cork which is 'altogether too provincial, too introspective, too thinly constituted in a social sense, to allow the kind of solid novelistic study which he seems to have most admired'. Cronin argues that the early title for O'Connor's second novel, *The Provincials*, was far more appropriate for its subject matter.[85] In his contemporaneous review for *The New Republic*, James Stern opined that '*Dutch Interior* – an unfortunate title, for surely a Vermeer, a Ter Borch, does not suggest the squalor, drabness, and the everlasting domestic crises of O'Connor's Ireland – is a very sad book'.[86] This assessment is backed up by O'Connor's biographer James Matthews, who contends that the novel 'develops from the static, suffocating atmosphere of a city, rather than from the motion of people's lives… characters are not much more than symptoms of a diseased provincial town and are acted on almost solely from without'.[87] But the title also hinted at wider European admirations on the part of O'Connor, even if Carol Taaffe argues that he was part of a generation which 'stolidly ignored literary developments on the continent'.[88] On the one hand, the reference to Vermeer's school of art in the title of *Dutch Interior* betrayed the influence of a continental model in its title. This was not merely a namecheck by O'Connor but signalled an attempt to incorporate painterly realism into the form of his novel. Writing in his later theorisation on the novel, *The Mirror in the Roadway* (1956), O'Connor self-reflexively offered the 'Dutch interior… as the ideal of the nineteenth-century novelist', in being focused on the 'domestic and civic', the 'study of society and the place of the individual in it'. Furthermore, he conceived of this fictional mode as focusing 'on the structure of the classes, professions, and trades rather than on the mythological or historical past'.[89]

In the titular allusion, *Dutch Interior* also smuggles in a British influence. O'Connor's

[84] Richard Bonaccorso, *Seán O'Faoláin's Irish Vision* (Albany, 1987), 110.
[85] Cronin, *Fiction*, 189, 187.
[86] James Stern, '*Dutch Interior*', review article, *The New Republic* 104 (20 January 1941), 91
[87] James *Matthews*, *Voic*es: A Life of Frank O'Connor (New York, 1983), 158.
[88] Taaffe, 'Coloured Balloons', 206.
[89] Frank O'Connor, *The Mirror in the Roadway* (New York, 1970), 12.

subsequent theorisation of the nineteenth-century novel alludes to the vivid incorporation of Dutch paintings by the narrator of George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859):

> It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence… I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sybils, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner… to that village wedding, kept between four brown walls, where an awkward bridegroom opens the dance with a high-shouldered, broad-faced bride, while elderly and middle-aged friends look on.[90]

The omniscient narrator of *Adam Bede* turns away from the mythic or heroic like O'Faoláin's equally first panoramic editorial for *The Bell* (discussed below), the allusion connecting O'Connor's last novel with the general move away from the mythic words of the past. This repudiation of history demanded a different technique from the quasi-naturalist depiction which O'Connor had favoured in *The Saint and Mary Kate*. Instead, he adopted a painterly mode, juxtaposing impressionistic views of the landscape with a more realistic, minutely detailed description of the houses of the main characters. Each perspective contains the other, since these houses of *Dutch Interior* are always either multi-storied or set upon a hill, facilitating a view of the city which allows for the representation of space in symbolic totality. This formal experimentation was an ambitious attempt to laminate the ideal of Vermeer, along with the techniques of Eliot, onto a representation of Cork. In its author's search for an appropriate form for a contemporary portrait of the city, *Dutch Interior* adopts this hybrid mode as an alternative form of realism to O'Faoláin's historical novels. But the effect is much the same.

Instead of the burgeoning city that featured – however briefly – in O'Faoláin's novels, the Cork of *Dutch Interior* is recorded in intense detail as commercially and socially lifeless, with fatal effects for the narrative drive. The intense interior detail in the novel is often related by the narrator to developing a sense of the contemporary mood of a provincial Cork, as opposed to his rejection of the mythical and historical past. In the house of one of the main protagonists, Stevie Dalton, the narrator describes how 'there was a clock in every room', and how Dalton's father 'set them by his watch which he had set by the Post Office clock on his way home from work. One who went by Government time couldn't go far wrong'. Despite Mr Dalton's attempt at standardising time, the provincial city offers a mixed space of both tradition and modernity. In a painterly middle passage, the style is heavily inflected with the *mise-en-scene* of 'a picture shop with a framed reproduction of the Vermeer girl in the window'. This

[90] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. Stephen Gill (1859; Harmondsworth 1997) 169; qtd in Franco Moretti, 'Serious Century', in Franco Moretti, ed., *The Novel Volume 1: History, Geography, and Culture* (Princeton, 2006), 364-400: 365n.

immediately departs to an emphasis on the beauty of a town with 'narrow side streets and lanes [that] seemed to lead nowhere but to narrower streets and lane'. The city leads into the city, and this passage more specifically climaxes with a refiguring of Cork as an impressionist painting – oddly, given the reference to classic realist painting in the title – in which all is 'blent':

> The front of the painted houses was already beginning to dim, and their colours to blend lightly into one another, into the green of the trees and the blue of the sky, as though a brush laden with water had been drawn lightly across all, concealing the figures at the open windows, while, high above, the face of the market-house clock became visible. Then, following the drift of shop-girls and bowler-hatted shop-boys, they continued along the main road to the west where the red sandstone walls and peeling shop fronts made a tunnel through the evening, past the court-house beyond which the slanting light rebounded off walls and hoardings as though they were pillars, each slightly dimmer than the last till at the road's end, all blent, all dazzled in a last feeble conflagration.

In positioning the market-house clock clearly above the rest of the town, and then depicting the built environment of Cork as an indistinguishable blur, O'Connor plainly contrasts impressionism and realism. This is also one of the few specific references to the clock-time of the action, and in setting this scene as occurring 'after six o'clock when the sun-blinds were pushed back, as though life there must cease at six', *Dutch Interior* also represents the boredom of provincial life in Ireland.[91]

Consequently there are few comprehensive plot developments in the novel, which accurately portrays what O'Connor saw as a provincial stasis in the city. Instead of a coherent plot, the novel is full of painterly meditations on Cork, the emphasis on time is linked to the descriptions of landscape and an impressionistic medium which constructs the city through a cosmopolitan lens. The clarity with which O'Connor represents the market clock suggests the city's increasing peripheralisation after the foundation of the Irish Free State. This peripheral city contrasts with the nostalgia for its relative prosperity as a part of the British Empire in *A Nest of Simple Folk*, with these moments in *Dutch Interior* portraying Cork as a provincial backwater. O'Connor's depiction of time as a routine is subsumed into the form of the novel, as *Dutch Interior* develops a degree of self-reflexivity in its intensely detailed painterly scenes. This almost synthetic description of landscape occurs throughout the novel, such as when Stevie notices 'the tumble-down old houses grouped about the bridewell, the old shops and rag-and-bone sores, the quay wall and the hillside on the opposite side of the river with its stepped laneways, its towers, its painted fronts'. An interior monologue makes this link between the vision and the earlier painterly departure from the narrative clear: 'all seemed as though on tiptoe, waiting to have its picture painted with all its colours infinitely fresh and tender'. Just as

[91] Frank O'Connor, *Dutch Interior* (1940; Belfast, 1990), 53, 90, 92, 90.

the vista seems to ask to be painted, a later description from the vantage point of 'a low wall from which one had a view of the city all spread out below', images the city and surrounding countryside as 'filled with colour, old, deep, rich colour; red brick that was almost blue, yellow brick that was almost gold, blent, ground into one another'. This emphasis on the blending effect of the view of the city, adopting the metaphor of making paint by grinding pigment, is also a narratorial trick of totalisation, with Cork described as a landscape that 'might have seemed a toy, a vast piece of scenery cut out of flat cardboard'.[92]

Unlike the Dublin which briefly disrupted *The Saint and Mary Kate*, in *Dutch Interior* the city and its rural hinterland are specifically constructed in opposition to America by the inclusion of an emigration narrative. A late argument in dialogue between the parish priest and the returning emigrant Gus Devane unsubtly draws out: 'you come back from a benighted hole like America and tell us that we're behind the times? My God, where people throw themselves into the river and under trains to get out of it'. If such opprobrium from the priest suggests the Church's institutionalised attitude of a rejection of modernity, then that it is aimed at Gus is entirely fitting. Like many of the returning emigrants of Irish fiction, he is a device to expose the small-mindedness of the Corkonians, as he comes back from a New York City where he was 'Building skyscrapers – such a name! Scraping the sky! They have a notion!'. Despite the innovative formal techniques adopted by O'Connor, the pull of Europe does not feature as prominently as that of the United States. Not just a place of skyscrapers and opportunity, New York is also home to 'Psycho-analysis, Walt Whitman, Buddhism, Mass Production', with Gus's brother Peter exclaiming to Stevie Dalton that 'He'd never stand this place – a wild fellow like him'. Stevie's reply, 'Then do you think this is no place for wild fellows?' places a self-reflexive emphasis on the flat portrayal of Cork in the novel. Where Gus actively builds skyscrapers in America, Stevie passively laments the ruins of the provincial city. But when Gus returns, he almost immediately complains that 'I believe a fellow only really understands one place; he can only feel right about one place. I could never feel right about America'.[93] His emigration to the promised land of New York, but inability to stay there, functions as a warning of the devastating effects that this provincialism has upon the inhabitants of the town. Even when they attempt to escape, they are drawn back into its regional inertia. As Matthews describes, the characters 'find they change only because Cork itself does not change', as the novel forces them 'all back together in the social and domestic morass of their hometown'.[94] The torpor of the landscape is thus representative of torpor in the people themselves, which the

[92] O'Connor, *Dutch Interior*, 139, 186.
[93] O'Connor, *Dutch Interior*, 213, 163, 172, 172, 184-5.
[94] Matthews*, Voices,* 159.

frequent suspension of the narrative in favour of 'painterly scenes' ironically asserts too.

From Cork to Corca Dhorcha

Because of the general focus in my argument on writers who represented the country and the city both as a counter to the rhetorical appropriation of the state and within a realist mode, I have not been able to incorporate Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) into this chapter. But in closing, I want to briefly offer some of the ways that Brian O'Nolan's journalism provides a useful point of comparison with O'Faoláin and O'Connor's ontological commitments to space, and how this comparison offers a way of reassessing his fiction. This is drawn out by the squabble in the letters section of the *Irish Times* between O'Connor and O'Faoláin about the 'Peasant Quality' of the Abbey Theatre in the autumn of 1938. O'Connor, who was then serving on the board of the Abbey, had characterised O'Faoláin's criticism of the institution as implying that '[t]he audiences are injected with the virus of P.Q., and we are back to the old vomit of the Abbey'.[95] While this would suggest a rejection of peasant life altogether, as another O'Connor reply stated, 'it would be fatal to produce Continental plays… the faults of the Irish theatre… are not the faults of the theatre only, but of Irish literature, of Irish authors (like myself and Mr O'Faoláin), of Irish life'.[96] This is an embryonic version of both his and O'Faoláin's later excoriation of Irish society for its lack of normality, rooted in their disappointments with the novel form. But an acerbic intervention in this debate from a third party explicitly couched the problem as a dichotomy of the country and the city: 'The present Abbey-goers have allowed themselves to get out of step and out of touch with the Abbey, and since these people are Dublin, and Dublin is Ireland, what greater calamity can befall our old and dauntless nation?'.[97] At this foundational moment in Brian O'Nolan's writing career, this satirical letter signed 'Flann O'Brien' echoed many of the later appearances of his various personae. Indeed, this Dublin-centrism echoed the terms of a later critique by Myles na gCopaleen in *Cruiskeen Lawn*:

> I see that at the recent meeting of the Irish Conservative Party, Fianna Fáil, an "urge towards the Gaelicisation of Eire" was expressed. "Symbols of foreign rule which have to survive on buildings and in public places" should be removed, according to resolution… well, Dublin will have to come down. All the streets, all the buildings, all the public places. And all the public houses, mark you.[98]

The similarity in the invective demonstrates that Myles saw the resemblances in the way that O'Faoláin and O'Connor appropriated the state's discourses of identity formation for their ends.

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[95] Frank O'Connor, 'Letters to the Editor', *The Irish Times* (3 October 1938), 5.
[96] Frank O'Connor, 'Letters to the Editor', *The Irish Times* (12 October 1938), 5.
[97] Flann O'Brien, 'Letters to the Editor', *The Irish Times* (15 October 1938), 7.
[98] Myles na gCopaleen, 'Cruiskeen Lawn', *The Irish Times* (8 November 1944), 2.

It also encapsulates how the misrepresentation of the country and the city, and Dublin and the West particularly, were central concerns throughout O'Nolan's oeuvre.

The first *Cruiskeen Lawn* column which appeared under the name of Myles na gCopaleen in 1940 proposed, in similar words, that the burgeoning vocational organisation Muintir na Tire be countered with a new, urban-centric one: '"Muintear na Cathrach" a bheas mar theideal againn, agus ní bheidh cead iontrála ag aoinne tuatach' ["The People of the City" will be our title, and nobody from the country will be allowed in].[99] As Carol Taaffe comments, 'O'Connor and O'Faoláin's impatience with the plain people of Ireland… would be parodied at length in *Cruiskeen Lawn*'. This formed a basis for O'Nolan's general output in these years, in which 'the recurrent themes of these letters would sound through'.[100] Much of the target of O'Nolan's various platforms for satire was a misappropriation of the 'plain people of Ireland', whether institutional or artistic, a theme which recurs throughout his *Cruiskeen Lawn* column, *An Béal Bocht* (1941), and *The Third Policeman* (written c. 1939-40, published 1967). A particular scene in *An Béal Bocht* even parodies the kind of totalising views with which the novels of O'Faoláin and O'Connor were riven, with the Corca Dhorcha panorama almost encompassing the entire island:

> concerning the house where I was born, there was a fine view from it…. Looking out from the right-hand window, there below was the bare, hungry countryside of the Rosses and Gweedore; Bloody Foreland yonder and Tory Island far away out, swimming like a great ship where the sky dips into the sea. Looking out of the door you could see the West of County Galway with a good portion of the rocks of Connemara, Aranmore in the ocean out from you with the small bright houses of Kilronan, clear and visible, if your eyesight were good, and the Summer had come From the window on the left you could see the Great Blasket, bare and forbidding as a horrible other-worldly eel, lying languidly on the wave-tops; over yonder was Dingle with its houses close together. *It has always been said that there is no view from any house in Ireland comparable to this and it must be admitted that this statement is true.*[101]

Relatedly, *At Swim-Two-Birds* queries the use of the novel form more generally as a possible solution to Ireland's problems, with the narrator considering a novel potentially 'despotic' when put 'in the hands of an unscrupulous writer'.[102] As his contemporary Graham Greene wrote in his readers report for Longmans, *At Swim-Two-Birds* was an attempt 'to present, simultaneously as it were, all the literary traditions of Ireland'.[103] One way of reading the 1939 novel is of

[99] Myles na gCopaleen, 'Cruiskeen Lawn', *The Irish Times* (2 November 1940), 3; I am grateful to Nora Moroney for this translation.
[100] Carol Taaffe, *Ireland Through the Looking-glass: Flann O'Brien, Myles Na gCopaleen and Irish Cultural Debate* (Cork, 2009), 26, 29.
[101] Myles na gCopaleen, *The Poor Mouth*, trans. Patrick C. Power (Dublin, 1996), 21; emphasis mine.
[102] Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939; London, 2000), 32.
[103] Graham Greene, Reader's Report on *At Swim-Two-Birds* for Longmans Green Ltd, repr. 'A Book in a Thousand', in Rüdiger Imhof, ed., *Alive-Alive O!: Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds* (Dublin, 1985), 40-41.

rebellion against this literary tradition and the authority of the author. In the narrative, this rebellion is played out as a clash between rural and urban forces, with the characters overthrowing their urban appropriator Dermot Trellis, who lives in the 'Red Swan Hotel' on Dublin's Lower Leeson Street.[104] This confrontation is explicitly figured as a mock-epic journey from the rural West to Lower Leeson Street.

Jameson writes that 'the satire of the anti-ontological is everywhere in ontological realism and indeed goes hand in hand with the very structure of the form'.[105] This is certainly an appropriate description for how the Cork realists positioned the political and cultural visions of de Valera and Corkery in the period. Indeed, given O'Faoláin's constant reinforcement of realism during the 1930s, his dismissal of *At Swim-Two-Birds* as possessing 'a general odour of spilt Joyce all over it' might be said to conform to this satirical purpose too.[106] But the writing of Brian O'Nolan demonstrates a satire of the ontological in his anti-realist journalism and novels, and his relentless parody eviscerated the ontological commitments of these contemporaries. His mockery of O'Connor and O'Faoláin was thus achieved not just by deconstructing the unoriginality of their writing, but also by exploding the inherited binaries which their works did little to alter: Europe/Ireland, cosmopolitanism/traditionalism, city/country. *At Swim-Two-Birds*'s deconstruction of the ontology of realism came at its literary apex in Ireland, as a notion which went beyond the form of the novel and had an active valence in the culture wars of the 1930s. O'Connor and O'Faoláin's realist novels were an attempt to model an Irish ideal beyond the strictures of the reductively rural one they perceived in literature and politics. O'Faoláin's recalibration of Ireland's history over the course of his novels and biographies recentred the modern city as the site of what he envisaged as a more complex sense of national identity. As the writer himself stated, '[n]o history is a history unless it moves towards an end. It must extract from confusion the emergent order'.[107] O'Faoláin's general plea towards modernisation over the course of the 1930s was constantly registered using the binary formula of the country and the city. As such, while his writing inhabited different genres, styles, and periods, the ultimate focus of his activity in this decade was to correct what he saw as a the romanticisation of Ireland and its history. O'Faoláin sought to replace this with a more composite realism that reordered history, style, and genre into a larger didactic about the modernisation and urbanisation of Irish society. Yet in opposing the constrictions of a ruralist image of contemporary Ireland, they still mostly reiterated the rural-urban divide which had

[104] O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, 35.
[105] Jameson, *Antinomies*, 214.
[106] Seán Ó Faoláin, 'Irish Gasconade', *John O'London's* Weekly (24 March 1939), 970, qtd in *Anthony Cronin, No Laughing Matter: The Life and Times of Flann O'Brien* (London, 1989), 92.
[107] Seán O'Faoláin, 'The Gaelic Corpse', *Leader* 76 (20 August 1938), 24.

also underpinned the visions of Ireland which they distrusted.

The post-treaty generation of writers mapped out their permissible terrain in the first few decades of the Free State, with O'Faoláin, in particular, doing so in service of a revisionist view of Irish history. But for all his experimentations with realism and biography, the omniscient representation of Ireland O'Faoláin so desired arguably came in the foundation of *The Bell*, as a magazine whose opening editorial fashioned a clear break from the past: 'the old symbolic words... belong to the time when we growled in defeat and dreamed of the future. That future has arrived and, with its arrival, killed them'.[108] In its open editorial policy *The Bell*, rather than any of his novels, was thus the culmination of what Frank Shovlin terms his gradual move 'away from what he saw as the strictures of traditional Irish Republicanism in favour of a cosmopolitan liberalism'.[109] O'Faoláin's opening editorial salvo, however, still betrayed the teleological rhetoric of his fiction:

> A boy grows into personality. A man is worth calling a man only in so far as he defines his own character for himself – makes it up out of the gifts of his fathers, the memories of his childhood, the dreams of his boyhood, the ambitions of his youth, the passions of his years, the strength of his own four bones. This magazine will, likewise, grow into character and meaning… this is not so much a magazine as a bit of Life itself, and we believe in Life, and leave Life to shape us after her image and likeness.

Apart from configuring the magazine as a *bildungsroman*, the opening contrasted the 'bit of life' that *The Bell* represented with what O'Faoláin called 'dead words' like 'Cathleen ni Houlihan, the swords of light and the risings of the moon'.[110] There are similarities between this construction of the real and that of Eoin MacNeill's mentioned in the introduction, with both appeals for a reality located in the present. As Flanagan argues, the magazine 'functioned as an essential institutional focus for a generation of dissidents in Ireland in the 1940s and 50s'.[111] Indeed, Flann O'Brien himself appeared from its first issue, in which he wrote on the subject of greyhound racing, an inclusion exemplifying how O'Faoláin's culture wars ended in a form of surrender to all sides of the discussion.

[108] Seán O'Faoláin, 'This Is Your Magazine', *The Bell* 1.1 (1940), 5-9: 5-6.
[109] Frank Shovlin, *The Irish Literary Periodical, 1923-1958* (Oxford, 2003), 79.
[110] O'Faoláin, 'This Is Your Magazine', 6.
[111] Flanagan, *Revolution*, 48.

3

a border in print: the country, the city, and the northern novel, 1920-1939

Belfast and the roots of the northern state

Towards the end of the *Dubliners* story 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', the nationalist Mr Henchy sets out a vision for the redevelopment of Dublin from its post-Parnell rancour. Through the character of Henchy, the old Parnellite, Joyce lampoons the rhetoric of development which characterised the utopian plans for reconstructing Ireland which were being propagated at the turn of the century:

> What we want in this country, as I said to old Ward, is capital. The King's coming here will mean an influx of money into this country. The citizens of Dublin will benefit by it. Look at all the factories down by the quays there, idle! Look at all the money there is in the country if we only worked the old industries, the mills, the ship-building yards and factories. It's capital we want.[1]

Liam Lanigan argues that Henchy's vision becomes a projection of 'cynical materialism… upon the local landscape', which demonstrates an increasing sensitivity 'to an emergent sense of civic identity' in Dublin.[2] What Lanigan does not mention, however, is that this civic identity was often figured in opposition to the dominance of Belfast, with David Dickson considering the two towns in this period as 'rival primates, competing for economic territory if not cultural influence'.[3] This nuance to Joyce's portrait of a Dublin deeply concerned with the growth of the northern city might be lost to the modern reader. Helpfully, however, *Dubliners* is full of allusions, epitomised by the almost fabular reference in 'Eveline' to a 'man from Belfast' who builds houses in a field 'not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs'. Another reference to Ulster is made in the characterisation of Alleyne, the abrasive head of Farrington's commercial law firm with a 'piercing North of Ireland accent' in 'Counterparts'. These representations of the north as a foil to Dublin pose a subtle contrast to the ruined city of the text, in which both the inertiatic Parnellites and the 'old nobility' roistered under 'gaunt

[1] James Joyce, *Dubliners* ed. Terence Brown (London, 2000), 131.
[2] Liam Lanigan, *James Joyce, Urban Planning, and Irish Modernism: Dublins of the Future* (Basingstoke, 2014), 114-6.
[3] David Dickson, 'Town and City', in Eugenio F. Biagini and Mary E. Daly, eds*, The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), 112-128:124.

spectral mansions'.[4] Joyce's allusions to Belfast also satirise the inadmissibility of Belfast, with its putative industrialism, Protestantism and Unionism, into the Irish nationalist project. For if Dublin badly needed industries, mills, ship-building and factories, it was most likely because its northern competitor had more readily embraced the industrial revolution. Belfast is similarly set in competitive relation with Dublin in the rest of Joyce's writing, epitomised by the 'swagger affair in the Ulster Hall' which was to be delivered by Molly Bloom and Blazes Boylan a few weeks after the action of *Ulysses*.[5]

Richard Kirkland argues that it is 'impossible to read Belfast through the lens' of *Ulysses* without becoming aware of there being 'no significant Belfast novel from this period whatsoever'.[6] What 'significant' means for Kirkland is unclear, but perhaps an alternate route would be to briefly read *Ulysses* through the lens of Belfast. By the end of the First World War, the supposed cultural and political differences that emerged from the competition between Dublin and the northern city led to a new constitutional arrangement on the island, which demanded a reconceptualisation of Irish space. On 2 February 1922 – the same day that *Ulysses* was published – David Lloyd George was convening a meeting in Dublin between Michael Collins and James Craig to thrash out the finer points of this new arrangement. Earlier, as Craig's wife recalled, Lloyd George had promised the northern premier 'that a settlement of the boundary question would only involve rectification of the border'. However, as she relates, at the same meeting Collins had also 'produced large maps showing that he wanted half of Ulster saying that Lloyd George had told him that he would get that'.[7] Oliver McDonagh's contention that 'the Irish problem has persisted because of the power of geographical images over men's minds' is certainly borne out by this orientation of the Irish territorial dispute on the map.[8] The object lesson of a map was repeatedly used by both states in the aftermath of partition, and most pointedly in the north where the border and its future have been a dominant concern of its politics and culture.[9] F.S.L. Lyons, taking the opposite view, argued that while there was a pervasive fascination with 'physical boundaries and questions of political sovereignty', this led to the postponement of 'any serious consideration of the cultural differences that underlay the partition of the country'. Yet, as Lyons argued a few paragraphs before this, 'the ancient quarrel is, of course, about power and about its economic base, as well as about its economic manifestations. But such clichés can hardly satisfy us'.[10] Whether clichéd or not, the roots of

[4] Joyce, *Dubliners*, 29, 85-6.
[5] James Joyce, *Ulysses: the 1922 text*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford, 1993), 5.121-2.
[6] Richard Kirkland, *Cathal O'Byrne and the Northern Revival in Ireland, 1890-1960* (Liverpool, 2006), 52.
[7] A.C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934* (Oxford, 2008), 155.
[8] Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: A Study of the Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780*–1980 (London, 1983), 15.
[9] cf. Eamonn Hughes, 'Introduction: Northern Ireland – Border Country', in *Culture and Politics in Northern Ireland, 1960-1990* ed. Eamonn Hughes (Milton Keynes, 1991) 1-12.
[10] F.S.L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (Oxford, 1979), 25-6; 21-2.

the northern state are intimately bound up in the economic prosperity of its industrial centre. Both these physical boundaries and the questions of sovereignty which have caused such fascination were determined by the growth of Belfast and the imagined separation of northern culture.

Benedict Anderson comments that imagined communities 'loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny'.[11] Through an imaging of cultural difference, the new northern state's anxious process of consolidation in the 1920s turned the chance of their existence into their ineluctable destiny. This transformation of luck into providence relied heavily on cultivating perceptions of the north as progressive, industrial, urban, and loyal, as figured to a south which was backwards, agricultural, rural, and treacherous. Characterisations of the island as being partitioned upon social, cultural, or religious grounds often fail to recognise the strong links which Unionists rhetorically fostered between Belfast and urban capitalism. Belfast's economic success had offered a strong argument against a separatist Irish parliament since the first Home Rule Bill. During its attempted passage in 1886, political pamphlets, newspaper articles, posters, and even cigarette packets became the visual battlefield upon which the political and cultural identity of Ireland was contested. This campaign persisted into the 1920s, by which time a structure of 'dichotomous constructs' had been long held within the Unionist imaginary, mapping 'a binary opposition between North and South along a range of indicators – Protestant/Catholic, Saxon/Celt, industrial/agrarian, businesslike/unbusinesslike, energetic/lethargic, law-abiding/lawless'.[12] These binaries were consistently deployed in service of retaining the status quo, as a positive autostereotype which fully embraced the character of a flexible geographical conception of 'the north'. Thus the binary relationship of north-south, which frequently divided rural and urban for political effect, had overwhelmingly adhered by the time of the establishment of what became pejoratively known as the Orange State.[13]

Belfast as a social, cultural, and economic exception in Ireland formed a key part of unionist rhetoric: an exceptionalism that has survived even in more recent historical analyses. As Philip Ollerenshaw notes, Belfast and its surrounds were 'geographically coterminous with the heaviest concentration of the Protestant population, leading many to draw a strong positive correlation between prosperity and Protestantism'.[14] During the treaty negotiations Arthur

[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), 12.
[12] James Loughlin, 'Creating "A Social and Geographical Fact": Regional Identity and the Ulster Question 1880s–1920s', *Past & Present* 195.1 (2007), 159–96: 161-2.
[13] cf. Michael Farrell, Northern *Ireland: The Orange State* (London, 1980).
[14] Phillip Ollerenshaw, 'Businessmen in Northern Ireland and the Imperial Connection, 1886–1939', in Keith

Griffith, considered the deepest economic strategist in Sinn Féin, declared that 'the Ulster question is a Belfast city question. They imagine they have special interests contrary to the rest of Ireland'. For A. C. Hepburn, Griffith's analysis ignored the deep-rooted sentiments of unionist farmers in what Churchill called the 'dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone'. [15] But the focus the plenipotentiary placed on Belfast offered a shrewd comment on how the city was deployed in unionist rhetoric as a totem to their industrial achievement. For example, Marianne Elliott's *The Catholics of Ulster* (2001) argues that

> in its size, economic activities and social problems [Belfast] had more in common with Glasgow and Liverpool than with any town elsewhere in Ireland, Dublin included… Increasingly Ulster people were urban-dwellers, while the population on the rest of the island remained largely rural.[16]

The 'remained' at the end of this analysis obscures the urbanisation taking place south of the border, even if, as Mary Daly argues, it was both to a lesser degree than the rest of Europe, and often quieted within the political rhetoric of both the Free State and the Republic. The overarching tendency has been to view the south as attached to the regressions of rural life: 'one of the attractions of a rural and agrarian society was the belief that it was synonymous with stability, whereas an urban and industrial society was associated with change'.[17] In using Dublin as the only named point of comparison to Belfast, Elliott accepts the terms of the argument set by a unionist agenda in the lead-up to partition: of a negotiation between an 'Ulster' centralised in Belfast and an Ireland centralised in Dublin rather than between, for example, the communities on the border. Moreover, she repeats the transposition of this dispute onto the rural-urban binary.

The Boundary Commission and 'northern' identity after partition

The analysis of 'Ulster' and Belfast as separate from the south reinforces the controversial terms of enquiry which had adhered in the Boundary Commission of the 1920s: a controversy which has been obscured since. An often overlooked aspect of the Boundary Commission negotiations is that many urban areas on the border, such as Newry and Derry, were retained by the north in spite of the wishes of their inhabitants, because 'Ulster unionists laid particular stress on economic reasons for not transferring such areas'.[18] As Ronan Fanning comments, one of the Boundary Commission's key aims – to fulfil the wishes of the people 'in so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions' – was contradictory in theory and in

Jeffrey ed., *An Irish Empire?: Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), 169-190: 171-2.
[15] Arthur Griffiths and Winston Churchill both qtd in Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast*, 277.
[16] Marianne Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster* (London, 2001), 321.
[17] Mary E. Daly, The Slow Failure: Population Decline in Independent Ireland, 1920-1973 (Madison, 2006), 50.
[18] Bryan A. Follis, *A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland, 1920-1925* (Oxford, 1995), 171.

practice.[19] Another 'mistake' of the Boundary Commission for some was its reification of the northern state 'as some essential, eternal – not at all post-modern – entity'.[20] But both states were reifications for many of those living on the border, even, and indeed especially, for those with strong national political attachments. The sense of dislocation expressed by the *Cumann na mBan*'s Ghosts was a cross-border phenomenon: 'Our country, Ireland, has been wiped off the face of the map. In its stead we are misrepresented by the "The Irish Free State" and "Northern Ireland"'.[21] Peter Leary's *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border 1922-1972* (2016) insists that partition was 'neither the most desired nor most readily envisioned outcome of any of the Irish parties to the conflicts that preceded its implementation. With the United Kingdom, Ireland, and even Ulster all divided, no previously "imagined community" was left intact'. Leary's study of the representations made to the Boundary Commission by border residents, who were predominantly employed in the agricultural rather than the industrial sector, argues that 'through the border, the concepts of place, past, and present they expressed were themselves reshaped and refreshed', and many suffered from the breakdown of local social, economic, and cultural networks.[22] Some of the most affected by partition, as documented by Leary in particular, had little agency in either an openly sectarian state north of the border or the religious and anti-republican strictures of the Irish Free State. Kirkland's analysis of the 'northern revival', for example, describes how the 'early proponents' of 'northernness' were 'cut adrift', eventually having 'to abandon it and instead threw in their lot with a concept of Irish nationalism shaped by Dublin'.[23]

The reshaping and refreshing of Irish national identity was culturally and politically centralised, mediated through the capitals of Dublin and Belfast. Both nationalists and the border residents were caught in a liminal zone on the margins of each state, a space rhetorically inhabited by many interest groups after partition. The reactionary character of the state's rhetoric often united the rural and the urban in a way which some of the more revolutionary strands of Irish nationalist rhetoric could not. This unity functioned even by simply referring to the map of Ulster for a sense of national and ontological stability, as an image of difference which required little explanation. Joe Cleary's study of partition argues that, contrary to the south, there was 'no major literary or cultural "revival" designed to create a new Ulster or Northern Irish identity'. Cleary's comparative study of partition defines the culture of the

[19] Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1983), 90.
[20] Anthony Carty, 'The Irish Constitution, International Law and The Northern Question: The Need for Radical Thinking', in Tim Murphy and Patrick Twomey, eds, *Ireland's Evolving Constitution 1937-1997* (London, 1997), 97-106: 104.
[21] Department of An Taoiseach Files, National Archives Ireland, S 5864A, qtd in Caoilfhionn Ní Bheacháin, 'Seeing Ghosts: Gothic Discourses and State Formation', *Eire-Ireland*, 47.3/4 (2012), 37–63: 53.
[22] Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-72* (Oxford, 2016), 51, 50-51.
[23] Kirkland, *Cathal O'Byrne*, 216.

northern state as one which 'identified with the protection of Protestantism and… the most reactionary elements of British state iconography'. This reactionism found the aforementioned aesthetics of *fin de siècle* unionism helpful in evoking the

> contrast between a vulgar but brashly energetic urban North and a more sleepy but easy-going rural South… [this was] little more than a derivative variation on the "Little England" paradigm of English identity that emerged in the late nineteenth-century. This paradigm – which depicted the rural counties of the south-east as the repository of authentic English values, uncorrupted by either the imperial ethos of London or the industrial blight of the North – was laminated onto the divided Irish landscape where it has retained considerable power as a cultural ratification of partition ever since.[24]

Although he takes a long-view of the legacy of cultural relations in the early twentieth century in Ireland, Cleary offers little discussion of the northern literature written in the decades before or after partition in his study. This literature recorded the profound impact that partition had on Irish cultural production, and the deep-rooted sense of change that it engendered in the inhabitants of the northern state. The literature of the north was also not necessarily as dichotomous as the new official cultural outputs of the state, which, in any case, as Jennifer Todd and Joseph Ruane argue, 'was pluralist and inclusive in respect of Protestant differences and exclusionary with respect to the Catholic minority'.[25]

Official culture and historiography

The argument that a Belfast parliament would be more economically suited to govern the north was certainly in question by the 1930s. During this decade the economic foundations of the state were subject to heavy pressures arising from the world depression. As Thomas Barlett states,

> the unionist government proved to be remarkably complacent in the 1920s and 1930s. By just about every measurement available… Northern Ireland, of all the regions in the United Kingdom, regularly and depressingly topped the list or came out bottom in the years up to the outbreak of the Second World War.[26]

Terence Brown argues that quite apart from the pervasive deprivation which is described by Bartlett, there was 'no cultural policy whatsoever other than, through its Department of Education, maintaining a curriculum of indisputably British complexion in the primary and secondary schools'.[27] But in the years after partition, literature responded to the state's

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[24] Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and The Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, 2001), 68.
[25] Joseph Ruane and Jennifer Todd, *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge, 1996), 179.
[26] Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, 2010), 436.
[27] Terence Brown, 'The Cultural Issue in Northern Ireland', in Dermot Keogh and Michael H. Haltzel, eds, *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge, 1994), 160-72: 160.

construction of northern exceptionalism. Binary constructs were consistently evident in the general visual culture of both state publications and a series of unionist histories like F. Frankfurt Moore's *The Truth About Ulster*, published in 1914, Herbert Moore Pim's *Unconquerable Ulster* in 1919, or James Logan's *Ulster in the X-Rays* in 1922. The emphasis placed in these histories on 'character' often reified 'the north'. Mary Burgess comments that the unionist spatial imaginary constructed by these histories was 'decidedly unstable, leading to a curious insecurity in the crucial marriage between unionist interpretations of history and the geography of the north of Ireland'. In the face of this insecurity, these writings conferred upon the six county statelet 'a pedigree of antiquity stretching back to the fifteenth century, [making] it identical with a new version of "Ulster", now a six-county, not a nine-county, province'.[28] Read together, these histories offered instead a kind of 'after history' in which the border was natural, inevitable, and perhaps most crucially, irremovable.

Burgess considers J. C. Beckett's 1952 statement as the apotheosis of this long campaign: 'the real partition of Ireland is not on the map but in the minds of men'.[29] If anything, the cultural output of the unionist state, and sympathetic historians and writers, amounted to a concerted effort to emplace the map into the minds of men as an emblem of identity rather than vice versa. This often involved transparent acts of geographic fabrication. A sense of territorial anxiety was certainly a driving motivation for the northern state's contribution to the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, which was perhaps their most prominent self-representation in these years. According to the Exhibition's official guide, the most striking aspect of their Ulster Pavilion was a 'huge diagrammatic map' of the state 'upon which the distribution of industries, the locality of pleasure resorts, railway and steamer routes [were] lit electrically in turn'.[30] This display connected with the aforementioned historiography which was sympathetic to the state, as a direct response to growing fears about how governmental bias towards the capital city might prove harmful to the ongoing border dispute: a senior government figure deemed it 'an opportunity of stressing interests other than those of Belfast'.[31] Here, the imperatives of territory were second to the expression of an industrial progress which was interchangeable with the identity of the state. That the northern delegates also facilitated an organised tour of the contested border region for willing British journalists again underlines the state's fascination with their external perception.[32] This international focus was key: the inward

[28] Mary Burgess, 'Mapping the Narrow Ground: Geography, History and Partition', *Field Day Review* 1 (2005), 121–32: 121, 122.
[29] J. C. Beckett, *A Short History of Ireland* (London, 1952), 192; qtd in Burgess, 'Mapping the Narrow Ground', 121.
[30] G.C. Lawrence, *Official Guide to the British Empire Exhibition* (London, 1924), 26.
[31] Cecil Litchfield to Lt. Colonel W.B. Spender, Secretary to the Cabinet of Northern Ireland, 20 September 1923, in The Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), Ministry of Commerce Files, CAB/9/F/14/1.
[32] James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland: 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2007), 338.

propagation of the map to the citizens of the new state complemented the outward projection of Ulster identity, a projection which sought to correct its received image with the unanswerable 'reality' of a map. The map, as what Benedict Anderson has called an 'infinitely reproducible series, available for transfer', was both a symbol of the state and a recurring representational strategy within its cultural superstructure. The state's official year book for 1927, for example, was advertised with the promise of that map along with 'seven plates and diagrams'.[33] In the six counties the development of the logo-map as an 'infinitely reproducible series, available for transfer to posters, official seals, letterheads, magazine and textbook covers, tablecloths, and hotel walls', established, in official terms, an identarian difference from the rest of the island.[34]

The map thus became the birth certificate of the new state, a birth which has been ambiguously located by Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon, and Henry Patterson 'in 1921 – or, more precisely, between that date and 1925, when the report of the Boundary Commission left the border as it was'.[35] The repeated reference to the logo-map removed this temporal uncertainty, leading to a peripheralisation of historical fact for political expedience. Pim's *Unconquerable Ulster* in particular made a startling discovery of 'a map of Ireland as it existed in the 12th century', which revealed a province which consisted of the 'famous six counties which Sir Edward Carson declared the Provisional Government would exclude from any Home Rule Act, *if we except Donegal and the County Louth*. Just take an atlas and follow the line which I shall describe'.[36] But, aside from such obvious grandstanding, more subtle tricks of location were also deployed in these histories. Gillian McIntosh has shown that the difference that the map represented was also consistently registered by a campaign of deeply politicised historiography in the 1920s. These practically interchangeable histories continually figured Catholics as peasants and Protestants as pragmatic modernisers, even in terms of where the narratives positioned their subjects:

> The leaderless natives... [were] mostly poor or broken men, received little except freedom to depart with their goods and chattels into any other part of the realm they pleased. Most of them did not do so, but, with characteristic Celtic love of the native place, stayed in their own districts occupying the less fertile land of the mountain or bog which had been excluded from the plantation. From this harsh soil they wrested a scanty subsistence, full of bitter memories and confronted daily with the sight of those whom they regarded as their supplanters.[37]

This passage exemplifies what Leary terms the 'areal differention' of 'religious and political

[33] St John Ervine, *Ulster* (Belfast, 1927), back matter.
[34] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 179.
[35] Paul Bew, Petter Gibbon and Henry Patterson, *Northern Ireland 1921-2001: Political Forces and Social Classes* (London, 2002), 13.
[36] Herbert Moore Pim, *Unconquerable Ulster* (Belfast, 1919), 45-46; emphasis mine.
[37] David Alfred Chart, *A History of Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1928), 19.

allegiance in the north of Ireland'.[38] McIntosh's contention that Ernest Hamilton, D.A. Chart, James Logan and Cyril Falls, a group of male unionist historians, 'created the template which subsequent protestant Northern Irish writers inherited and often echoed' is also borne out by this passage. Her description of these as an 'ideological backbone' for the 'civic rituals' of unionism in the 1930s and later 1940s can actually be extended not just to history but also literature, and the timeframe could also more capaciously include the 1920s.[39]

Chart's *A History of Northern Ireland* (1928) was explicit in opposing economic progress and historical memory, which was a recurring theme throughout unionist history and literature of the 1920s: 'the memory of the Irish peasant is very long; he has no sense of historical perspective; and the wrongs suffered by his ancestors centuries ago are to him as things of yesterday'.[40] A common stereotype of the Irish Catholic population was countered with a positive autostereotype of Ulster Protestants, figured in F. Frankfort Moore's terms as 'the attempt of the subject race to rebel against the ascendancy'.[41] This perception survives even in Terence Brown's 1985 *Field Day* Pamphlet, where he describes the opposite condition to Chart's: 'the northern Protestant… lives without much sense of the modes of thought and feeling that the written records of his ancestors represent'. Brown characterises this cultural amnesia as symptomatic of the way in which the Orange state fostered a reductive depiction of a unified Protestant tradition which obfuscated its long tradition of dissent, with the 'energy', 'skill', and 'quality of mind' demonstrable in nineteenth-century Presbyterian debates contrasting sharply with what he called the 'extraordinarily debased level of political consciousness expressed by the Unionist party since the foundation of the northern Irish state until very recent times'.[42] This accusation of cultural impoverishment has been nuanced in recent years. For example, Connal Parr's examination of the northern Protestant working-class imagination in the twentieth century argues that its diversity has been a form of strength, and that the wider ignorance of the complex nature of Protestant culture in Ireland has led to an 'inaccurate, skewed vision of its history and potential'.[43] Perhaps one reason why this skewed vision has dominated is because in the first few years of the northern state's existence, commissioned artworks, literature, and histories were often dictated by the imperatives of consolidating the state, a condition exemplified by William Conor's mural *Ulster Past and Present* (1932). This mural depicted a vision of communitarian progress towards an industrial present away from a Celtic-Gaelic past. Like Chart's deliberate positioning, *Ulster Past and*

[38] Leary, *Unapproved Routes* 41.
[39] Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth-century Ireland* (Cork, 1999), 7.
[40] Chart, *Northern Ireland*, 19.
[41] F. Frankfort Moore, *The Truth About Ulster* (London, 1914), 14.
[42] *Terence Brown, The Whole Protestant Community*: *The Making of a Historical Myth* (Derry, 1985), 20.
[43] Connal Parr, *Inventing the Myth: Political Passions and the Ulster Protestant Imagination* (Oxford, 2017), 1.

Present marked a break from this ruralised past towards the future of industrial achievement, but it also maintained some form of continuity in its imaging of the pastoral Ulster countryside. As H.S. Morrison, in his social and cultural history *Modern Ulster Its Character, Customs, Politics, and Industries* (1920) claimed, '[t]he Belfast spinner, and the Ulster farmer, if they work in double harness as they are doing now, will form a combination hard to beat'.[44] The proximity of the hills to Belfast formed, for unionists, an aesthetic 'double harness' which demonstrated the mutual dependence that each had on the other.

Writing Partition

The consolidating imperatives of the state seemingly did not lead to a sustained campaign of imaginative literature. According to Norman Vance, unionist literature after partition offered only 'qualified literary praise of engineering and economic prowess', leaving 'little scope for romantic ruralism or superfine aestheticism'. Instead unionist literature in Ireland, before and after partition, was the almost sole purview 'industrialists, lawyers and soldiers'. In this stereotypical description, which discounts 'obvious aesthetic and political prejudices, derived from unionist mercantile philistinism, dourly practical unimaginative northerners and killjoy Calvinists suspicious of literature as of life itself', Vance insists that 'it has to be said that there are few obviously unionist literary figures of obvious genius'.[45] It could easily be said that there are few nationalist literary figures of obvious genius either, but in such analyses the subjectivity of obvious 'genius' is not permitted in the same way that their obvious political attachments are. Those who did achieve some form of success and critical acclaim in Britain during this period – Louis MacNeice and Forrest Reid being two prominent examples – are considered as having done so in the face of a general literary and cultural poverty in the six counties, and often with a literal or imaginative escape having been enacted. This is certainly the case in treatments of the elusive novelist Reid, who is considered by Graham Walker as living 'a world away from the Loyalist working-class clamour of the nearby ship-yards… mockingly indifferent'.[46] While Walker refers specifically here to Reid's reaction to Craigavon's funeral, the sense is that he has negated some kind of residency requirement to be considered 'unionist' proper, and urban experience inspires or even validates political sentiment. Joseph Tomelty complained that Reid's Belfast was 'so different to the Belfast of St. John Ervine and Michael

[44] H.S. Morrison, *Modern Ulster: Its Character, Customs, Politics, and Industries* (Belfast, 1920), 65.
[45] Norman Vance, 'The Problems of Unionist Literature: Macauley, Froude and Lawless', in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, eds, *Defenders of the Union: A Survey of British and Irish Unionism Since 1801* (London, 2001), 176-187: 177.
[46] Graham Walker, *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party: Protest, Pragmatism and Pessimism* (Manchester, 2004), 83.

McLaverty, that it almost ceases to be Belfast at all'.[47] Yet Reid has been illuminatingly considered by Eamonn Hughes as deploying a 'device of implicitly using Ulster landscape ... and yet dehistoricising it as the setting for his mythical world… much like the unionist myth of nurture from the land without guilt'.[48] In this reading, an obscurantist mythic depiction of 'the province' erases the recency of a separate Ulster identity. But rather than focusing, like Hughes, on the coded aesthetics of unionism in Reid's literature, this chapter examines those novels that were more explicitly inspired by the imperatives of identity formation after partition.

Eric Bulson's contention that 'acts of geographic imagining' are the means by which people 'construct social, ethnic, political and cultural boundaries' is illustrated not just by the process of boundary-drawing undertaken culturally in the first quarter of the century in Ireland, but also by subsequent criticism of that process.[49] While Clare O'Halloran's own study of southern attitudes towards the border, for example, argues that 'there was insufficient literary evidence for any major sense of public trauma over partition', more pause needs to be given to the context of the phenomenon of partition.[50] In her recent study *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel 1790-1829* (2011), Claire Connolly describes the Act of Union as 'not so much a substantial and undisputed fact sitting on the horizon of early nineteenth-century Irish expectations, as "an extreme political formula" that needs to be understood outside the "historiography of resistance and crisis"'. Thus, as she outlines, this demands an engagement with the Irish novel 'in all its complexity: there are Union novels, but they take their place alongside 1798 novels, Repeal novels and fictions of Catholic Emancipation'.[51] A similar recognition of partition's complexity is demanded here, and a consideration of partition not as a distinct trauma in itself but an aspect of the Irish revolutionary period, and indeed the First World War which shadowed that period. Northern novels written after partition do feature in more recent integrationist studies of the Irish novel by Derek Hand and Vance, but the general critical ignorance towards the northern novel between the wars has often been explained, as in Vance, by way of its irrelevance, incompetence, or both. John Wilson Foster's work has been a notable exception, but even then his *Forces and Themes of Ulster Fiction* (1974) and the more recent *Irish Novels 1890-1940: New Bearings in Culture and Literature* (2009) have viewed the fictional output of 'Ulster' in terms of how novels lay outside the narratives of the supposedly Dublin-centric Revival. While many of these studies have enriched our understanding both of the Ulster Protestant tradition and the fate of the northern minority, the

[47] Joseph Tomelty, Review, *Irish Bookman* 1.10 (June 1947), 90, qtd in Kirkland, *Cathal O'Byrne*, 82.
[48] Eamonn Hughes, 'Ulsters of the Senses', *Fortnight* 306 (May 1992), 10–11: 11.
[49] Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000* (New York, 2007), 9.
[50] O'Halloran, *Partition*, xiv.
[51] Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel 1790-1829* (Cambridge, 2011), 32.

construction of this difference by the state and its allies is rarely mentioned in them. As the first chapter of this thesis contended, the literature of the Free State in the decade after partition has far too frequently been discussed in relation to state control, particularly in terms of its policy on Irish language, morality, and censorship. This frequent contrapuntal reading of state and literature has, though, rarely been directed northwards. For all the commentators who have critiqued the Free State's appropriation of the Western countryside, there has been little comment on the reification of industry, urbanity, and the city by Ulster unionists, nor the no less artificial creation of a 'northern' identity. These are dominant characteristics of the novels published around the time of partition, which connects them with the emerging political culture of the 1920s.

In that decade, a body of literary and historical texts were published which colluded with the interests, aims and objectives of a state dominated by one party, complicating any sense of an artistic rejection of the government. For the most part, the few novels written in the 1920s which attempt to function as the symbolic form of the emergent state were unable or even unwilling to turn the internal divisions of religious sectarianism into a vision of social cohesion. Instead, many of these texts coalesce with the history and rhetoric of the unionist party, and construct a symbolic, almost mythical significance to the journey – often a prodigal return – to the city of Belfast. The implications of this overemphasis on Belfast throughout the 1920s was that, even in its departures from the city, fiction largely remained within the six counties (the seemingly special case of Donegal excepted), and its city, unlike the dissident geography of fiction written in the south, was almost always Belfast. The ruin, poverty, and general urban decay with which Dublin is scarred during its post-partition fiction is counterpart in the northern novel to an accumulation of capital, industry, and construction. Belfast, even when scarcely perceptible, is an ever-encroaching social, cultural and political presence, and as writers emphasised, the city itself is dominated by a rural backdrop. With its accumulating size, burgeoning state, and flourishing industry, geographical confusion and/or dislocation is a constant presence in these novels, intended to elicit ineluctable recognition of Belfast as an outlier on the island of Ireland. Quite apart from subsuming these heavily politically charged descriptions of landscape into its narratives, the marriage of history and geography was often literally enacted by the plot of the northern novel. Northern novels frequently construct their relationship to contemporary notions of history and politics through their representation of the country and the city.

The Ideology of Ulster Realism

In previous chapters it has been demonstrated that in the Irish novel after partition, the urban is

repeatedly fused with what Richard Kirkland terms 'the non-negotiable, always objective "reality"'.[52] This process is also evident in the culture and politics of the north, also preserved in critical treatments of the post-partition period. For example, Clare O'Halloran's aforementioned study of partition and southern nationalism often reflects the binaries that it purports to critique. In particular, her characterisation of a general southern ignorance to an ambiguous northern realism offers the general impression that southern rhetoric is based upon some make-believe, imaginary ideological base as opposed to the industrial economic 'realities' of the north, the existence of which is 'the outcome of irreconcilable differences'.[53] Again, the discursive terms of Lyons dominate, with cultural differences taken as natural rather than artificial constructs. Thus in its focus on the south, O'Halloran's study overlooks how such stereotypes were freely adopted by northern unionists as an act of autostereotype which relied upon a construction of essentialist characteristics. Likewise, in his more recent commentary, John Wilson Foster contends that social, political, and economic realities are intrinsically linked to the predominance of fictional realism in writing from the north during the Revival. Arguing for partition as 'thinkable, feasible… even necessary', Foster again reframes Irish literary criticism in cartographic terms, claiming that a tradition of lower-middle-class fiction 'has hardly been charted on the Irish critical map, in part because of a reluctance on the part of many critics to read Ulster fiction closely if at all'. For Foster, the north had 'no part in the grand narrative being told by the Irish Literary Revival… the world of industrial and other clerks, shop assistants, and minor officials, was anomalous in Southern Irish fiction of our period'.[54] Even ignoring how this writes much of the fiction of the twenties and thirties out of existence, the implication remains that the south is rural and simplistic to the urban complexity of the north. As Seamus Deane's commentary on R.F. Foster's treatment of the 1916 rebellion in his *Modern Ireland* (1989) argues: 'The north can read the south; the south cannot read the north. Writing is the characteristic practice of the "incurably verbal" south and it is always… separate from pragmatic considerations and infused with what the north is good at'. For Deane, Foster posits the north as a place which 'is good at [reading]… the extrapolation from verbiage of the real message, a capacity that is characteristically pragmatic, hard-headed, rational. Thus the north and south are constituted both as politically and culturally distinct entities'.[55]

This paradigm is entirely applicable in the cultural representations of this period, with realism or reality often serving as ciphers for the urban as well as a new northern national

[52] Richard Kirkland, *Identity Parades: Northern Irish Culture and Dissident Subjects* (Oxford, 2002), 81.
[53] O'Halloran, *Partition,* 26.
[54] Foster, *Irish Novels*, 154-5.
[55] Deane, Seamus, 'Wherever Green is Read', in Máirín Ní Donnchadha and Theo Dorgan, eds, *Revising the Rising* (Derry, 1991), 91-105: 94.

identity that had appropriated it. The slippage between realism, reality, the city, and the north which appears across a range of studies needs to be relocated within the context of the first years of partition, since many of these terms appear generously throughout the state-sponsored histories and unionist representations published in those years. There is also an important literary corollary, because realism as a form began to be used by writers like St. John Ervine and Agnes Romilly White as a method of reiterating the propagation of difference that pervaded official representations in these years. Fredric Jameson's recent definition of the mode in *The Antinomies of Realism* (2013) offers some insight into how appropriate the adoption of a realism with anachronistic influences was for the given moment of state consolidation. His definition also serves as a warning of the realist novel's inadequacy as a piece of historical evidence:

> Realism… is a hybrid concept, in which an epistemological claim (for knowledge or truth) masquerades as an aesthetic ideal, with fatal consequences for both of these incommensurable dimensions. If it is social truth or knowledge we want from realism, we will soon find that what we get is ideology. If it is beauty or aesthetic satisfaction we are looking for, we will quickly find that we have to do with outdated styles or mere decoration (if not distraction). And if it is history we are looking for… then we are at once confronted with questions about the uses of the past and even the access to it which, as unanswerable as they may be, take us well beyond literature and theory and even seem to demand an engagement with our own present.[56]

And if it is some kind of political geography that we are looking for, then what we find is that a text is often inflected with the inherited geographies of its political outlook. For all the limitations of Jameson's critical description of realism and its ideological effects, it accurately describes some of the fiction written in the early years of the northern state.

The Loughsiders' *winter of discontent*

The fact that one of the first novels published about the north after partition – *The Loughsiders* (1924) by Shan F. Bullock – has been deemed a 'parable of the Plantation' by Patrick Maume gives a sense of ideology's overspill into literary production.[57] However, Maume's description is perhaps misleading considering the *fin de siècle* setting of the novel, which held a particular valence for the author as well as other writers in the aftermath of partition. The connections between the Irish agricultural cooperative pioneer Horace Plunkett and Bullock, who was born in Fermanagh but lived in England for almost all of his adult life, have been uncovered by Phillip Waller. Waller describes the Fermanagh author as, at one time, 'closely associated' with the mission of Plunkett to 'disseminate ideals of agrarian cooporatives and to avoid the partition

[56] Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism* (London, 2013), 6.
[57] Patrick Maume, 'Ulstermen of Letters: The Unionism of Frank Frankfort Moore, Shan Bullock, and St John Ervine', in Richard Engliah and Graham Walker, eds, *Unionism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1996), 63-80: 70.

of Ireland under Home Rule'. Perhaps the largest contribution of the writer to the political life of Ireland was his stint as a civil servant for the Irish Convention of 1917-18, a failed attempt to resolve the constitutional questions arising from the fraught decade of the 1910s chaired by Plunkett himself. Written in the years after this failure, Waller argues that *The Loughsiders* was Bullock's 'nostalgic last tale of the Ulster farming class'.[58] Its dedication certainly demonstrates Bullock's disappointment with the partition he worked to avoid but eventually 'accepted'.[59] The story is set near the turn of the century in order to remember a time before the First World War, revolution, and partition: 'To my brother Willie. This story of the Ireland we remember and love and hope to see again'. As such, the novel begins by deploying strategies of isolation in its description of the remote Loughsider community:

> It was so very still, very empty, not a fowl upon it, not a fish rising anywhere, the one sound above it a great turmoil of midges, engaged in heaven knows what prodigious labours. This brooding peace pervaded also the encircling countryside, cut it into its thousands of little green fields by throughs of tall green hedges, dotted with its white houses standing often in the shelter of poplars and orchards, beautiful always in sun or rain because of its wide undulating greenness lying there beneath its soft Irish sky. To shout seemed an outrage in such a place, to strive and cry a thing impossible.

As with this passage, *The Loughsiders* was one of the rare examples of an almost entirely rural northern novel of this era. This is figured in contrast to the environment of the readership for whom Bullock framed the narrative: 'You who go out for a day's sport on the Thames, suitably annoyed and laden with all kinds of expensive tackle, may well smile at this account'.[60] Bullock therefore offers a retreat into the peripheral landscape of Fermanagh for a London audience.

As an elaboration of a specifically defined locality, it also offered a complication to the spatial imaginary of unionism in Ulster. The categorisation of the novel as nostalgic by Waller overlooks the deeply satirical nature of the text as a partial homage to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, as well as its subtle dialogue with contemporary political life in Ireland. In looking back to a time of peace in the countryside, which is explicitly figured in direct opposition to Belfast and London in the novel, the novel quiets the recent violent history of Fermanagh during the revolutionary period. Peter Leary outlines how the kidnapping of forty-four unionists in Fermanagh and Tyrone, sporadic attacks on Fermanagh Army Barracks by the IRA, a shoot-out between the IRA and Special Constabulary on a train from Belfast to Enniskillen, as well as the shelling of Pettigo and Belleek with British Artillery, all occurred between February and June 1922 alone.[61] Yet while the narrative remains focused upon the turn of the century, and

[58] Philip Waller, *Writers, Readers, and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain 1870-1918* (Oxford, 2008), 139, 140.
[59] Maume, 'Ulstermen of Letters', 70.
[60] Shan F. Bullock, *The Loughsiders* (1924; Belfast, 2013), [front matter; no page number], 9, 8.
[61] Leary, *Unapproved Routes*, 8-10.

the action is set between this Loughside and a nearby town, there is a hint of the sectarian tensions of the capital which were still evident during the time of its publication. In particular, the introduction of James Richmond, a 'sergeant in the Royal Irish… now retired on pension because of injuries given by a cobblestone flung by Belfast rioters', offers Belfast as a countervailing space of violence to the peace of Fermanagh. This peace is repeatedly emphasised in the novel's descriptions of the landscape and its community:

> By nature and acquirement, almost of necessity, considering the circumstances of their remote, uneventful lives, the Loughsiders are wonderful talkers. Talk fills their life, colours and sweetens and preserves it from dreariness. And just because the happenings of their existence, there among the hills crowding back from the shore in eternal monotony, because these are so trivial and same, varied mostly by what the sea sends them across the mountain, therefore the Loughsiders not only find comfort in talk, they make an art of it.[62]

In its more anthropological passages such as this, the novel reads like the unionist cultural histories with which it was contemporaneous. The early description of an 'eternal monotony' which shadows the community of the novel hardly does much to recommend the narrative to its readership, but the repeated emphasis is on the dislocation of the Loughsiders: 'remote… among the hills'. Thus even the position of the Loughsider community offers a complication to the coherence of Leary's aforementioned 'areal differentiation'.

Unlike Chart's rejection of the remote hillsides, Bullock deploys the same imagery and location of the Irish peasantry which he used in much of his earlier works like *By Thrasna River: The Story of a Townland* (1895) and *Dan the Dollar* (1905). The simplicity of the villagers in *The Loughsiders* offers a contrast to the main character, Richard Jebb, who, in a similar way to Gloucester in the Shakespearean source-text, attempts to connive his neighbours into a beneficial marriage for himself. As such, Maume terms *The Loughsiders* 'a devastating portrait of a society where the young are frustrated and driven away, leaving the old to draw what comfort they can from the embers'.[63] But if it is also a parable of the plantation then this frustration and exile, as well as the recurring impoverishments of its imagined community, hardly suggest a healthy future for the northern state. Nor does the continual interference of the nefarious community figurehead, Jebb, who is described by Bullock as 'more and less than a typical Loughsider'. Jebb acts as the archetypal 'Ulsterman' in the novel, a figure who is

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[62] Bullock, *The Loughsiders*, 168, 133. The emphasis on talk also resembles, for example, the description of Paddy Flynn in 'The Teller of Tales', a story in W.B. Yeats's *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), as possessing 'the ancient simplicity and amplitude of imagination'. For Yeats, this tale-teller '[h]e did not live in a shrunken world, but knew of no less ample circumstance than did Homer himself'. W. B. Yeats, *Writing on Irish Folklore, Legend and Myth* ed. by Robert Welch (Harmondsworth, 1993), 110.

[63] Patrick Maume, 'Discovering Shan Bullock', review of *The Awkward Squads and Selected Short Stories*, *Dublin Review of Books* 51 (March 2014).
<http://www.drb.ie/essays/discovering-shan-bullock> Accessed 9 August 2017.

respected by the community because of his 'experience and the knowledge it brought'. He is described in anthropological terms as one of the 'dark, sallow breed which keeps the world going: a true Northerner, a Protestant of standing and character. His eyes had depths of shrewdness and contriving. He passed for a knowledgeable man'. The knowledge and experience which the narrator emphasises is mostly of the landscape as well as his community's activities: 'Such knowledge had Richard that he could tell you not only who lived in all those white houses, but their history and affairs also'. Jebb's archetypal function is also strengthened by his having returned from the cities of America to live on the secluded shore of Lough Erne, where he could have been 'owner of ten thousand acres by now! And here he was wasting his life on twenty acres of poor land!'. With his knowledge of both the rural and the urban social worlds, the action of the novel is effectively driven by Jebb's manipulation of his neighbours: 'Ye know nothing about machines in this country. America's the place for them'. Thus his perceptions of the Fermanagh countryside and American cities do not just frame the narrative in which he is a protagonist. They also frame the community itself, locating the novel within a global context of industrialisation.

This context is revealed in one episode later in the novel, when Jebb exploits his knowledgable status to entice his neighbour Sam Nixon towards New York, a place with 'houses up to the sky an' shops that will dazzle your eyes. Millions crowdin' the streets. Plenty to eat an' drink. Plenty o' work. Plenty o' money'.[64] The golden memory of an urban past being invoked in this rural setting corresponds to the sense of Belfast as a ruralised city, and the co-existence of these, along with the link to America, express a peculiarly Ulster sensibility, the double harness of H.S. Morrison. As his interior thoughts are gradually revealed by the novel, Jebb's attempts to resolve the hardship which his neighbours the Nixons face after having lost their patriarch Henry and their land going to rack and ruin as a consequence. Though he publicly claims this interference as an act of neighbourly paternalism, it is achieved for his own personal gain. Jebb's rejection by the Nixons' eldest daughter Rachel, and subsequent manipulation of events to marry Nixon's petty criminal widow, Ruth, as well as reworking *Richard III*, could be read as the metaphor for a one-religion state. After all, he takes over a farm that John Wilson Foster has termed 'the ultimate of the Protestantising of the land… a model of snugness, tidiness and modest prosperity'.[65] This is even more pointed when considering that *The Loughsiders* is positioned along a Fermanagh-Cavan border, a border which was at once a newly international one and also in the process of being redrawn by the Boundary Commission. The rural economy of the farm life and the close-knit Protestant community of the novel thus seem to form a

[64] Bullock, *The Loughsiders*, 120, 9, 11, 7, 121, 148.
[65] John Wilson Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (Dublin, 1974), 34.

microcosm for the ideal state in every respect except for the fate of its youth. Indeed that Rachel, his step-daughter by the end of the novel, marries the retired constable from Belfast, suggests the different strands of unionism forming a marriage of convenience and practicality, the country and the city in tandem. In a novel set at the turn of the century, the resolution of the marriage plot becomes an image of the future state, creating an historical perspective to the present-day government from the strategic position of the Cavan-Fermanagh border.

Mapping the Orange State in The Wayward Man

Though mostly based in England from the 1910s on, and a longtime drama critic for *The Observer,* the Belfast-born writer St. John Ervine was notorious for his conversion to fiercely partitionist attitudes after the creation of the northern state. Before partition, he was better known for his plays, for being an eyewitness of the Easter Rising as Abbey Stage Manager, and as a critical biographer of Edward Carson. Despite some early entanglements with Fabianism and Irish nationalism, he became a staunch conservative Unionist after losing a leg at Flanders in the First World War.[66] As such, his 1913 view that '[i]t is not a beautiful city…I have never met anyone who was not depressed by Belfast', was contradicted with vigour in his writings of the 1920s, which mythologised the growth of a separate northern consciousness and celebrated the industrial success of the north.[67] By 1926 he had already became noted for 'the venom in which he steeps his pen when writing of those Irish who do not enjoy the good fortune of having been born in Ulster'.[68] This charge referred to his introduction to *Ulster Songs and Ballads* by H. Richard Hayward, an introduction which had even taken pains to guard against this kind of criticism by stating that: 'There are no real beliefs in Ireland (or were none, for reality is beginning to break into the Irish mind), and opinions about the north and the south are rarely related to fact: they are myths made by politicians'.[69] Ervine's recognition that political myths are often foisted upon the border belies his conspicuous politicisation of Ireland's constitutional geography after partition. As such, his novels have stood in for a record of actual experience for critics like John Wilson Foster. For Foster, Ervine along with Bullock 'cannot be accounted part of a literary revival that preferred romanticism to realism. Nor could the reality of the North of Ireland be accommodated by a cultural nationalism directed from Dublin'.[70] But this reading

[66] Parr, *Inventing the Myth*, 46-7.
[67] St John Ervine, 'The Return to Belfast', *The New* 14.4 (27 November 1913), 102-4: 103.
[68] W. D., 'Review: Ulster Songs and Ballads by H. Richard Hayward', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 15.57 (March 1926), 161-163: 162.
[69] St John Ervine, 'Foreword', *Ulster Songs and Ballads of the Town and Country* by H. Richard Heyward (Belfast, 1926), i-ix: vi.
[70] John Wilson Foster, *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival: A Changeling Art* (Dublin, 1987), 176.

uncritically follows the message of his novels, journalism, and travel writing, all of which demonstrated that his belief in the beauty of Ulster had a political foundation. His political beliefs were seldom hidden in his texts, which often restated partition as a division between a progressive urban middle-class of Ulster businessmen and a lazy, retrograde, rural south.

Ervine's valorisation of the north as opposed to the south was epitomised in 1949, when in his initially authorised biography of James Craig he claimed that 'the Ulster people were not, and are not, willing to turn away from a prominent partnership in a galaxy of nations to an introspective, obscurantist, Gaelic-speaking agricultural republic'.[71] In the tourist pamphlet and novel that he wrote in the 1920s, he attempted to explain the new state as a logical outcome of the differences in character in north and south. During this decade, Ervine was commissioned by the Ulster Tourist Association to write *Ulster* (1926, revised 1927), a booklet which attempted to rectify the image of the 'province' for a British and North American audience: 'the beauty of the… province is more than the mind can imagine. By some oddity of fate, Ulster is commonly considered by strangers to be an industrial province'. Like the diagrammatic map from the Empire Exhibition, intended to consolidate the border areas of the state, Belfast's deployment in opposition to the rural south by Unionist rhetoric is complicated by a social and economic reliance upon the countryside. The closeness of rural beauty to Belfast was an aestheticisation of such territorial claims: 'four miles or so from the high gantries that hang over the growing Atlantic liners, astound yourself… with the site of the Giant's Ring… as fine a rampart… as [you] will see anywhere'. This territorial emphasis was useful for a pamphlet written in the immediate aftermath of the birth of the state, for which maps were an icon of ontological security from which the individual could understand his place in the world. As the text describes the borderlands, it specifically seeks recourse to the map while queering the boundaries of the state: 'Take up the map and regard the province from the south of Fermanagh to the north of Donegal… Look at the map again and let the names of the seas and the lakes run along your tongue'. Ervine also namechecks the local history of colonial endeavour: 'The records of the sea are full of Ulster names, not only as builders of ships, but as captains and sailors'. The tourist guide's opening passages reinforce the city's rural past but colours the 'Ulsterman' with a progressive wanderlust which is, both in the context of the mapping of space undertaken in the pamphlet and across the rest of Ervine's polemical writings, oppositional to the south: 'Ulster is a small place in a small island, but it has taken an extraordinary part in the establishment of the British Empire and of the United States'.[72]

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[71] St John Ervine, *Craigavon: Ulsterman* (London, 1949), 249. Astonishingly, while it was commissioned by the northern state, Ervine's manuscript was disowned by the government before its publication as too belligerent towards the south; McIntosh, *The Force of Culture*, 148-52.

[72] Ervine, *Ulster* (Belfast, 1926), 3, 6, 9, 7, 6.

All of these heavily spatialised characteristics are in play in Ervine's novel *The Wayward Man* (1927), which was written at the same time as the tourist booklet. The novel is ostensibly a fictional analogue for the establishment of a 'permissible terrain' by the new state. In being stubborn, Protestant and from working-class, late Victorian Belfast, its protagonist Robert Dunwoody is the archetypal 'Ulsterman'. The novel inhabits a time period which, like *The Loughsiders*, bypasses recent political controversies for a comparatively more stable timeframe. Unlike Bullock's novel, however, *The Wayward Man* does not demonstrate any disenchantment with the partition of Ireland but attempts to backdate its social and cultural gestation, focusing on Belfast and its commercial and industrial growth before the First World War. Possessing many similarities to the visual and textual culture of Unionism in the 1920s, Ervine's novel consciously reflected a wider emphasis on the 'wondrous' growth of the city from humble beginnings. *The Wayward Man*'s portrait of the accumulation of wealth and status in late nineteenth-century Belfast also bypasses the economic hardship which beset the early 1920s to emphasise its most successful period. However, as in the state-sponsored tourist guide, there is also an eye on the rural surrounds of the city. Dunwoody's prodigal exile, from which the book derives its title, is actually initiated by an eerie encounter at the aforementioned Giant's Ring. Nicholas Allen has considered a later use of the same picturesque setting, in Glenn Patterson's *The Mill for Grinding Old People Young* (2012), as connecting the narrative with 'a deep time that extends beyond the social disruptions of nineteenth-century industrialisation'.[73] Ervine's novel, like Conor's aforementioned mural *Ulster Past and Present*, instead stages a symbolic turn away from the deep time embodied in the cromlech into the network of exchange that the sea offers in the imperial epoch of the novel's timeframe. The escapist appeal of the sea is established by the opening pages of *The Wayward Man*, in which a series of exotic geographical referents—Italy, Cuba, China, India—displace the reader's sense of the Ballymacarret which the novel initially purports to represent. Such displacement has a similar effect on the protagonist, who 'would open up his atlas and gaze at the boot-shaped map of Italy, with its heel in the Adriatic and its toe almost touching the rump of Sicily, and tell himself that it was next-door'.[74]

Apart from representing a secure model of authority, maps are also an important symbol throughout *The Wayward Man*. In the coda of the first section, his mother comes 'upon him studying maps and trawling rivers from their source to the sea… she found signs of his father in this map-reading and wished to remove them'.[75] The initial focus on a newly developing

[73] Nicholas Allen, 'Ireland, Literature, and the Coastal Imaginary', in Nicholas Allen, Nick Groom, and Jos Smith, eds, *Coastal Works: Culture of the Atlantic Edge* (Oxford, 2017), 61-76: 71.
[74] St. John Ervine, *The Wayward Man* (1927; London, 1936), 12, 12-14.
[75] Ervine, *Wayward Man*, 27.

Belfast gives way to satisfy Dunwoody's wanderlust, as he travels to places as far off as Glasgow, Australia, Africa, India and America, in one instance even embarking on a failed attempt to travel to the western seaboard of the United States from New York City. Dunwoody's expeditions are a dramatisation of what the tourist guide termed a 'pioneering and unquenchable spirit… which went everywhere', but reveal more about Belfast than the places he travels to.[76] The narrative arc is often a transparent effort to chart the 'Ulster' of the contemporary cultural and geographical histories onto the topography of the United States. The 'waywardness' of Dunwoody is, in this respect, not a retreat from his hometown, but a means by which both its picturesque setting and its industrial achievements can be tested against that of the wider world. In his travels, he constantly maps the Belfast of his memory to the rest of the world, comparing it, for example, with the treacherous Bay of Biscay: 'I've seen rougher water on the pond in the Ormeau Park'. Likewise, when he is imprisoned in the United States, he recalls visiting the Crumlin jail: 'This happy-go-lucky jail was a "Crumlin", too'.[77] The continual evocation of Belfast and its surrounds while Robert is abroad is in sharp contrast to the novel's outright refusal to describe any other of the various places he inhabits; foreign cities and towns are only social, civic or institutional experiences rather than visual ones. The escape and then return serves as a useful device in which to champion the virtues of Belfast.[78] When Robert returns to his flourishing hometown, he notes that '[t]here were changes in the city, little changes that he might not have noticed had he continued to live in it'.[79] The distance of both time and space constructs the point of view in nostalgic terms.

But there is also a sense of heritage to this journey. Robert's father, as Ervine earlier reveals, was a ship's captain 'drowned with his crew in the Eastern Pacific', whereas his mother came to the city from a moneyed family in the Ards Peninsula village of Donaghreagh, which is based on Donaghadee.[80] This Hardy-esque use of the fictional village-name 'Donaghreagh' for his mother's hometown creates a synecdoche for the rural past from which the growth of Belfast emerged. The marriage of two senses of history and geography thus gives Dunwoody a dual geographical inheritance, and his belated embrace of his home city is symbolised by his marriage to Brenda Carnduff, who is the most obvious anthropomorphism of the city. The

[76] Ervine, *Ulster*, 8.
[77] Ervine, *Wayward Man*, 148.
[78] This used the same strategy as F. Frankfort Moore's *Belfast Telegraph* columns of the early 1920s, which began with a return to the city of the author's youth: 'Some of the landmarks that I had known long ago I recognised without difficulty, but the old seamarks with which I had been familiar forty years before had disappeared… I seemed to have lost all my bearings and it was only when I lifted my eyes unto the hills and saw the Napoleonic profile of MacArt's Fort that I felt among old friends'. F. Frankfort Moore, *In Belfast by the Sea*, ed. Patrick Maume (Dublin, 2007), 11.
[79] Ervine, *Wayward Man*, 192.
[80] Ervine, *Wayward Man* 27, 31.

geographical dynamics of Ervine's marriages in *The Wayward Man* are different to the classically symbolic functions of Jane Austen's novels, which as Franco Moretti notices 'join together— "marry"—people *who belong to different counties*' as a means of consolidating the representation of a stable nation-state. But the 'new mobility' in English society that the works of Austen represented for Moretti is replaced in Ervine's novel with much more inward function.[81] Rather than a marriage between counties, the joining together of two people born on the same street, of the merchant sailor and businesswoman, becomes a device for consolidating the territory of the state. Brenda and his mother form the fictional representation of Belfast's past and future respectively, both being upwardly mobile, strongly Unionist, capitalist and with a stubbornly regionalist ethos. As both of these women state in the novel, they have never been to Dublin, and have no intention of going there—nor indeed, does the novel itself. Through this marriage-plot, *The Wayward Man* thus develops into a veneration of Belfast's progress to 'greatness' as observed through the eyes of Brenda, whose 'pride in Belfast became more and more a proclamation of its greatness'. This pride is almost a mantra: 'The biggest shipyard in the world was in Belfast. The biggest linen-mill in the world was in Belfast. The biggest tobacco factory in the world was in Belfast. The biggest ropeworks in the world was in Belfast!'.[82] Ervine attempts in the novel to resolve the contradictions between his protagonist's wanderlust and the growing industrial achievement of what seem like *The Wayward Man's* actual characters: the city of Belfast and the Ulster of the unionist imaginary.

The similarities between the descriptions of the landscape in the tourist guide suggest the novel as a powerful advertisement for both the city and the state. Perhaps unsurprisingly for two texts that were written almost simultaneously, those passages which map the Ulster landscape are often interchangeable with the intensely detailed tourist pamphlet. The Irish action of the novel takes place almost entirely in the same small section of Antrim and North Down which the earlier booklet focused upon as an attractive tourist site. When Robert and Brenda visit the north coast on their honeymoon in the novel, the passage reads more like a travel agent's brochure: 'the game of golf, which was becoming very popular, attracted a nice class of people to the town. She had read somewhere that the links in Portrush were the finest in the world'. These passages resemble invitations to appreciate the cultural and economic genesis of the northern state, rather than significant plot developments. But they also suggest the collapse of Brenda's character into a mouthpiece for unionist sentiment. A seemingly innocuous statement she makes during their honeymoon anticipates the emergence of a set piece later in the novel: 'I've got our future all mapped out for us'. Where this initially seems to be

[81] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London, 1999), 14; Moretti's emphasis.
[82] Ervine, *The Wayward Man*, 263.

an innocuous verb, Brenda quickly thereafter reveals her ambition to 'own a shop in every town in the North', a dream which is propagated by a strikingly familiar document:

> She produced a map of Ulster. Red rings were drawn around a number of towns; Ballymena, Larne, Portrush, Coleraine, Derry, Letterkenny, Strabane, Enniskillen, Omagh, Dungannon, Cookstown, Newry, Portadown, Lurgan, Armagh, Newtownards, Holywood and Bangor; in each of which, within five year's time, she said, the name of "DUNWOODY" would flash from a signboard.

Like the northern state itself, the genesis of this map is in commercial gain. Letterkenny forms something of a red herring here, but as with the mutable geography of the Tourist Guide the more noticeable absences are the towns of Cavan and Monaghan. Instead Robert is sent by Brenda to expand their business along the lines of this map, travelling by rail to 'every town in Ulster'.[83]

While Ervine was often happy to assert the seemingly inherent characteristics of the 'rural' and the 'urban' as they applied to the two states in Ireland, he was equally happy to ignore these boundaries in his fiction as in his tourist writing. As John Wilson Foster states, '[t]he love which Belfast Protestants have for their city, a love which informs Ervine's novels, is mingled with pride in the industrial achievements of Belfast'.[84] It is also mingled in *The Wayward Man* with a developing hatred of the south, since Brenda's emerging civic pride is strengthened alongside her rejection of Dublin, as her goal of establishing the business 'up and down the length of Ireland' quickly devolves into a marked 'contempt for the Southern Irish'. The southern city is given an anthropological gloss in her rejection of the south, as what she terms 'a poor-plucked sort of place full of clever-clever, talky-talky fellows, none of whom would earn ninepence a week in any city inhabited by real people'.[85] This declaration, comparing Belfast and Dublin rather than neighbouring towns, is almost indistinguishable from what James Logan's contemporary study *Ulster in the X-rays* perceived as a binary relationship between the two cities:

> Dublin is Nationalist, fond of social life, pleasure-loving, gay, book-reading with many would-be "Intellectuals" and long haired dreamers, some of them literary lights, but many only posing; Belfast is Unionist, hard-working, progressive, with no blue blood or pretensions, with plenty of horny hands and hard knuckles.[86]

Similarly to the southern critiques of the failure of the state to live up to its utopian promises, Logan's study was furnished with damning accounts of the Dublin slums in comparison to

[83] Ervine, *The Wayward Man*, 229, 222, 244, 261.
[84] John Wilson Foster, *Irish Novels 1890-1940: New Bearings in Culture and Literature* (London, 2009), 154.
[85] Ervine, *The Wayward Man*, 244, 263.
[86] James Logan, *Ulster in the X-rays* (London, 1922), 61.

Belfast in a chapter which was unsubtly entitled 'Dublin V. Belfast'. The ending of *The Wayward Man*, in which Robert returns to the sea after fathering an illegitimate child, could be read as a rejection of these achievements for the wider world. But interpreted in another way, it actually serves the same purpose as the map itself, since this infidelity is with a member of his own community, and in leaving Belfast, Robert ostensibly becomes an ambassador for the same claim upon a place in world history which the *Ulster* pamphlet stakes.

Urbanisation in Gape Row

While Ervine's influence in this era seems to have been ignored in the years since, he was an important mentor and supporter of other northern writers. He was also a persuasive recommender to English publishers, an influence which was certainly useful for Agnes Romilly White, who sent the manuscript of her debut novel to him in 1934. She received the following typically abrasive, yet positive reply:

> I constantly receive letters in which I am told that the writer is an Ulsterman or an Ulsterwoman and that the writer is sure this fact will enlist my sympathy for his or her work. It doesn't. There are at least a million Ulstermen and women and I cannot feel a burning interest in all of them, nor do I think myself under any obligation to fall into an ecstasy every time they take a pen in their hands or write a story in which somebody says "Och, och anee!". You will understand, therefore, the feeling of reluctance with which I opened your novel and began to read it. Frankly, I did not want to read it… But in a couple of minutes nothing on God's earth would have kept me from reading it… I congratulate you on a fine piece of work which makes me feel that you may write the great Ulster novel which has yet to be written.[87]

This novel, entitled *Gape Row* (1934), attempts to model a distinct 'Ulster' identity using the same terms of negotiation which adhered in *The Wayward Man*, and similarly beginning its historical timeframe at the turn of the twentieth century. It was also a moderate success at the time, with Ervine complaining to White that 'one lamentable result' of his endorsement and her success was 'that every person in Ulster who has ever put pen to paper, now considers it is my duty to read his manuscript, find a publisher for him, and generally make a fortune'.[88]

Although she was in her sixties at the time of *Gape Row*'s publication, little is known about White in comparison to Ervine and Bullock. Her papers at Trinity College Dublin, where her brother H. O. White was a Professor in the School of English, demonstrate that her poetry and short stories were published in a range of minor British magazines, and parish newsletters in Belfast with little success before her breakthrough later in life. She had also corresponded

[87] St John Ervine to Agnes Romilly White, 9 April 1934, Trinity College Dublin (hereafter TCD), Agnes Romilly White Papers, TCD MS 3773 / 53.
[88] St John Ervine to Agnes Romilly White, 29 July 1935, TCD, White Papers, TCD MS 3773 / 37.

with the Unionist MP Henry Wilson about a political matter concerning Belfast slightly over a year before his assassination by the IRA, which ignited the Irish Civil War.[89] White's almost spectral presence in these archives, which mostly contain correspondence addressed to her and with little trace of her own communications to these men, vaguely places her as a Church of Ireland parishioner located for much of her life in Belfast. *Gape Row*, however, fleshes out some of her political opinions more fully, especially when considered alongside the developing visual culture of the state and in view of Ervine as an exemplar for the older woman author. In *Gape Row*, White deploys similar tricks of location to *The Wayward Man*. The opening passages locate its titular community in a place where it is able to see **'**with one well-trained eye all that it wanted to see', namely 'the traffic from the city pass through on its way into the quiet, distant spaces of the country'. Only a few pages later, as the youthful villagers Ann and Johnny make 'their untroubled way up the Holywood hills', they are given the perfect vantage point to view, and therefore totalise, the city of Belfast and the wider territory of the state. This establishes the adhering terms of geographical representation for the majority of the novel:

> On their left, Belfast lay at the foot of the mountains hidden in blue-grey smoke. They saw the spires of churches and mill chimneys rising through it, and the funnels of ships in the great shipyards, and they heard the low, musical hum of the city and the lark's song overhead.
>
> Down below them in one of the loveliest valleys in Ulster were farm-houses set in orchards and lawns, and neat little cottages and wooded slops; and green cornfields and grasslands, and meadows filled with ripening hay.

This general description embeds a set of values in the 'musical hum' of Belfast and the 'loveliest valley' of farm-houses and 'ripening' meadows, a clear double harness of the rural and urban. However, this precipitates a series of specifically chosen geographical referents: 'Slieve Donard', 'the Castlereagh hills', 'the Mourne Mountains', 'Belfast Lough… [and] the mountains beyond it covered with delicious shadows and shadow-dimples', 'the coast-line stretch[ing] away to Blackhead', and finally 'Holywood', a place which is 'tucked cosily under the hill'.[90] White thus effectively reproduces Belfast and its margins a totalised image to be consumed by the reader, just as much as it would have been in the postcards and cigarette packets of the era.

This heavy-handed early episode frames *Gape Row* within the landscape and historical context of the state, with the narrative beginning, like *The Loughsiders* and *The Wayward Man*, in what histories of the period constructed as its nascence. The vantage point of the Holywood Hills offers a more cohesive means of assimilating the territory into the vision of the novel, even if the loneliness, isolation, and quarrels of the Gape Row inhabitants are continual themes.

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[89] Henry Wilson to Agnes Romilly White, 15 December 1920, TCD, White Papers, TCD MS 3773 / 60 & 61.
[90] Agnes Romilly White, *Gape Row* (1934; Belfast, 1951), 5-6, 16, 16, 16-7.

Norman Vance describes the 'sensitive pastoral awareness of poverty and bereavement' which characterises White's 'novels of village life near the city'. What he considers as the 'alternative to Irish Ireland' which White's regionalist novels represent is most obviously signposted by the proximity of the city to the village community in *Gape Row*, a proximity which both the plot and the dialogue do much to emphasise in these initial passages.[91] There is a tangible pastoral beauty to the County Down countryside which is heightened on the villagers' return from the city: 'Ann loved to come home out of the city with its harsh clamours and noises… enveloped in quietness and cool airs and dim green lights'. The aspirational social mobility of the young villagers is signposted by the potential move from Gape Row to the suburbs of East Belfast, to an 'unpretentious little villa, exactly like every other little villa in a certain suburb on the outskirts of the City'. By contrast, the city-centre streets are 'dirty and crowded with workmen and workwomen hurrying home', an arena where the villager Ann learns 'horrid Belfast expressions' which she tries to forget in Dundonald. This is clear when the eldest member of the Gape Row community, the ailing Jinnana, tells her neighbours her Belfast backstory: 'I fretted after the quietness of the field… You think long all the time in the town, and sure here you'd never be thinking long and the young things growin' round you in the fields'.[92] This is only a diverted longing for the land, characteristic of any 'Irish Ireland' depiction of the country and the city. Indeed, the fact that the titular location was actually in the process of being demolished by the novel's publication suggests the nostalgic overtones of its representation.

As with *The Loughsiders*, this nostalgic mood seems to be partially in service of a political message. The actual process of urbanisation deeply affects the sense of threat that the urban poses to the village life, and so naturally the younger inhabitants of the 'Row' are the most attracted to the lure of the provincial capital, the 'Bohemian life [they are] accustomed to in town'. These youths are gradually urbanised themselves, exposed to the social and cultural attachments of the city. *Gape Row*'s Belfast, fresh from its accession to city status, is an ambivalently registered place of wealth and employment, but also violence and destitution. But the city is mostly a positive space, as another trip to the hills allows Mrs. Murphy, a central character of the novel, to develop a sense of an emerging civic consciousness:

> From this height she could see the city lying in the circle of its violet mountains, the great gantries standing in the Queen's Island which at a distance looked like delicate lace-work, the long lines of suburban villas running out into the fields, the dull silver of the lough.

This passage encapsulates the crucial difference between an 'Irish Ireland' sense of the city as

[91] Norman Vance, 'Region, Realism and Reaction, 1922-1972', in John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2006), 153-170: 156.
[92] White, *Gape Row*, 42, 40, 70, 87.

a departure from the country, and the 'British-Ulster' one which aestheticises the growth of the city of Belfast as an ineluctable destiny. The historical setting of the novel in the 1900s and 1910s means that the reader is aware of the social, cultural, and political consequences of this ever-expanding urban centre, offering urbanisation as a form of identity formation. These set pieces are not just glosses on the community of the novel, since they effectively symbolise the emergence of the northern state as viewed by the residents of Gape Row.

Two significant disruptions to the mostly stable geography of the novel are engendered by the marriage-plot, as the brothers Andy John and Michael are put in competition for the hand of Mary Murphy. One disruptive element is the lure of the returned emigrant, Andy John, a plot development which offers a renewed sense of historical consciousness for the new state. There is more than a hint of irony to this, with Andy John telling 'fairy-like tales of men who had risen from humble beginnings to positions of wealth and power in the States', offering a more derisive view of the attachments to America than *The Loughsiders* and *The Wayward Man*.[93] The contempt with which this Ulster Horatio Alger myth is coloured does not extend, however, to the counterpart myth of his brother Michael, who goes off to train as a soldier in Dublin for the First World War. This move is conspicuously dramatised in detail by White as journey from the comforts of Ulster to the darkness of the south:

> As the Dublin train moved out into the country he turned away, and looked steadily out of the window… he was glad when they left the patchiness of suburbs behind, and the long, level fields, the hills rising and falling, and later, the high, blue outlines of the Louth mountains, came into view. *Soon the fields took a grimmer loo*k, and the stone ditches replaced the autumn hedge. The mountains came nearer, and the train swung out through the Gates of the North. The clouds grew darker and lower, and great, heavy shadows lay along the fields. In five minutes, a thick storm of rain was beating against the windows, *and the view was blotted out*.

This passage is largely dictated by pathetic fallacy: the grey skies of a soon-to-be Republic blotting out the possibility of natural beauty within the work of 'realism'. As the speed of the train refuses any view of 'Malahide' or 'Clontarf', Michael makes his way to the 'crowded' Amiens Street station, 'out into a dirty, dismal looking street'. The ugliness of Dublin is at odds with Michael's Gatsby-esque look over 'the dim, silver country—his own country, his own fields' just before he leaves for the War. The almost predestined geographical and meteorological peculiarity to the 'north' in the above passage is compounded by the social experience of Michael in Dublin; he begins to identify his 'northern upbringing' and his 'northern caution'. This is foreshadowed by an earlier passage in which the only Catholic villager leaves the Row, as 'Pat McGrath' departs to live his retirement 'with the married

[93] White, *Gape Row*, 124, 140, 60.

daughter that lives in a big way in the County Cork'.[94]

The blotting out of the south in the train passage is complemented by the representation of Dublin as a site in which the villager experiences alienation, with the train view denying the possibility of totalisation that the vantage point of the Holywood Hills offers for Belfast. Michael's inevitable return to Belfast and Gape Row, much like Robert Dunwoody's, comes as 'a relief to him', once again invoking an individually perceived geography of difference which affirms the sense of a separate Ulster identity. This relief is signposted primarily by the sight of Cavehill from the city centre. Like Frank O'Connor's *The Saint and Mary Kate* and Ervine's *The Wayward Man*, *Gape Row*'s expanding geography is thus not a means by which Agnes Romilly White was able to widen her localised novel's context. Instead it reinforces the unionist-regionalist lens through which the landscape of Ireland is treated. *Gape Row*'s descriptions of landscape also connect it with the partitionist histories written in the aftermath of the First World War, which constructed the war as a fundamental schism in the politics of the island. When, earlier in the novel, Mrs Murphy, 'getting mixed in her geography', calls Glasgow 'the dirtiest hole in Ireland', any confusion is cleared up at the novel's close by the exclusionary processes of the narrative. Indeed, as the narrator states, '[t]he war had come, and made everything simple'. Since there are little historical markers before the onset of the war, its disruption of the community is all the more devastating. Thus, by its end, *Gape Row* is an extended history and geography lesson which is clearly understood at the novel's close, with the war the *deus ex machina* which copperfastens the representation of space in the novel.[95] Michael's death at the Somme, the final act of the novel, not only enshrines a cartography of enclosure with a blood sacrifice, but in forming an act of fictional commemoration, blurs the border between reality and realism while simultaneously demarcating the border between north and south.

BBC Ulster and the Development of a Regional Identity in the 1930s

As a novel which did little to alter the representations of the 1920s, the appearance of *Gape Row* in the mid-1930s was against the grain of the development of a fictional critique of the state and its origins. In a wider sense, northern literature, history, and art eventually began to echo the divisions which were evident in an era of economic stagnation and general civil unrest. While one area in which the state was able to exert considerable control was the radio, during the 1930s regionalist impulses in broadcasting also came at a time when literature was being written from the geographical margins of the state. In his summary of the station's plans for the

[94] White, *Gape Row*, 229-30, 230-1, 225, 232, 239, 93; emphasis mine.
[95] White, *Gape Row*, 271, 20, 229.

forthcoming year on 30 December 1935, George Marshall, the BBC's Regional Director for 'Ulster', recognised that one of the station's flagship programs, *Provincial Journey*, seldom encroached upon the territories which the transmitter's signal could not reach. For Marshall, 'such places as Enniskillen, Omagh, and Coleraine' were to be avoided, since 'there are few things more irritating than for the people of the district to know that their countrymen are broadcasting, and to be unable to hear them'. The broadcaster planned to gradually 'reach out' in the direction of these marginalised places, with feature programmes and talks which would

> definitely focus on the province as a whole… [o]n those districts in the west which have had so little representation up to the present, and we shall try to present to you the lore and the remote existence of those in the Province who live in such places as the Sperrin Mountains and Rathlin Island, which have remained so little affected by the march of industrialism.[96]

As Rex Cathcart notes, after the Lisnagarvey transmitter was opened in 1936, *Provincial Journey* 'went to Portrush, Strabane, Newry, Cushendall and other towns previously outside the range of the Belfast signal'. This was followed by another series, *Village Opinion*, in which '[a]ccounts of the… lives and times by the inhabitants of Fintona, Feeny and other small settlements were relayed'.[97] This was a significant development in the formation of a separate identity, projecting the purity of village life onto the entire region and in the process claiming it for the state in the same way as the *Irish Press* column of Aodh de Blácam. These regionalist moves were in the context of a society which Lillis O'Laoire describes as 'acutely sensitive to the least tweaking of political and cultural identities on the airwaves'.[98]

The literature of this society in the late 1930s had also become acutely sensitive to the ontological importance of geography, with novels strategically positioned to enact a sense of dislocation from the emergent state's territory. The narrative march of Belfast's wondrous growth was checked by a deconstruction of the centre in the novel, which was analogous to O'Faoláin and O'Connor's repudiation of the ruralist ideology of the Free State. While this was not in as coherent or coordinated a fashion as these ex-comrades and writers, the marginal spaces of the six counties were already beginning to be mapped in literature. Vivian Mercier's exclusionary description of a 'fictional map of Ireland' during the 1920s as 'like a jigsaw piece abandoned by an impatient child' becomes much more complicated in this era:

> The islands off the western and northern coasts are filled in, as we have seen, along with bits of the adjacent mainland… Belfast, pending the arrival of Michael McLaverty, offers us only a glimpse of its suburbs as a background to

[96] George Marshall, qtd in Rex Cathcart, *The Most Contrary Region: The B.B.C. in Northern Ireland 1924-1984* (Belfast, 1984), 73.
[97] Cathcart, *Contrary Region,* 77.
[98] Lillis O'Laoire, 'Irish Music', in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), 267-283: 277.

> the psychological subtleties of Forrest Reid. The rest of Ireland—with the exception of the cities of Cork and Limerick, as we shall see—offers us a farm here, a country house there, and no villages or towns at all except those of Brinsley McNamara. Realism goes hand-in-hand with regionalism, but only certain regions seem to have appeal for the novelist or storyteller.[99]

What Marshall called 'the lore and the remote existence' of spaces like Rathlin Island, putatively 'unaffected by the march of industrialism', were represented by the debut novels of Olga Fielden and Michael McLaverty. Just as the ink had dried on the border in print which much of the fiction written in the first decade of the northern state represented, the socially, cultural and economically peripheral spaces of the imagined 'Ulster' were brought to bear on the centre by these novels.

Displacement from the state in Island Story

In direct contrast to how the incursion of history simplifies both the plot and the spatial narratives of *Gape Row*, another largely forgotten novel, Olga Fielden's *Island Story* (1933), portrays the life of villagers on Rathlin Island (here 'Rathanheena') as being completely disinterested in political developments. Again, little is known about Fielden, a Queen's University Belfast graduate, apart from her involvement as an actor, writer, and producer of drama in Belfast for the BBC and later the Abbey in Dublin. She did have some brief successful as a novelist with *Island Story* and *Stress* (1936), both of which were published in the 1930s. In the former, her debut novel, the late contextualisation of White's debut novel within a First World War milieu is contrasted by an indifference to any historical event on the part of the titular islanders. The World War, the Irish Revolution, and partition are all equally irrelevant to the day-to-day life of her islanders:

> As a war the catastrophe of 1914 meant nothing to the islanders. It had no connection with the realities of life as they knew them, the weather, the price of food stuff, cattle and crops, or the questions of seedtime and harvest… The minds of her people, sunk through generations in hard physical toil on an isolated island, had neither the power nor the vision to enter into sufferings which left them unscathed. Lists of wounded and killed and missing were so much waste news-space that would better have been devoted to the local market or the price of pigs.

Unlike *Gape Row*, *Island Story* is a kind of anti-Ulster novel, with the narrative subverting many of the inherited clichés that adhered in the 1920s. Fielden rewrites Ervine's archetype of the Ulster seafarer with the 'strapping, wayward daughter' Jane M'Cormack, who possesses 'her father's blood' which 'urge[s] her to see more of the world than the sea-girt acres of Rathnaheena'. The resemblances to Ervine's narrative are striking, with McCormack's father

[99] Vivian Mercier, 'Literature in English, 1921–84', in J.R. Hill, ed., *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VII* (Oxford, 2003), 487–537: 495.

also dying at sea 'in the terrible fatality of the S.S. *Downshire* which left one port for another and was never heard of again'. Jane, like Robert Dunwoody, satisfies her wanderlust by heading to Glasgow, which 'sounded more homely perhaps than Liverpool or London, or Buenos Aires where her father used to sail in his ship… it was easier to get to than the others for a boat sailed there direct every evening from Blackfoot'.[100] Thus many of the typical themes and motifs which were present in the previous novels discussed within this chapter are undercut.

Rather than being in service of a nationalist political statement, *Island Story* disavows any relation to the landmass of Ireland generally. However, Rathnaheena ironically fits Nicholas Allen's description of Ireland as 'an island whose imaginative connections are with the water that surrounds it, rather than with the landmasses about it'.[101] This widespread political disconnection is typified in the islanders' response to the First World War, for which 'there was nothing more to it than a spectacle. It was a happening with which they had no personal connection whatsoever'. Neither does the revolutionary period in Ireland encroach significantly on their lives. In fact, the event actually makes the island a popular attraction for tourists:

> the thought of a night's crossing of the Irish Sea brought fear, and a desire to find pleasure in a safer place… In the south too the threat of Civil War bursting into open rebellion in the terrible Easter of 1916 forbade indulgence in the loveliness of Southern Ireland. Heroic souls with no one dependent on them might brave the bullets of the south or the hidden terrors of the deep, but mothers with families pining for sea breezes, dare not face the possibilities that war had brought so near.

This is not so much a reinforcement of partition as a further disavowal of any political narrative at all. Unlike Peadar O'Donnell's fiction, or the Blasket Island narratives, the island's isolation does not engender a centrality to identity construction but a disconnection from it, and its inhabitants are far more connected to the merchant trade: 'Most of the island's young manhood was already at sea with the merchant service'. The islanders are conspicuously modern, exploiting their newfound tourist hotspot status to expand their houses so 'that one more household from the city might squeeze into a cottage and pay a ridiculous price for the privilege'. The islanders capitalise upon the city which was such a formative influence on the Ulster identity, and like Jane they do not passively suffer dislocation profit from it. The early chapters narrate a gradual form of modernisation, as things 'unknown in Rathnaheena' arrive in the form of a shop, advertisements, a tea-house and dance floor, and motor-vehicles: 'A fleet of Ford cars for hire crowded in upon her narrow roads, and an enterprising County Council planed her winding ways down to a foot-rule and made crooked paths straight'.[102] Like White's

[100] Olga Fielden, *Island Story* (London, 1933), 48, 29, 28, 38.
[101] Allen, 'Coastal Imaginary', 61.
[102] Fielden, *Island Story*, 49, 52-3, 49, 54, 59-60.

novel, the urbanisation of the peripheral 'rural' space is an ineluctable reality, but this is an á la carte arrangement made to suit the Rathnaheena community.

The marriage plot of the novel enacts a further tie between two rival senses of community and geography in the wedding between the younger Jim Cole—descended from inhabitants of the island—and Jane. For Jim, this is a marriage as much to his wife as to the Rathnaheena with which the novel takes great pains to identify her. As the narrator glosses this marriage, feminising the island: '[Rathnaheena] had cast her spell upon him… It was green and bracing and clean, something he had never believed in, which from its very newness appealed to him'. In a reversal of the mapping ritual precipitated by the Dunwoody's marriage in *The Wayward Man*, the wedding reception is held in Belfast: 'If it had been possible [Jim] would have liked the ceremony itself to have taken place in Belfast, a grand gesture of independence before these islanders with their narrow ways of thought and indecent solemnity'. The reception's more domesticated gesture of independence, however, deconstructs the sense of Belfast as a homeland for the islanders:

> At the Belfast terminus they were ushered with careless ease into three taxis, and were rushed with breath-taking speed through streets which, on their rare visits to the city, they were accustomed to tread with the bewildered carefulness of country cousins 'up' for the day. Right into the very heart of the city they were plunged, and set down with a flourish before the wide glass doors of a gaily bedecked be-marbled restaurant where an enormous commissionaire in gold braid and medals disdainfully opened their taxi doors and directed them within.

The register here is of alienation from a disdainful upper-class in Belfast who are described as the 'soft city folk' who mark the islanders' entrance with snobbish bewilderment: **'**Eyes turned on them from all corners of the room, and to add to the embarrassment of their entrance, the band stopped with a loud burst of sound'. As a result of this episode, Jane realises that she is an 'absurd figure' away from 'her right setting in the fields and byres of Rathnaheena', a deconstruction of the integrity of the community of 'Ulster' which is at odds with an initially complex sense of geography. If this excursion leads Jane to 'know her place', then this passivity is not necessarily directed against the state *per se*, but more against the world of men. This target is more directly stated after her consumptive daughter Molly dies: 'she had been another woman, and only now that she was dead did Jane come to know what she had meant to her'.[103]

Molly's passing foreshadows Jane's own death, which Naomi Doak reads as a 'haunting challenge to traditional concepts of Irish identity', suggesting that it was 'ironic that the characteristics epitomised by the literary works of the Western Islanders themselves and those of this Northern Irish Protestant woman author and her female character appear to be the

[103] Fielden, *Island Story*, 91, 108, 124-5, 125, 128, 188.

same'.[104] Doak's analysis of how and why Fielden has been 'omitted from Irish literary history' places the blame on a dominant 'Revivalist' literary model, contending that 'Fielden's Northern, Protestant, English-speaking, fictional islanders were nothing but exotic flowerings of a colonial imagination… Outlawed as "aliens"'. This process of exclusion is mostly within what she characterises as the statist criticism of Irish literature by Declan Kiberd and Terence Brown. In another article, Doak contends that 'the audience for novels exploring alternative perspectives of female subjectivity seems to have been limited' in the literature and literary criticism of the northern state, as the paradigm of political readings demonstrably privileged male voices. She explicitly compares Fielden's absence in the canon with the supposed prominence of Peadar O'Donnell, who was himself often peripheralised as more political than literary, and was, like Fielden, published by Cape in the 1930s.[105] Writing in a similar effort of recovery, John Wilson Foster argues that the novel offers 'an insider's view of her own rural Protestant community in all its grimness', which is a strange description given that Fielden was predominantly based in Belfast and was certainly never a resident of Rathlin Island.[106] Some elements of the novel pose a challenge to conceptions of Irish identity, particularly its deployment of the island as a trope which is supposedly displaced from its natural habitat, but the 'Northern Irish' and 'Protestant' aspects are not spared from Fielden's satire. Perhaps most strikingly, and far from being either an ironic or coincidence or an insider's view, the similarities between *Island Story* and the Blasket narratives suggests the island narratives as a significant source of inspiration for the novel.

Beyond these local concerns, the setting of the novel underpins a sense of placelessness and consequently a connection to wider currents in the interwar period. Island literature cannot be reduced to the national in the way of Doak, forming an archipelagic trend just as much as an Irish one. As John Brannigan writes in his *Archipelagic Modernism. Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (2014), there was a broader turn towards a literature of the island in the 1930s, and the novels of Peadar O'Donnell and Michael McLaverty, for example, operated within a context of 'islomania'. A new form of 'islandness' was deployed for a range of purposes, including the expression of a modernist sensibility, as well as giving expression to the 'perception that the islands on the western edge… represent peripheral extremes of mainland society'.[107] Similarly, as Allen has argued, criticism on island literature regularly

[104] Naomi Doak, 'Ulster Protestant Women Authors: Ogla Fielden's *Island Story*.' *Irish Studies Review* 15.1 (2007), 37–49: 46.
[105] Naomi Doak, 'Assessing an Absence: Ulster Protestant Woman Authors: 1900-60', in Mervyn Busteed, Frank Neal, and Jonathan Tonge, eds, *Irish Protestant Identities* (Manchester, 2008), 126-138: 130.
[106] Foster, *Irish Novels 1890-1940,* 147.
[107] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh, 2014), 156, 147.

'concentrates on the connections between sovereign territories, with less thought given to the water ways between'. This tendency is partly because of the historical baggage in Whiggish treatments of Irish history:

> The history of nationalism in Ireland privileges the construction of the state as a sovereign and self-sustaining entity, while the island's cultural history suggests a different dynamic, which the late history of the British Empire helps us to understand. Water was the global medium of its transactions and consequently, the representation of seas, estuaries, and coastal zones provides a trans-, or even extra-, national context for the narratives created around them.[108]

The recurring argument of this thesis is that the construction of the state as sovereign and self-sustaining entity in Ireland was aided by a wide-ranging representation of the country (in the south) and the city (in the north) as the axial lines of official identity. Although, in the south, the island narratives of Tomás Ó Criomhthain and Muiris Ó Súilleabháin became important to what Barry McCrea calls 'a political-cultural movement that idealised the dwindling folk cultures of the country side', Fielden's displacement to the north coast via a fictionalised Rathlin Island offered a way out of the narratives of Ulster unionism.[109] The island becomes a metaphor for resistance to these dominant representations, resisting and indeed exploiting the big events of history in the period for its own gain.

Michael McLaverty and 'spatial alternative thinking'

Another Jonathan Cape debut novel written by a Belfast author also represented Rathlin Island. This was Michael McLaverty, who wrote consciously within a tradition of contemporary Irish fiction. As a *Northern Whig* article reported him telling a Belfast audience in 1940, the author modelled his work on what he considered as two recent masterpieces: '*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*... Mr McLaverty described as a better book than *Ulysses*, classing it with O'Faoláin's *A Nest of Simple Folk* as the two best Irish novels of this century'. As with O'Faoláin and O'Connor, the speech records once more how *Ulysses* was relatively unpopular as a frame for realist Irish novelists of the period. But McLaverty also felt that '[t]he rise and fall of the cotton mills, the shipyards, and the Orangemen were all subjects needing the necessary interpretation… It was a great pity that Belfast had not produced novels about its working-class population'.[110] By its 'working-class' population here the writer meant the Protestant working-class, since he himself had filled an absence with his novel *Call My Brother Back* (1939), with the landscape of the novel directly implicated in the political situation.

[108] Allen, 'Coastal Imaginary', 61-75.
[109] Barry McCrea, *Languages of the Night Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe* (New Haven, 2015), 123.
[110] McLaverty qtd in [Anon.], 'Irish Novelists of To-day: Belfast Author's Luminous Survey', *The Northern Whig* (28 February 1940), 6.

Aodhan Mac Póilin contended that McLaverty had 'a deep personal loathing of the unionist state', but that the 'treatment of political and sectarian themes is so restrained that this is barely perceptible in his fiction'.[111] Writing from a different perspective, John Wilson Foster argues that *Call My Brother Back* examines 'the price exacted by the deserted and violated land' rather than being concerned with 'the Troubles'.[112] However, his first novel repays being located within a wider politicisation of the field of representation by the state and sympathetic artists and authors after partition. The previous novels in this chapter ranged from political quietism, narratives of origin for the state, or a displacement that signalled a disengagement with constitutional politics. McLaverty's fiction, however, subtly deconstructs the historical and geographical integrity of the state by faithfully representing the arbitrary and frequently violent processes of its establishment. Together with its subtle (and sometimes unsubtle) uses of literary allusion, the specific historical location of *Call My Brother Back* offers a record of the partition of the island from a northern nationalist perspective.

Call My Brother Back demonstrates the author's deep concern with the culture of the state, as well as a singularly northern anxiety about being cut adrift from the tradition of 'Irish Ireland' writing. He particularly admired *A Nest of Simple Folk* as possessing 'all the qualities that make for permanence'. The qualities he identified in the novel were arguably more of a description of his ideal than O'Faoláin's intended effect: 'the Land—incipient growth of our struggle for Independence—the delineation of two backgrounds—urban and rural'.[113] It was ironic, given O'Faoláin's rejection of the example of Daniel Corkery, that McLaverty's endorsement of these qualities conforms almost exactly to that of *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (1931), 'the interplay of those great forces – Religion, Nationality, the Land'.[114] But *Call My Brother Back* was moored both textually and autobiographically in the tradition of Irish poetry. The inspiration for writing the novel came to McLaverty when he was staying upon Rathlin, reading first an account of the 1935 Belfast pogroms, and then W.B. Yeats's 'The Wild Swans at Coole'. The effect was a powerful contrast in his mind, as 'all the twisted life of that city… suddenly surged with compulsive force into his mind… the tranquillity of the island life compared with the pitiable waste of blood that was spilt in the poorer quarters of Belfast'.[115]

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[111] Aodhan Mac Póilin, 'The Irish language in Belfast until 1900', in Nicholas Allen and Aaron Kelly, eds, *The Cities of Belfast* (Dublin, 2003), 41-61, 41.
[112] Foster, *Forces and Themes*, 47.
[113] Michael McLaverty, *In Quiet Places: The Uncollected Stories, Letters, and Critical Prose of Michael McLaverty* ed. Sophia Hillan King (Dublin, 1989), 76.
[114] Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature* (Cork, 1996), 25. This lineage is important to McLaverty's writing, demonstrated by his rejection of Sam Hanna Bell's invitation to participate in the Festival of Britain in 1951: 'Surely you don't expect an Irish Nationalist like myself to subscribe, implicitly or explicitly, to Festival of Britain activities'; qtd in McIntosh, *The Force of Culture*, 113n.
[115] Rev Matthew Hoehn, *Catholic Authors: Contemporary Biographical Sketches, 1930-1947* (New Jersey, 1947), 473-74.

This comparison is assimilated into the form of the novel, which is partitioned into two books, 'The Island' and 'The City'. Although this spatial structuring principle is lifted directly from O'Faoláin's novel, unlike the markers of development which 'Country', 'Town' and 'City' signified in the Cork novelists' schemata, for McLaverty the island and the city are practically psychological referents. Each is prefaced with a quote, firstly from 'The Wild Swans at Coole' ('They paddle in the cold | Companionable streams…'), and then Louis MacNeice's 'Valediction' ('Frost will not touch the hedge of fuchsias, | The land will remain as it was, | But no abiding content can grow out of these minds | Fuddled with blood, always caught by blinds').[116] The overt signposting of his belonging to a unified tradition of Irish writing in the aforementioned public speeches continued this construction of an unpartitioned and cross-confessional literary lineage.

As predominantly, but not entirely, realist narrative, *Call My Brother Back* is occupied in its initial stages by the anticipated move of Colm MacNeill, the main protagonist, towards Belfast. His anticipated trip towards St Kevin's College on the Antrim Road is foreshadowed by the post he receives from his Belfast-based brother:

> he would fall to thinking of Alec, wondering what he would be doing now in the big city.
>
> Once Alec had sent him a postcard with a bulging three-legged pot on it, and when you lifted the lip off the pot there were twelve little photographs of Belfast folded together like a melodeon: there was one of the shipyards with its gantries: one of Donegal Place with its trams: one of the City Hall with its dome and turrets: and some of Colleges and Castles. Try as he could Colm failed to bring them to life.

This portrait of the intensely visual culture of the emerging state is, in effect, a hegemonised representation of Belfast which focuses on the City Hall and the city's industrial quarters. The juxtaposition of these icons with the 'rocky land' of the island render them little more than dream-visions for Colm, who is unable to imagine the city beyond these vague, broken images. Such is his inexperience of the mainland that when he visits Ballycastle, he is unable to appreciate the distance he will soon be travelling: 'away beyond that lovely mountain he would be going soon, and as he looked at its cold, rainy folds, he wondered if he would be able to see it from the town'.[117] This geographical naivety is accompanied with a lack of knowledge about history in the initial pages. One of the underappreciated contexts of the novel is that it is set in the period of the Irish revolution, a timeframe which is constructed in the text from the developing perspective of a northern nationalist. The move from the extremely quiet and

[116] W.B. Yeats, *The Wild Swans at Coole* (London, 1919), 2; Louis MacNeice, *The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice*, ed. E.R. Dodds (London, 1966), 53.

[117] Michael McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back* (1939; Belfast, 2003), 8, 24.

peaceful Rathlin to a violent, sectarian city is an allegorical development of political consciousness. For McLaverty, Rathlin is Ireland before the trauma of partition, before the brutal emergence of the Orange State. *Call My Brother Back* thus refracts the standard representational stratagems of both the state and the Irish novel to enact this vision with an established political and aesthetic legacy.

Colm is rapidly catapulted into Belfast after the sudden death of their father, Daniel. Before this move to the College – the actual details of which are left silent in the text – Colm's brother Alec returns to the island from Belfast, and imbues a sense of political geography before his inevitable move to the city:

> And then he'd talk to them about Ireland and how the people long ago were robbed of their lands; or standing on a hill he'd turn towards the mainland and tell how the good land was in the hands of the planters and the old Irish scattered like sheep among the mountains and the rocks.
>
> When a newspaper was sent to him he'd read about the Home Rulers, Sinn Féiners, and election fights in Belfast and other parts of the country.[118]

Brannigan has suggested that the theme of island depopulation, which appears across many of McLaverty's prose works, is not 'simply the result of economic factors' but something more 'inherent' and 'degenerative' within the islanders.[119] The novel also reframes the country and the city as the quiet past and the disturbing present, respectively, significantly rewriting the aforementioned dominant strain of unionist geography which imaged the position of Catholics as reflective of the faults in their character. The city is again framed as a political arena in which these debates about the shape of the nation are being held, often without the input of the rural peasantry for which they claim to speak. In being imparted to Colm within the last chapter of the quickly-paced first section of the novel, with his inevitable arrival in Belfast always pending, these passages foreshadow the political undercurrent of the rest of the novel. The aforementioned postcard images of City Hall, the Gantries, the Castles, and the Colleges which prefaced Colm's move to Belfast are denied to him by narrative's representation of geographical exclusion in the city. As John Wilson Foster states, '[i]n their part of Belfast, the MacNeills are still close to the countryside despite the grimness of their living conditions', with this rural proximity a 'safety-valve'.[120] For Edna Longley, the second section provides 'a half-tantalising, half-consoling glimpse of the countryside', which 'epitomises an incomplete rite of passage not just from the country but towards economic, cultural and political integration'.[121] These heavily fatalist readings tend to ignore the historical formation of the ghettoes of Belfast,

[118] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 46.
[119] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, 149.
[120] Foster, *Forces and Themes*, 43.
[121] Edna Longley, *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle, 1994), 91.

particularly in its most Catholic district in the West, and the aforementioned 'areal differentiation' of political identity in the north of Ireland. The totalisation of Belfast in unionist rhetoric is rewritten by the novel's spatial narrative by placing its community on the edge of the city.

Rathlin Island and the Falls Road are each testament to David Sibley's contention that 'power is expressed in the monopolisation of space and the relegation of weaker groups in society to less desirable environments'. [122] The aforementioned location of the Irish peasantry in Chart's *A History of Northern Ireland* is analogous to where the MacNeills are placed in a Belfast suffering from the riotous traumas of the contemporary historical period. From this environment, the novel records the coercive formation of the state, which was what Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson call 'a product of a specific conjuncture of events rather than simply the expression of a deep-seated ideological attitude'.[123] This conjuncture of events is recorded faithfully in the Belfast section of the novel, with actual historical details of the 'troubles' in Belfast being reproduced. One chapter makes much of the intrusion of the police by the raid on Colm's school, St Kevin's College (a fictional stand-in for St Malachy's College on the Antrim Road, where McLaverty attended): 'A few weeks afterwards the College was raided. Colm arrived one morning to find soldiers with fixed bayonets lined outside the gates of the avenue'.[124] The papers of Col. F.H. Crawford record, in brief detail, some of the police operations in this period and the similarities are noteworthy: 'St. Malachy's College, Antrim Road. Searching grounds for arms. Party dug within a foot or so from where the arms are buried'.[125] This historical accuracy facilitates the relentless configuration of Colm's situation as a problem of displacement from the true habitat of the countryside:

> And when he went to bed he tried to sleep by thinking of the island; but, in the morning, he awakened not to the cry of gulls or the sound of the sea, but to the rattle of early trams and milk-carts and the newsboys shouting the latest ambush from Cork or a shooting in another part of his own city.[126]

As the suturing of historical events and descriptions of the environment in this passage demonstrates, *Call My Brother Back* is not only about partition in terms of both its thematic concerns and plot. It also belongs to the context of the body of post-partition Irish fiction which responded to contemporary politics by manipulating the received literary paradigm of the country and the city.

The novel is not always as heavily loaded with political trauma, however, and the

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[122] David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London, 2002), ix.
[123] Bew, Gibbon, and Patterson, *Northern Ireland*, 39.
[124] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 153.
[125] Col. F.H. Crawford, Personal notes, 23 April 1921, PRONI, Crawford Papers, D640/6/2.
[126] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 149.

resemblance of this West Belfast community to the Rathlin Island one is drawn out by the fifth chapter of the city section. In this instance Jamesy, Colm's brother, writes a 'long letter about all the neighbours in the street' to their uncle on the island. Although he does not 'know much about the people in Nos 21, 23, 25', the microscopic detail of the rest of the street suggests a much closer-knit, even knowable, urban community than the representations of Belfast in the novels of White, Fielden, or Ervine allow. A more collective representation of Belfast is also given towards the end of *Call My Brother Back*, in which a street-caller stands above the divided citizens of Belfast, and delivers a 'parable of the sashes', unveiling a socioeconomic cartography which overwrites sectarian division in favour of a socialist vision: 'Ye never seen shootin' in the Malone Road or Balmoral or in the other flashy districts of this town'. The coda of the novel is full of these kinds of totalising visions, which in the most joined-up instance of a vision of Belfast is linked to the history of republicanism in the city. When the three brothers look over the city of Belfast from the vantage point of Black Mountain, the Irish Republican Army volunteer Alec incorporates the 'churches… factories and playgrounds' of the city into an anti-sectarian rant. When he catches sight of the sun shining on Cave Hill, he muses on the forever disappointed radicalism of a Belfast whose citizens have forgotten their shared revolutionary heritage: '[o]ver a hundred years ago great patriots stood… and looked down at Belfast; they were Wolfe Tone, Henry Joy McCracken, Neilson and some others'.[127]

The focus on memory finds its counterpart in an earlier episode of the novel when the dominant unionist geography is rewritten during a geography lesson in St Kevin's: 'the map of Ireland was rolled down the wall and the master… would look to the south of the map, turn round quickly, and ask a boy to point out Moville and Tory Island'.[128] The appearance of this set-piece resembles Seamus Heaney's description of the six-county map in his own schoolroom as relegating the south 'to a political and geographic nowhere… [meaning to] imprint an official Northern Ireland and establish a six-county-centric point of view from the start'.[129] Here, instead, the image of the whole island is enshrined, with its appearance is a rejoinder to the state's proliferation of the six-county image. The sense of dislocation which this elicits foreshadows an ending which symbolises the creation of the northern state as a personal trauma for the MacNeills. Alec's murder by the Royal Irish Constabulary in the denouement is therefore a metaphorical removal of any dissenting element from the city, emphasised by the disruption of his funeral: 'The green, white, and gold flag of Ireland was thrown over the coffin, but when it was carried out to the street policemen rushed across and snatched the flag'. This

[127] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 88, 91, 184, 163-5.
[128] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 68.
[129] Seamus Heaney and Dennis O'Driscoll, *Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (London, 2009), 246.

death extends the schoolboy's confusion to the rest of the novel's community, as the narrative takes a more naturalist turn towards passive description and an acceptance of the MacNeills' fate. In the last chapter, Jamesy emigrates to Birmingham, and Colm takes a tram into the 'open country' at the end of the line, mapping the 'tow-path' of the Lagan. On the return journey, he moves 'towards the centre of the city, down from the Big Houses to the long narrow streets', a collective cartography which precipitates *Call My Brother Back*'s final image of Colm's insomnia:

> In bed he lay awake, his mind swirling to and fro… rabbits wild and free on the hills around Belfast… swans moving across black water… oil-lamps warming the windows in Rathlin… a rusty tin in the fork of a thorn bush… a rickle of bones falling dead in York Street…[130]

Thus in its last paragraph the novel abandons the realist form that it had relentlessly deployed throughout the action. As Luke Gibbons describes of Joyce, a man who held 'no romantic illusions about the restorative powers of the countryside', the language here resembles the modernist technique of montage: 'the structuring of identity as the juxtaposition and commingling of opposites'.[131] The most stylistically modernist moment in the text comes at the end as an image of intense displacement, a montage of rural and urban images that finally ends on a gothic note of death.

The final passage of *Call My Brother Back* meshes together the country and the city in this way to form an alienating mood of displacement, with Colm's consistently maudlin sentiment for the island eviscerated by the trauma of the Belfast Troubles. But in more general terms, the depiction of the city as a badland of republicanism fits with Marianne Elliot's description of Catholic perceptions of the city: 'Belfast was the seat of the enemy. Belfast Catholics reconciled their residence in Unionism's capital by a kind of spatial alternative thinking'.[132] McLaverty's alternative vision consciously relied on the mainstreams of Irish nationalist and Ulster unionist representations of space. Indeed, as this chapter has argued, while Nicholas Allen's contention that the 'absence of an agreed founding document' for the Free State led to an 'over-production of a host of competing other texts' could not be extended to the north, this did not mean that fiction did not reflect a diverse range of attitudes to the dominant forms of national belonging of this era.[133] The extant body of critical literature often refuses this multifarious engagement with space by both north and south in the post-partition period. Writers rarely challenged the historical validity or authority of a government which encouraged

[130] McLaverty, *Call My Brother Back*, 174, 190, 190-1.
[131] Luke Gibbons, 'Modernism, Montage, and the City', in *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork, 1996), 165-169: 168.
[132] Elliott, *Catholics*, 198.
[133] Allen, *Modernism, Ireland and Civil War* (Cambridge, 2009), 25.

certain aspects of cultural life, particularly as they pertained to a delicately mapped process of consolidation. Yet northern fiction charted a wide terrain from the shores of Lough Erne to the Belfast hills, from the slums of East and West Belfast to the degradation of Rathlin, operating with a field of representation which privileged the urban over the rural.

4

The place of nostalgia in the Irish novel, 1941-45

Life on an outpost of Europe?

On 7 March 1937 Tomás Ó Criomhthain, Blasketman and author of *An t-Oileánach* (1929), died at the age of eighty. Only three years earlier, the publication of Robin Flower's translation of his autobiography had been heralded as a national triumph, with the text glowingly described in *The Irish Times* as a vision of life on 'an outpost of Europe… long before any symptoms of change'.[1] Terence Brown's *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* considers *An t-Oileánach* as 'one of the finest examples' of the works which had posited a 'vision of the western Ireland as the primal source of the nation's being'. For Brown, the narrative exemplified the 'encouragement of Gaelic revival to project a cultural image of the nation', with the 'direct espousal of rural civilisation' the sole cultural contribution of de Valera's government in the 1930s.[2] However, despite these celebrations of his work, his death and burial garnered little attention in the national press. The small article which appeared on the ninth page of the following Thursday's *Irish Press* was almost anthropological, reading the Blasket islanders as practitioners of a way of life which was disappearing: 'Tomás Ó Criomhthain, of Blasket Mor, off the Kerry coast, was borne in a "naomhog" across the Blasket Sound to Dunquin, the family burial-ground. The island fleet of canoes followed in procession'. The article closed by referencing the elegiac refrain of *An t-Oileánach*: 'At the end of his book, "The Islandman" says "When I am gone men will know what life was like in my time"'.[3] In life, as in death, Ó Criomhthain represented a cultural and linguistic distinctiveness which was claimed by sections of Irish nationalism as an essential ontological symbol, encapsulating an austere self-sufficiency which had, supposedly, never known city life.

As the front page of the same issue of the *Irish Press* which featured the islandman's obituary reported, Ó Criomhthain's passing came just as the draft of de Valera's *Bunreacht na hÉireann* was being finalised for presentation to the Dáil, and contemporaneous debates in the

[1] [Anon.], 'Life on an Outpost of Europe: *An tOileanach* in English'. *The Irish Times* (27 October 1934), 7. In their own obituary for Ó Criomhthain, the paper mistranslated his name as 'Thomas Crogan'. [Anon.], 'OBITUARY', Obituary of Tomás Ó Criomhthain, *The Irish Times* (10 March 1937), 8.
[2] Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922–2002* (rev. edn, London, 2004), 84-5.
[3] [Anon.], '"When I am Gone"; Tomás Ó Criomhthain Who Wrote a Famous Life-Story', *The Irish Press* (11 March 1937), 9.

chamber were frequently embellished with reference to the Irish peasantry. Irene Luchetti even floats the idea that the preamble of the Constitution, in its depiction of an 'heroic and unremitting struggle' for the nation, drew 'a picture of national character similar to Blasket Island character'.[4] The idea of the islanders as the source-text for the Constitution is quite a flight of fancy, but the life they epitomised was certainly a rhetorical boon to its introduction. In the months after this formal introduction, the Fine Gael Deputy James Dillon claimed that the **'**ambition of the present Government' was 'to make peasants of the children of people whom our fathers rescued from peasantry'.[5] Though this was ostensibly a critique of their economic policy, it also attacked the moral and spiritual value which Fianna Fáil had placed in the peasant image. Only a few months later, Teachta Dála for Cork West, Tom Hales, symptomatised this charge in claiming in the same house that to find the 'Great civilisation of the West… [y]ou may go to France, Spain, Germany and Italy, but eventually you will find it in the little cottages amongst the peasants'. As his model peasant society exemplified, Ireland was not just 'the greatest moral nation in the world and rightly so', but also one which would last: 'Europe to-day is awaiting a new re-mapping… I believe God in His time will select His instrument to carry out the undoing, whether that instrument be a dictator or otherwise'.[6] Curiously, although his doomsday prediction was specifically railing against the partition of the island, Hales completely ignored the industrial north. The peasant, thus elaborated, served as a purified vision of Irishness to match this purified geography, orientating the ideal Irish citizen as rural, self-sufficient, and historically continuous. Hales's speech exemplified a contemporary tendency to interpret social and political problems through the master code of the country and the city, with the peasant often providing an ideal platform from which to attack the Irish Left.

As Michael Pierse notes, what Tom Garvin called a 'cultural reversion' meant that the contrast proved fruitful in the throes of the Second World War, so that '[u]rban Ireland was again the poor relation, and Fianna Fáil again identified opportunities amidst the chaos, intensifying its attacks on communism as a means of stemming reinvigorated support for the Labour Party, following an upturn in trade-union activism during the early 1940s'.[7] Over the course of the 1930s, the Irish Free State was particularly involved in a restorative nostalgia for a peasantry which, they felt, embodied the social and cultural ideas of the nation in Ireland in the lead up to the war. This was the motivating factor behind the establishment of the Irish Folklore Commission, which was set up in 1935. Gearóid Ó Crualaoich considers the Commission as motivated by an ideology which privileged 'the memory of traditional cultural

[4] Irene Luchetti, *The Islandman: The Hidden Life of Thomas O'Crohan* (Bern, 2009), 109-110.
[5] John Dillon, Dáil Debates 67.7 (15 April 1937), col. 124ff.
[6] Tom Hales, *Dáil Debates* 67.1 (11 May 1937), col. 124ff.
[7] Michael Pierse, *Writing Ireland's Working Class: Dublin After O'Casey* (London, 2010), 17.

forms that were expressive of the world-view and lifestyle of former rural, relatively unsophisticated, largely under-educated, and perhaps only partly-literate segments of the Irish population'.[8] A desire to preserve the traditions of the countryside also inspired the new vocational organisation Muintir na Tire (People of the Country), of which both Éamon de Valera and Aodh de Blacam were active supporters.[9] Established in 1937, the Catholic body maintained a middle-class town support base which found similar appeal in an image of 'rural Ireland'. As another commentator had it: 'Country life is not dull. It is city life that is cheerless and stupid and vapid, degenerate, futile, and foreign with its narrow conventions, its artificiality and its purchased amusements'.[10] For all its focus on the nation, which frequently led to an opposition of 'foreign' and 'native', the movement's journal did demonstrate an interest in the global development of farm life. Articles in its official organ *Rural Ireland* include those on Scottish farmers and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Again, although it was rhetorically defined in opposition to the city, the very definition of 'rural life' relied upon the medium of a print culture and industry that was necessarily centralised in the cities and towns. As the Jesuit E. J. Coyne wrote in the body's Official Handbook of 1941, '[i]n modern times, the scales have been weighted very much against the country and rural life'.[11]

Like the Folklore Commission and the preservation of peasant life, the emergence of a dedicated rural movement at this time in itself suggested its perceived necessity in the face of the traumatic process of rural depopulation and constant urbanisation. The emphasis on a memory of traditional forms was key, since although rural life was frequently positioned as an embodiment of the essential qualities of Ireland, the tactic of using the peasantry as an ideal for the nation was not confined to the shores of the island. Barry McCrea's *Languages of the Night: Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe* (2015) argues that the loss of regional patois with the metropolitan standardisation of English and French in Western Europe was 'one of the most notable and immediate cultural elements of "modernity"… during the flowering and aftermath of modernist writing'.[12] Similarly, in his own theorisation of a European 'peasant culture', which he considered as the 'quintessential repository of collective memory', Pierre Nora claims that the peasant's 'recent vogue as an

[8] Gearóid Ó Crualaoich, *The Book of the Cailleach: Stories of the Wise-Woman Healer* (Cork, 2003), 158, qtd in Mícheál Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970: History, Ideology, Methodology* (Helsinki, 2016), 51.
[9] Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1922–1973* (Madison, 2006), 36, 47.
[10] Canon Power, qtd in Eoin Devereux, 'Saving Rural Ireland-Muintir Na Tire and Its Anti-Urbanism, 1931-1958', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 17.2 (1991), 23-30: 23.
[11] E.J. Coyne, qtd in Devereux, 'Saving Rural Ireland', 27.
[12] Barry McCrea, *Languages of the Night Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe* (New Haven, 2015), 10-11.

object of historical study coincided with the apogee of industrial growth. Such a fundamental collapse of memory is but one familiar example of a movement toward democratisation and mass culture on a global scale'. Furthermore, for Nora, the peasant represented the apotheosis of 'lieux de mémoire', which

> have no referent in reality; or, rather, they are their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs. This is not to say that they are without content, physical presence, or history; it is to suggest that what makes them lieux de mémoire is precisely that by which they escape from history.[13]

The tactic of positioning the peasant as a symbol of escape was to prove extremely useful during the Second World War. As this chapter argues, the nostalgia which pervaded Irish novels during what became known in the south as 'The Emergency' was a reaction to the war. What seem like introspective accounts of the Irish countryside thus actually provide a useful foil to the vast uncertainties of the conflict.

Deep Ireland

Terence Brown's recent history of *The Irish Times* suggests that during the War, Irish letters organised itself 'as a force that could effectively oppose the monolithic Irish Ireland ideology that helped to sustain de Valera in power'.[14] For Brown, *The Irish Times* performed a leading role in this organisation, but some similarities remained between Muintir na Tire's vision of Ireland and the vision which the newspaper seemed to sponsor. Both were certainly invested in a culture of nostalgia, what Myles na gCopaleen's *Cruiskeen Lawn* column frequently critiqued as 'the great national nostalgia that we already know to exist—a nostalgia for what is frugal, decent, and unobtainable'.[15] While Myles might have termed this a 'national' nostalgia, it was not just limited to Irish Ireland devotees or members of Muintir na Tire. As Robert Smylie's editorial for the *Irish Times* in August 1944 claimed:

> Often we are charged in Ireland with living too much in the past. Whatever the justice or otherwise of that charge, it might be retorted on our neighbours if there were not good cause for the wave of nostalgia that seems to be passing over war-harried Britain.

Smylie refers here to the contemporary popularity of BBC productions depicting the Georgian and Victorian eras, a popularity which was explained in terms of the war: '[i]f men find pleasure in reviving these memories, it is also well; for that innocent gaiety reminds young and old of the world's former peace. This was the sanity that men once enjoyed; to this, let it be hoped, a

[13] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7-24: 7, 23-24.
[14] Terence Brown, *The Irish Times: 150 Years of Influence* (London, 2015), 144.
[15] Myles na gCopaleen, 'Cruiskeen Lawn', *The Irish Times* (13 October 1944), 3.

released world soon will turn again'.[16] An earlier editorial had conveyed how popular the BBC had become in comparison to Radio Éireann during these years, acerbically commenting that the government knew 'no matter how bad the Irish programmes may become, 170,000 people will continue to take out licences every year in order that they may listen to the BBC'.[17]

It was also with reference to radio in October 1939 that Patrick Kavanagh wrote an article in the same newspaper which was appropriately entitled 'Europe is at War: A Rural Irish Contrast Remembering Its Pastoral Peace'. This piece recorded the outbreak of war from the perspective of his Dublin apartment, in which he overheard a neighbour's radio broadcasting jazz and propaganda: 'Such of [which] as has filtered through the ceiling [and] has had another effect on me'. Kavanagh rejected this mix of modernity in favour of focusing on the pastoral: 'Being an Irishman I should be abnormal if I didn't dream, think and write of far-past peace and quiet in pastoral fields when everybody else is thinking in terms of war'.[18] Yet even the nationalisation of a rural nostalgia as opposed to the foreign jazz on the radio was not reflective of British writing of the period. As Angus Calder writes, in response to the challenges of urbanisation and the mechanisation of European warfare, a sense of a 'Deep England' re-emerged in the 1940s which drew upon 'conceptions of Englishness developed so fully between the Great War and the second that they had the aura of "natural" existences rather than ideological constructs'. English cultural production during the war, including the radio and the novel, was 'much obsessed with English landscape and the countryside', projecting an image of 'a Green and Pleasant heartland… which stretched from Hardy's Wessex to Tennyson's Lincolnshire, from Kipling's Sussex to Elgar's Worcestershire…Parts of Kent, for instance, were "deeper" than anywhere'. This description approximates both what Calder terms the exclusion of the 'industrial Midlands and the north with its factories and windswept motors' in war culture, but also the 'greening' of a modernising twenty-six counties during 'The Emergency'.[19] Articles 2 and 3 of the new constitution may have claimed 'the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas' for 'the national territory', with the limits of its jurisdiction to the twenty-six counties '[p]ending the re-integration of the national territory'.[20] But no wide-ranging aesthetic integration was undertaken. As in Conor Cruise O'Brien's description of the Revivalists, southern nationalism frequently 'sought in Ireland the kind of dignity and kind of wealth that the industrialised world, the modern world had lost; the Ireland

[16] Robert Smylie, 'Editorial', *The Irish Times* (1 August 1944), 3.
[17] Robert Smylie, 'Radio Éireann', *The Irish Times* (2 May 1940), 4.
[18] Patrick Kavanagh, 'Europe Is At War: A Rural Irish Contrast Remembering its Pastoral Peace', *The Irish Times* (25 October 1939), 8.
[19] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1991), 181, 182, 182.
[20] *Bunreacht na hEireann* (1937), Articles 2 and 3.

they loved had an enormous West Coast and no Northeast corner'.[21]

As Clair Wills notes in *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland during the Second World War* (2007), despite the unpopularity of Ireland's neutrality, a flourishing industry of English nostalgia in the 1940s was also often more able to incorporate 'rural Ireland' into its aesthetic. British tourist narratives of the island thematised the journey over the Irish sea: 'to travel from Britain to Ireland in wartime was to journey from darkness into light… Dublin's wide and well-lit streets screened a moral darkness'.[22] The incorporation of Ireland into the pastoral literature of the war was reflected in these outside descriptions of Ireland. Cyril Connolly's Editorial for the 1942 special 'Irish' issue of *Horizon*, for example, occasionally presented a nuanced view of the culture, politics, and society of an Ireland which was, according to many British observers, a 'small, obstinate, intransigent nation with its head still stuck in 1938'. Although Connolly complicated this picture in some detail, his piece still frequently reverted to a standard imaging of Ireland in spatial terms. The construction of an otherness was particularly evident in his image of priests whom are soon to 'rule the towns and villages' training in a Maynooth 'where the clock keeps a different time from all secular Ireland'. When Connolly writes of looking over the view from Killiney, for example, having travelled from the 'beautiful' buildings of Dublin city centre, the image is of an exotic other:

> One climbs a promontory where one looks back over the harbour of Dunleary [sic] to the domes of eighteenth-century Dublin… Here one seems to have travelled through many degrees of latitude… The blending of woods and fields with the shore and the moorland, the contours of the distant mountains dappled with sun and cloud, are like a coloured print of a plantation in the West Indies, the feeling for landscape which has lain buried through two years of war and journalism wells over.

The backwardness occasionally prevalent in Ireland was not necessarily an unappealing one to Connolly. Indeed the piece ends with his wondering: 'Are the wisest people in the world those who have kept their calendar at 1938?'.[23] While Connolly aired some complications to this picture of Ireland, the landscape of the island still seems to stand in for the past – a tactic which found use in the novel of the period too.

Britain in Pictures*: Repackaging Rural Ireland for a British Audience*

Irish writers and historians including Seán O'Faoláin, Elizabeth Bowen, Kate O'Brien, and

[21] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Writers and Politics* (New York, 1965), 94, qtd in Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), 193. See Chapter Five for an account of the late development of the 'Ulster' imprint of this pastoral regionalism.
[22] Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland during the Second World War* (London, 2007), 5-7.
[23] Cyril Connolly, 'Comment', *Horizon* 5.25 (January 1942), 3-11: 9-10, 8, 11.

Edward Lynam were prominent contributors to the Collins series *Britain in Pictures*, which was sponsored by the Ministry of War. For Tom Walker, series like *Britain in Pictures* signalled 'a mid-twentieth century war-shadowed trend for producing works of somewhat nostalgic cultural self-definition that attempt to characterise England's landscape, history, and people, often in regional terms'.[24] This effort was turned towards its neighbouring island in O'Faoláin's number *The Story of Ireland* (1943), which continued his project of mapping modernisation onto the cities, towns, and countryside of Ireland. Beginning his account of the history of Ireland since the Flight of the Earls, O'Faoláin's narrative quickly collapsed into a survey of the topography of the country, with the narrative consistently locating the present tense in the urbanised and industrialised quarters. Writing of Dublin, 'a city that has been for a long time trafficked by the world', he claimed that visitors would 'expect that some things, memories, and citizens of that city should have a world-repute and he will find them'. The capital of Ireland was 'adult, busy, sophisticated' because of its 'long and varied experience of contemporary life'. This set up a clichéd contrast between the adult experience of the city, and the childlike innocence of the country, a contrast which is often converted, as Raymond Williams noted, 'to illusory ideas of the rural past'.[25] On departing from the city, this sophistication dissipates, and Dublin's 'uniformity with the rest of the English-speaking world' is shattered when 'cycl[ing] over the Wicklow hills, down by Glenmacnass, into the antique cul-de-sac of Glendalough'. Once in these hills, only 'thirty-three miles' from the capital, O'Faoláin emphasises the difference in quasi-anthropological terms: 'we are in a country of small, mountainy farms, poor soil, cows straying by the road, and sheep bleating in the fog… It savours of a folk-world'. The values of modernity and traditionalism are again mapped onto the landscape of Ireland, with O'Faoláin unapologetically stating that '[e]verything in Ireland is… both temporal and spatial'. That is, temporal and spatial in terms of a modernity which is tied to urbanisation, since as he glosses further, 'according as the traveller goes farther and farther west, he puts back his watch—but here one puts it back not by hours but by centuries'. In this imagining, the south of Ireland is figured as backwards in time, as opposed to the six counties 'where the present is inescapable… you may, without a jar, cross back from clanging Belfast to clanging Glasgow'.[26] For O'Faoláin, these cities are industrial spaces which are interchangeable in terms of their cultural as much as their economic outputs.

Linking this deep map of Ireland to his literary and cultural activity before the war, O'Faoláin claimed that 'the public intelligence of Ireland is the intelligence of an historic nexus

[24] Tom Walker, *Louis MacNeice and the Irish Poetry of His Time* (Oxford, 2015), 82.
[25] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Frogmore, 1975), 357.
[26] Seán O'Faoláin, *The Story of Ireland* (London, 1943), 9, 9, 9-10, 12, 13.

of simple folk with a long and tragic struggle behind them'. In explicitly linking the history of Ireland to his earlier novel, he was creating a different past for his modernising project, in his own words 'introducing new circumstances into every historical scene'. The newness of these circumstances was unclear, however, since O'Faoláin figured his journey through the island as a 'tug-of-war between modernity and tradition'.[27] Like much of his earlier efforts, *The Story of Ireland* often reads like an attempt to police the boundaries between modern and traditional values rather than the nostalgic purpose it was meant to serve. This is perhaps unsurprising, since as Rhiannon Moss writes, he had defined himself against a '"nostalgia fantasy" perspective' which was prevalent in national culture.[28] But there were self-revisionary tendencies at work here too. Given the presence of a harp symbol on the book's cover, his excoriation of Jonathan Cape in 1933 for their inclusion of a harp and shamrocks on the sleeve of *A Nest of Simple Folk* speaks to his sense of an audience for the *Britain in Pictures* number:

> Judging by this jacket English artists still think of Ireland in terms of caubeens, shillelaghs, coleen bawns, jaunting cars, jaunting cars, harps and shamrocks. Just as they think, in their lazy indifference, of Scotland as a place of kilts, saxpences, whiskey, and poor jokes. The only place your jacket would be considered suitable for an Irish novel is in the Bowery. Or, presumably, some young man's flat in Bloomsbury.[29]

Despite the complaint, the sleeve design was retained for his novel, and O'Faoláin's own inclusion of a harp on the cover of *The Bell* suggested his acceptance of that symbol at least. In the case of *The Story of Ireland*, his control over the cover design was probably negligible, as the numbers for Wales and Scotland brandished dragon and thistle symbols respectively. Production values were an important part of their function as a piece of propaganda. As Collins' chief editor F. T. Smith commented after coming across *Britain in Pictures* show-cased in the shop window of a war-scarred English town, they had become 'bright banners on the battlements of our island fortress or, more modestly perhaps, the defiant cockades that a nation of shop-keepers might flaunt in the faces of their book-burning foes'.[30] O'Faoláin's *Story* was a constituent part of this effort, a signal example of the connections in cultural representations during the war.

all done from the metropolis!

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[27] O'Faoláin, *Ireland*, 9, 10.
[28] Rhiannon Moss, *Irish Modernism in an International Frame: Thomas MacGreevy, Sean O'Faoláin and Samuel Beckett in the 1930s*, PhD Thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2009, 132.
[29] Sean O'Faolain to Ruth Atkinson, c. September 1933, Papers of Jonathan Cape Ltd, The University of Reading, JC A6/1/4.
[30] F.T. Smith qtd in David Keir, *The House of Collins: The Story of a Scottish Family of Publishers from 1789 to the Present Day* (London, 1952), 267.

In his editorial policy for *The Bell* during these years, O'Faoláin was also less proscriptive about including nostalgic representations of the island. Joe Cleary considers O'Faoláin as a 'frustrated novelist' who yet managed to 'establish a very durable way of conceptualising the development of modern Irish literature', with his frustrations in fiction often obscuring the achievements of his cultural criticism. This durable way was a 'conflict between "realism" and "romance"', which 'conceptually organises' his career.[31] Such a division could often be renounced. This contradictory nature was on show in *The Bell*'s editorial in May 1941 entitled 'Provincialism', in which he wrote that the title-word meant 'as little as its opposite, metropolitan. Take this magazine. Whatever quality it has is largely due to the deliberate policy of raking the countryside for material—finding strength at the source. But it is all done from the metropolis!'. Although ostensibly a prolonged introduction to Maura Laverty's immediately following extract from her work-in-progress *The Lost Village*, which would later become *Never No More* (1943), in closing the editorial O'Faoláin more generally claimed that 'we have all met people who have been to Timbuctoo who might as well never have left Ballybehindbeyond. As one never meets in the country anybody half so stupid and silly as the people one meets in cities'.[32] As discussed below, this was not without a few caveats about the benefits of continental travel, but it still demonstrates that O'Faoláin envisaged *The Bell*, in part, as a magazine of 'provincial writing' for a city audience, which is the same market for parochial or rural nostalgia which saw Patrick Kavanagh briefly employed as a columnist for the *Irish Press* in this era. The many ruralist pieces that appeared regularly in city newspapers and periodicals like *The Capuchin Annual*, *The Irish Press*, and *The Irish News*, amongst a wide range of other titles, suggest how much nostalgia for a past rooted in the simplicity of rural life was a defining feature of Irish writing. If it was a defining feature, however, it was not a distinguishing one, with a contrapuntal reading of contemporaneous British and Irish literature affirming Raymond Williams's maxim that '[n]ostalgia… is universal and persistent; only other men's nostalgias offend'. [33]

A trend for introspective nostalgia in the Ireland of the 1940s became a productive inspiration and source of financial support for many of its novelists. Cathal O'Byrne's contemporaneous *Irish News* column about Old Belfast has been read as politically nostalgic by Richard Kirkland, whom suggests that the past is 'deployed as a mode of survival…. resid[ing] in his conviction that only nostalgia can compete with the (for him) appalling reality of a partitioned Ireland'.[34] Nostalgia was also a standard representational strategy of writing

[31] Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), 146.
[32] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Provincialism', *The Bell* 2.2 (May 1941), 5-8: 6, 8.
[33] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 21.
[34] Richard Kirkland, 'Dialogues of Despair: Nationalist Cultural Discourse and the Revival in the North of Ireland,

about Dublin and Cork in issues of *The Capuchin Annual*. Where for O'Byrne, to reimage the recent history of Belfast as a town in the minds of its nationalist constituents provided relief from the trauma of partition, for John Bowe the ruralisation of the city was a reclamation for Ireland: '[p]erhaps no metropolis is now so characteristically native as Dublin is… she is as homely and as charming as a Munster village'.[35] In 1940, the *Annual* subsumed any kind of regional representation into a national-provincial framework, with separate subsections on Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connacht, furnished with the same frame of representation in each section. By 1941 this process of nationalising urban space was well established, with Denis Barry's 'A Prospect of Cork' adopting a strikingly similar register: 'away to the south the hills are still green, the lovely valley of the Lee peeps in at the west, downstream the river, with great near factories on one side and the confusion of shipping on the other, widens to an impressive estuary'.[36] The cities of Ireland, north and south, were made much more palatable by such acts of nostalgia, offering the potential for recovery in the nationalist project through an imaging of their always more rural past.

The prevalence for a specifically restorative rural nostalgia in Ireland is at odds with the description of southern Irish life during the Second World War by Terence Brown, which reads Patrick Kavanagh's *The Great Hunger* (1942) as evidence for the 'deprivation and despair which in Ireland as a whole was to drive thousands of young men and women off the land to the industrial suburbs of Birmingham and to London'.[37] Brown's treatment of the reflectively nostalgic poem as 'an antenna that sensitively detects the shifts of consciousness that determine a people's future' was not necessarily reflective of the contemporaneous literature which commemorated the disappearance of folk culture in an age of modernity. Nor was it entirely reflective of the poet's own activity during the war years, which were a time of significant contradiction, self-revision, and general anguish for Kavanagh. Derek Hand describes Kavanagh's prose as 'not beyond pandering to the stereotypes that would keep an urban middle-class audience entertained'.[38] This is certainly true considering the poet's activity during the Second World War. For while simultaneously contemplating the vapidity of peasant life in poems like *The Great Hunger* (1942), he was also 'writing articles for the papers, mainly on the pleasures of country life… which, fifty miles away, calls me to return. There is a new prosperity owing to the war'.[39] This passage was from his 'City Commentary' column for *The*

1900-20', *Irish University Review* 33.1 (Spring - Summer, 2003), 64-78: 66.
[35] John Bowe, 'This is Dublin', *The Capuchin Annual vol XXVIII* (Dublin, 1938), 79-89: 83.
[36] Denis Barry, 'A Prospect of Cork', *The Capuchin Annual vol XXXI* (Dublin, 1941), 68-76: 68.
[37] Brown, *History*, 175.
[38] Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2010), 200.
[39] Peter Kavanagh, 'Writer', in Peter Kavanagh, ed., *Patrick Kavanagh: Man and Poet* (Newbridge, 1986), 77-85: 77.

Irish Press, written under the pseudonym 'Piers Plowman', in which Kavanagh offered a rural outlook on the cities of Ireland in a similar way to the 1940s instalments of the *Capuchin Annual*. As Antoinette Quinn describes, this was explicitly publicised as a country writer bringing his lens to the life of the capital city, as 'part of the *Press*'s drive to foster its image as a national rather than a Dublin newspaper'.[40] The manifesto which opened 'City Commentary' was therefore explicit in its reading of the Dublin as 'an integral part of Ireland', railing against the charge that it was 'spiritually, mentally and nationally… a thing apart'.[41] The call of this life was also not necessarily one which Kavanagh heard from some innate desire to return, but was specifically rooted in his struggle to survive economically in the city. Either way, one of the most powerful critics of rural fantasies was also a beneficiary of the culture that placed such a value on them, a contradiction encapsulating how the division between nostalgia and a more cosmopolitan form of literary expression was a porous one.

Nostalgic Realism in the War Years

Forms of pastoral had a new relevance not just amidst mechanical and industrialised warfare, but also in a longer-standing reorganisation of world capital. As Williams describes in the latter chapters of *The Country and the City*, where 'the "metropolitan" societies of Western Europe and North America are the "advanced", "developed", industrialised states; centres of economic, political and cultural power', this stands in sharp contrast to the 'other societies which are seen as "underdeveloped": still mainly agricultural or "under-industrialised"'. 'Thus', for Williams, 'a model of city and country, in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and, is seen but also challenged as a model of the world'.[42] Both states north and south, and both capital cities Belfast and Dublin, were already invested in, and affected by, this dominant pattern of global exchange, and the Irish novel often reflects an increasing sense of isolation, whether offering stratagems of escape to provincial solipsism, or undertaking a stern diagnosis of such insularity. Irish writers frequently turned towards the traditional and reliable mode of historical fiction to encode attitudes about the present. In both they could rely upon the already established axes of the country and the city. This structure of feeling was fundamentally altered by the increasing presence of the elsewhere both as a location for writers and their audience, as well as for the characters in their novels. However, the tug of war between tradition and modernity, as well as the country and the city, remained a productive theme for Irish writing during the war years. As the first few chapters of this thesis have argued,

[40] Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: A Biography* (Dublin, 2001), 206.
[41] Piers Plowman, 'City Commentary', *The Irish Press* (14 September 1942), 2.
[42] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 334.

the model of city and country in Irish economics, politics and culture already went beyond the boundaries of the bipartite state structure left on the island after partition.

Ireland was frequently characterised in this era as a benighted rural backwater in opposition to the enlightened European cities by both outsiders and internal perceptions. But this was in the face of a fairly rapidly increasing urban population, belying a collective decline in rural populations north and south since partition. Perceptions of both north and south often referred to the relative development of their industry, thereby adhering to the cultural logic of a partition based socially and economically on rural-urban lines. But they also reflected the changing positions of each state in an ever-widening framework of global relations. Irish writing often utilised the modes of nostalgia in this context to rewrite the history of its cities and towns as a place where the comparatively recent and more peaceful rural past was only a moment of reflection away. On a simplistic level, British attitudes towards the southern state's neutrality were explicitly linked to its perceived rural economy and society. Wills summarises the logic of these perceptions: '[i]t seemed reasonable that a people who did not enjoy the benefits of modern city life, the prosperity of industrial development, or the fruits of empire, should stay out of a conflict between economically advanced and highly mechanised powers'.[43] This attitude was mirrored in Irish literary production during the war. As Guy Woodward writes of Conal Casey's short *Capuchin Annual* travelogue 'Journey in Ulster', 'the war is incompatible with an ancient, peaceful, primarily rural and devotional culture'.[44] From the reverse perspective, the northern state could be 'deliver[ed]… from the menace of Irish nationalism' both in terms of the sympathy it earned with its wartime engagements and distance from the ruralist representations of Irish nationalism north and south.[45] But this picture is not as aesthetically divergent as it seems, since many of this period's Irish novels mirror those of Britain, particularly Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), in that they are often 'about tracing one's history by studying the traces and sites of memory that provide one with a sense of historical identity'.[46] In other words, as Robert Hewison termed of 'Deep England', they construct 'an image of the national heartland… as much out of folk memories, poetry and cultural associations as actuality', returning to the rural past as a source of ontological security.[47]

Marina Mackay's study of English modernist writers during the war describes how they were 'compelled to scrutinise the political and moral claims of insular nationality at a time when

[43] Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 35.
[44] Woodward, *Culture*, 216.
[45] James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), 27.
[46] David Rothstein, '"Brideshead Revisited" and the Modern Historicisation of Memory', *Studies in the Novel* 3 (1993), 318-331: 319.
[47] Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, Art and Politics since 1940* (London, 1997), 23.

allegiance was demanded as rarely before'.[48] While this is certainly true of some Irish writing in the period, much focus has been placed on modernist responses to 'The Emergency' to the detriment of writers who did not fall within the modernist bracket. As Joep Leerssen argues, while the 'mid-twentieth century has been described generally as a period of relentless modernity, the time of Sartre and Beckett', little focus has been given to 'the no less important wave of popular nostalgia that formed its counterpart in these decades'.[49] The Irish novel was motivated by a nostalgic desire to preserve the cultural traditions of the previous generations, with the rural countryside a means by which to escape from modern warfare into the customs and traditions of the past. Maura Laverty's *Never No More: The Story of a Lost Village* (1942), Michael McLaverty's *Lost Fields* (1941), and Mary Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street* (1945) – later subtitled 'a family story of Irish small-town life' – reflected a popular frame of nostalgia for life outside the major cities which, as in Britain, complemented an institutional effort to reenergise the countryside. While the titles and subtitles of the aforementioned novels of Laverty and McLaverty symbolise a commitment to reconstructing the past through a particular space, they also register the irretrievable loss of that particular space. They update, for a contemporary situation, the earlier pastoral representations which held appeal for the Irish Free State and its writers after the traumatic emergence of a state from the violent crucible of the revolutionary period.

Wills suggests that the Irish 'documentary realist movement… became bound up with a form of provincial nostalgia' during the Second World War. For writers like Maura Laverty, Michael McLaverty, Kate O'Brien, and Mary Lavin, the novel was a means of negotiating a course through tradition and modernity in Irish fiction during this period, mapping an Ireland caught at the juncture between two generations. As Wills notes, the archipelagic trend towards nostalgic literature was a response to the war just as much in Ireland as in Britain, since '[f]antasies of rural Ireland, like nostalgia for an unspoilt England, were solace for those bruised by the effects of the war'. This was because '[t]hey represented the known, the familiar, that which we like to imagine continues elsewhere despite all the chaos and disruption of our lives'. However, they were also flowerings of a modernity in the form of greater access between the country and the city, inspiring this 'combination of realism and nostalgia' which

> had initially been spurred by the growth of Ireland's fledgling tourist industry. As excursion trains became more and more fashionable in the late 30s, and motorcar ownership rose, the market grew for material aimed not solely at the foreign visitor, but at the Irish city dweller, who was encouraged to discover his own country.[50]

[48] Marina Mackay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge, 2007), 2.
[49] Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006), 238.
[50] Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 294, 296, 295.

Wills provides a vivid picture of the social and economic backgrounds which underpinned this rise in nostalgic realism, which was aligned with a wider preservationist ethos in Ireland at the time. But what were the formal qualities of this nostalgic realism? In the place of the considered focus on narrative progression which derived from a concern with the story of Ireland in the historical novels before the war, the popular format tended to undertake detailed descriptions of the landscape and customs of their locations. Offering little gloss on major historical events, these novels emphasised a memory rooted in place rather than time.

The use of nostalgia, particularly for 'rural Ireland', must be understood as deeply engaged in positioning the pasts of Ireland for the present. These narratives approach the reconstruction of place from a diverse range of social and political outlooks, sharing some similarities but offering a range of responses to the traumatic processes of modernisation, urbanisation, and the mechanised warfare that shadowed their writing and publication. There are even different forms of nostalgia being expressed. Glossing the definitions of Svetlana Boym, Denis Walder provides a useful distinction between what he terms 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgics in his *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory* (2010). For Walder, '"restorative nostalgics" try to restore the past, as in national and nationalist revivals everywhere, turning history into tradition and myth and monument; reflective nostalgics realise the partial, fragmentary nature of history or histories, and linger on ruins and loss'.[51] Both of these uses of nostalgia were prevalent in the culture of Ireland of this time, but whereas movements like Muintir na Tire sought to proselytise for a return to the countryside, a much more complex engagement with the uses of nostalgia is evident in the Irish novel. This is particularly true on the level of space, with the Irish novel longing for the simplicity of the village life near the Bog of Allen, the strictly defined class society of small-town Ireland in the years after the famine, a Toome farmland that lay beyond the intrusions of the northern state, or even the cultivating environment of the nineteenth-century European city.

Historical realism and prolepsis in The Land of Spices

Kate O'Brien's 1941 novel *The Land of Spices*, which consciously mapped a European exterior as a foil to Irish provincial life, offered an alternative, transnational history of Irish social and intellectual development. However, partly because of its almost instant banning by the Censorship Board, the novel has often been read in the light of what is considered a staid and conservative culture in Ireland during the war. Seán O'Faoláin, for example, felt that its banning brought into question whether Ireland had 'Standards and Taste', suggesting again that it was

[51] Denis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* (London, 2010), 11.

Irish society's closeness to the farm which was at fault: 'I am sure most people would agree, at any rate, that a people like ours are as yet comparatively unspoiled, living as we do a natural existence as farmers, or as townspeople still close to the farm'.[52] As a text which contrasts the isolated life of 'rural Ireland' with the more cosmopolitan aspirations that could be found on the continent, *The Land of Spices* is constructed by O'Faoláin as a radical intervention into this rural society. This frame of reading O'Brien as a radical author has been reiterated in more recent studies of the Limerick author. Eibhear Walshe, for example, has described O'Brien as a 'subversive novelist' who is 'deceptively traditional in form but radical in content', with 'each novel a Trojan horse smuggling in forbidden topics… through the medium of her civilised, graceful narratives'.[53] This description certainly rings true of her novel *Mary Lavelle* (1936), which was also banned. This earlier novel constructs Ireland *in absentia* as a socially, economically, and sexually enervating environment figured against the exotic allure of the Basque country. But the alluring portrait of Europe which emerged in that novel was fleshed out more fully in *The Land of Spices* by an explicit comparison with the society of Ireland just before the onset of the First World War. The two characters which the novel focuses on and implicitly asks the reader to compare are Helen Archer and Anna Murphy. The elder Archer's story is told through flashbacks in the narrative which reveal that she grew up in Brussels as an English University Professor's daughter in background characterised by transnational cosmopolitanism, but after discovering her father's homosexual affair with a student gave herself to the strictures of a religious order. Archer, having taken the name Reverend Mother Marie-Hélène eventually ends up in a convent just outside Mellick (a fictional name for Limerick), where she encounters a prodigal young student named Anna Murphy, herself from a middle-class rural Irish background. As Ann Owens Weekes has suggested, these narratives are figured in the novel as contrapuntal, with both characters being placed in literal and symbolic dialogue with each other.[54]

However, the effect of this contrapuntal composition is arguably the converse of what Walshe describes. Going against this dominant grain of interpreting the novel, Michael G. Cronin argues in his reading of *The Land of Spices* that Kate O'Brien was 'deeply committed to and enmeshed in the value-systems of her epoch'. Cronin's persuasive analysis of *The Land of Spices* exposes many of the problems with readings of the novel and O'Brien more generally as radical, reassessing her as a classically liberal writer who deploys a double-helixed *bildungsroman* format in this instance to sketch a 'Whiggish' form of development. The

[52] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Standards and Taste', *The Bell* 2.3 (June 1941), 5-11: 5.
[53] Eibhear Walshe, *Kate O'Brien: A Writing Life* (Dublin, 2006), 2.
[54] Ann Owens Weekes, *Irish Women Writers: An Uncharted Tradition* (Lexington, 1990), 127.

exposition of these lives is contrapuntal and generational, with Murphy faced with similar dilemmas to her older mentor, and the effect is that she is 'refined and made ethically stronger by the lessons drawn from [Archer's] mistakes'. As Cronin suggests, the banning of *The Land of Spices* was a *cause célèbre* for writers and commentators in this period since 'a strain of irrationality and dysfunction in the national project had to be exposed'. More specifically, he writes that for O'Faoláin, 'the stark divergence of views between the newspaper reviewers and the Censorship Board, represented a failure of cultural authority in the new state'.[55] Although disagreeing with this perception in her own persuasive reading of the novel, Anne Fogarty notes that the 'contrasting fates of the two heroines at the end of the novel symbolise opposing possibilities for female liberation'. Indeed as Fogarty suggests, the novel is riven with 'ambivalence' and 'opposing meanings', and the 'repressions and unvoiced events that the novel fastens on are intimately associated with place'.[56] I want to more modestly suggest that this ambivalence and silence in the novel, as well as Cronin's provocative argument, offer a way of reading the novel as deeply enmeshed in a culture of nostalgia at the time, which was also intimately connected to place. Both of these arguments can lead to a re-evaluation of the oppositional representation and socialisation of geography in the novel, with this narrative of improvement filtered through a continental role model necessarily privileging the elsewhere at the expense of Ireland. Whatever about the silences within the text, the geography of *The Land of Spices*, opposing Europe along the familiar lines of rural tradition and urban modernity, is certainly not a radical move. The intrusive style of the author consistently emphasises the contrast between the benefits of a European consciousness which is really an urban consciousness, and the restrictions of a life rooted in the parochialism of rural Ireland.

The novel almost dictatorially frames the action as an exposition of this central dynamic in one of the later chapters, 'Summer With Charlie', in which the titular brother of Anna Murphy is killed in a swimming accident. Although set in Doonbeg in the West of Ireland, this is not a 'return' to peasant roots but the retreat of Anna and her wealthy family during the summer holidays to a 'furnished house'. Taking place in the early days of the First World War, this departure from the restrictions of the convent setting allows the novel to outline the higher social classes present in the village through a series of representative figures: a Judge, a Bishop, and even a recently imprisoned suffragette from England. Holidaying amongst these figures at this crucial time, Anna is insinuated into a number of historical and political contexts in her

[55] Michael G. Cronin, 'Kate O'Brien and the Erotics of Liberal Catholic Dissent', *Field Day Review* 6 (2010), 28-51: 33, 48, 48, 20-1, 31.
[56] Anne Fogarty, '"The gentle thread of the little voice": Silence, Sexuality, and Subjectivity in Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices*', in Michael McAteer, ed., *Silence in Modern Irish Literature* (Leiden, 2017), 146-160: 157, 150.

encounters with them, including suffragism, constitutional nationalism, republicanism, and the recent Balkan Wars. This chapter thus represents her first engagements with her own context, and in the pivotal scene the Catholic Church, embodied in the form of the bishop, is set in train against the foreign liberalism which the suffragette Miss Robertson represents, with Anna and her younger brother Charlie the audience. In a delicately choreographed stand-off about nationalism and politics, the bishop considers the French-speaking convent in which Anna is schooled, as 'too European for present-day Irish requirements. Its detachment of spirit seems to me to stand in the way of nationalism'. Robertson, however, disagrees, arguing that 'Sinn Féin' is 'an unattractive motto to give to young people'. 'Ourselves alone' is figured as something of an antonym to 'detachment of spirit', which is defined a few pages later by Anna as 'when you don't let the things that happen to be happening round you seem much more important than what happens to other people or in other times'.[57] In the midst of these competing forces, Anna's definition of 'detachment of spirit' serves as a proleptic criticism for the present, but also as a didactic mantra for the novel itself, the standard by which to measure any representations of Europe or Ireland which are contained in the narrative.

For all its cognitive dissonance with the social and cultural project of the Free State, *The Land of Spices* was not an aberration in the geographical representations of Ireland in the 1940s. As Walshe contends, O'Brien specifically sought 'to contrast the cultural insularity of the Irish Free State with the enlightened, European Catholicism of her imagined bourgeoise'. While for Walshe, Éamon de Valera created 'an imaginary sense of nationhood by idealising Gaelic rural self-sufficiency and frugality', O'Brien was instead 'actively countering this with her mythical version of an Irish bourgeoisie, made noble by a kind of gentrified austerity and by the civilising traditions of European Catholicism'.[58] But this description of an 'imaginary sense of nationhood' is tautological in Benedict Anderson's definition.[59] If *The Land of Spices* offered an active countering of a putative rural self-sufficiency, then the eventual move of Anna Murphy to Dublin through the winning of a scholarship conforms to the standard trope of abandonment of rural Ireland for a more cosmopolitan future. Her implied critique of the monolithic structures of the state was a repetition of representational tactics which had adhered long before the 1940s, as the consistent comparison of the novel to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) would suggest. As such, and while Cronin makes a distinction between James Joyce's casting of 'history as a trauma to be resolved rather than a set of conditions with which to engage dynamically' and O'Brien's commitment to a Whiggish

[57] Kate O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* (1942; London, 2006), 195, 200, 200, 203.
[58] Walshe, *O'Brien,* 91, 77.
[59] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (rev. edn, London, 2006).

alternative form of development, on a more simplistic level both of these works didactically position Europe as the ideal location of exile.[60]

Although the novel predated 'The Ireland That We Dreamed Of' by a couple of years, it is instructive to note that O'Brien's creation of a myth also relied upon a similar discourse of nostalgia to de Valera's broadcast. An escape into the past is central to both imaginings, but in *The Land of Spices* the escape also signposts the intellectual development of her protagonists. The idea of the Irish countryside is certainly the idea of childhood for O'Brien, but the novel departs by degrees from this cliché by partially rejecting the teleological simplicity of the city as a solution to the pains of development. Early in the novel, it is made clear that the wanderlust adventures of Helen Archer's childhood formed, for her, an education in art, opera, poetry, architecture, or in other words, an embourgeoisement. Domesticated initially in the '*Rue Saint Isidore*' in a 'little stretch of leafy, high-perched, shabby suburb' in Brussels, Helen's early years are interchangeable with these surroundings, in what the narrator terms 'the suburb of childhood'. Rather than an exceptional space, the *Rue* is an environment 'repeated in a thousand European towns, of unpretentious, civilised routine; a little girl's world of everyday sounds and smells – tasks, pleasures and impressions'. It is also a perfect location from which to travel to Europe to corroborate this shared civilisation, as the narrative makes clear by taking Helen to all of these places:

> She was free to read anything, but she had to read the works he prescribed and discussed with her. He took her all over Belgium and into Holland and the Rhineland in pursuit of art and architecture and history. He took her through Normandy one spring, through Brittany another. When she was sixteen he took her for eight weeks to Paris.

As the narrator goes on to explain through free indirect discourse, 'It was a lively and instructive time in Paris, with "much to be examined"'.[61] Travel here is a cognate of education and development, and the sense of a Europe full of art, architecture, and history is less than delicately constructed as a place which is not Ireland, or in any case not the Ireland of the novel. The anachronistic or proleptic aspect of this is heightened by Helen's liberty 'to read anything', which is about as obvious a comparison with the Ireland of the novel's banning as could be imagined. As such, what Matthew Reznicek, in his reading of her later novel *As Music And Splendour* (1958), terms an essential aspect of 'the Irish women's economic *Bildungsroman*', namely 'the tension between personal independence and taking one's place within the broader socioeconomic landscape of capitalism and modernity', is not really in evidence here, since personal independence and the broader socioeconomic landscape are both associated with

[60] Cronin, 'Liberal Catholic Dissent', 48.
[61] O'Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 50, 154-6, 154, 154.

Europe.[62] The free movement which Helen enjoys on the continent is not offered to her in the convent, nor is it granted to Anna until her move to Dublin at the end of the novel. Indeed significantly, this move to Dublin is in itself only forecast by Helen rather than actually detailed in *The Land of Spices*.

This is also in the context of an Ireland where, as Wills states, 'physical immobilisation caused by travel restrictions [were] responsible for a cultural and psychological state of siege'.[63] The staged retreat to a rustic, picturesque Ireland by Helen, which bypasses the complexity of Irish cities and towns, is thus a pastoral escape to tranquillity in opposition to the trauma of witnessing her father's homosexual encounter. This is traumatic even in terms of its narrative progression, since instead of describing the practicalities of her departure to Ireland, O'Brien catapults Helen into an Irish landscape which is interchangeable with its people. Helen develops 'an immediate fancy to the beautiful Georgian buildings with their dark woods and gleaming lake; she took an equal fancy to the Irish character'. Ireland is thus an uncomplicated retreat to a bucolic simplicity, 'to as pleasant a life as might be found in a valley shaded on the one side by religious vows and on the other by an inborn need to be a success with her fellow-creatures'. Like Cyril Connolly's view of Dublin as an exotic other, the 'beautiful' and 'dark' landscape is once again an analogy for the Irish people themselves, the convent, by degrees, stands separate from this. As a *bildungsroman*, the action evokes a clear contrast between the two types of education offered in different times, and the paradoxical confinement and stimulation of the convent is registered as a more ambiguous space than the desirable Europeanisation of Helen's childhood. As Archer herself says, 'Our nuns are not a nation, and our business is not with national matters'.[64] The convent, in bringing together this international range of perspectives and backgrounds, instead potentially offers an escape through cosmopolitan education, but is beholden to this collision of *raumgeists* in a way that the unencumbered journeys of Helen Archer are not. The setting is also a stage for the battle of its central *raumgeists.* In its isolation *Compagnie de la Sainte Famille* inhabits a liminal space in Irish society similar to the Big House, but also offers a way into that society through the visits of the church and the Catholic bourgeoisie. This collision of spatial narratives is particularly important when considering the context of the novel's publication, since the stasis of a convent which is a partial synecdoche for southern Irish society is obviously intrinsically linked to its isolation during 'The Emergency'.

The convent school also harbours a sense of a Dublin-centric Irish society, albeit a

[62] Matthew Reznicek, 'These Irish Investments: Money as an Organising Principle in *As Music And Splendour*', *Women's Studies* 44 (2015), 197–223: 197.
[63] Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 279.
[64] O'Brien, *The Land of Spices* 92, 15.

Dublin which is gradually being taken over by this Catholic middle-class. *Sainte Famille* is thus distant from the society of manners and rumours which the Dublin of the novel is constructed, and yet still deeply connected to its socioeconomic hierarchies. This contradiction is evident in the episode where Molly Redmond, a classmate of Anna's, undergoes bullying for her turf commissioner father's very public profligacy and ensuing family troubles. She is precisely identified as coming from a Dublin suburban home which has 'a tennis court *and* a croquet lawn', having also 'been to London twice for Christmas, and always spent the summer holidays at a place called Knocke'. O'Brien charts the narrative of the Redmonds onto a wider one of rural to urban migration, with her nouveau riche mother and father's marital troubles subject to Ascendancy snobbery, where 'men [talk] about the case in the Kildare Street Club'. This illustrates how, in its early and middle stages, the novel remotely constructs Dublin through dialogue as a space which is watched and reported on by public institutions: 'Private! It's in the *Irish Times*!'.[65] The location of the house in Monkstown renders the Redmonds' narrative a representative one of the nineteenth-century Catholic upper middle-classes 'taking over' the capital city. In particular, the holidays to London and to Knocke (in Belgium, not the modern day Irish Catholic pilgrimage site) suggest the pull of Europe as a site of leisure, with such tourist trips 'taking hold as a cultural practice beyond the confines of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy' since Catholic Emancipation in 1829.[66] But 'Redmond' here also more obviously serves as a reminder of the Irish Parliamentary Party leader whose political fortunes were attached to the interests of upper middle-class Catholics which this family represents, the narrative haunted by the once potential alterative of constitutional nationalism. As such, Gregory Castle argues that in *The Land of Spices*, 'parochial worldliness constructs narrative temporalities that model a form of belated self-cultivation that is both outside time and in touch with the quicksilver presentness of aspiration itself'. For Castle, the convent 'takes the students (and their teachers) outside the nation-time'.[67] This might be true of the specific nation time of Ireland in the 1940s, but the emphasis on the novel is an alternative form of political organisation, which although eschewing the restrictions of the essentialist discourses that were associated with republicanism, replaces them with a no less circumscribing form of attachment to continental European cities which were subject at the time to the ravages of war.

As Cronin argues, 'O'Brien was writing at a time when European politics was dominated by totalitarianism and the struggle against it, and her attachment to an essentially nineteenth-century model of ethical liberal individualism was, in those circumstances, pertinent

[65] O'Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 126-7, 128, 137; O'Brien's emphasis.
[66] Raphaël Ingelbien, *Irish Cultures of Travel: Writing on the Continent, 1829-1914* (London, 2016), 6.
[67] Gregory Castle, 'Destinies of *bildung*: Belatedness and the Modernist Novel', in Gregory Castle, ed., *A History of the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge, 2015), 483-508: 500.

but also *nostalgic'*.[68] It was also nostalgic with a distinct sense that Ireland had taken the wrong turn in abandoning its vaguely-defined tradition of European liberal democracy for more exclusivist forms of national identity. In the oppositional structure of the novel, this nostalgia has a logical geographical corollary in the caricature of nationalism in the figure of Mother Mary Andrew, who in her religious dogmatism has been read by Elizabeth Butler Cullingford as a microcosm of the nascent Free State.[69] Given that the origin story of Mother Helen Archer is emphasised in the novel, it is curious that Mother Andrew's background has received less attention: 'This nun came from Tyrone, had an unpleasant accent and was too pedantic for the Bishop's liking'.[70] This description comes after Andrew suggests that she has 'very strong views' on 'the matter' of 'an enthusiastic Revivalist from Dublin' coming to teach the children, ostensibly setting her up as an unrepentant nationalist. Cronin diagnoses this as symptomatic of 'her "status-uneasiness" within the convent', a precarity which 'suggests that the origins of post-independence failure lie in the earlier eclipsing of the Catholic bourgeoisie, either Unionist or Irish Parliamentary Party in their politics, by the arriviste lower middle-class supporters of Sinn Féin'.[71] What is being offered by her 1941 novel is a political and geographical narrative of state formation which is contrapuntally developed alongside Anna and Helen's narrative of individual growth. Despite the clear differences between the nation and the individual, however, the logical destination for each is the city, the restorative nostalgia for an Irish Ireland replaced with a restorative nostalgia for a Europeanised one.

Recovering the lost village

There are marked similarities in the biographies of Kate O'Brien and her younger compatriot Maura Laverty, with both living in Spain as governesses during the 1920s. There are similarities in the subjects that they chose in their writing, particularly with regards to *More Than Human* (1944) and *Mary Lavelle* which both drew upon their author's experiences on the continent. The emphasis which O'Brien places on the complex social and cultural relations between particular locations in Ireland is also in evidence in Laverty's writing, although largely in the service of a reclaiming a sense of village life which could balance tradition and modernity rather than a repudiation of 'rural Ireland'. The sense of balance which Laverty represented in the countryside rewrites those representations like *The Story of Ireland* which offered a more simplistic way of reading Ireland's geography. The contrast between these viewpoints is

[68] Cronin, 'Liberal Catholic Dissent', 33.
[69] Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, '"Our Nuns Are Not a Nation": Politicising the Convent in Irish Literature and Film', *Éire-Ireland* 41.1 (2006), 9–39: 28-9.
[70] O'Brien, *The Land of Spices*, 18.
[71] Cronin, 'Liberal Catholic Dissent', 49.

particularly marked in O'Faoláin's preface to *Never No More: The Story of a Lost Village*, included in the first edition published by Longmans in 1943. Writing in full acknowledgement for an English audience, O'Faoláin claimed that the reader will find 'beauty, nostalgia, sentimentality (it drips with it)… and one need not even wish that this life were more fastidious, or without its rural crudities, or its rural gall'. With the introduction adopting the same coordinates of interpretation the writer used in *Story Of Ireland*, Laverty's novel was also described as being 'surrounded by a village life as stable and as lively as a tradition, as untouched by time as if we were back in the Dorsetshire of Hardy'. These are remarkably similar terms and indeed locations to the 'Deep England' of Angus Calder. O'Faoláin's interpretation of *Never No More* as an Irish imprint of a British trend for nostalgic desire was also in keeping with the preservationist theme of the novel. This is underlined as he locates the action of the text outside of a fairly detailed list of those things he considered representative of modern, metropolitan life, which included the 'lashing of money, endless rounds of parties, sport galore polo, tennis, golf, races, the hunt, servants, batmen, motorcars, silver, scandals by the ton, balls up in Dublin, foreign fields of sport and bloodshed'.[72] *The New York Times*' reviewer of the novel certainly agreed, claiming it to be 'written as only one of Irish blood could write it, breathing a civilisation that has never succumbed to industrial strain or to over exigencies of modernity'.[73]

However, *Never No More* is not, in O'Faoláin's terms, 'richer than that glittering life those few miles away where everything, as in every sophisticated society, is pared away with friction with something else'.[74] Rather it reveals a village life which is conditioned by its relationship to the centres of Kilkenny and Dublin. The narrative focuses upon the small village Ballyderrig – a fictionalised Rathangan, Kildare – yet even while serving as a synecdoche of traditional values it is represented as being intimately connected to more putatively modern places. Even if the entire action of the novel takes place there, the narrator, Delia Scully, can only understand Ballyderrig in relation to these spaces, and the reader is invited to do so as well on a number of occasions. As Wills suggests, the novel's message is ostensibly that 'folk practices and country lore could enable a balanced integration of modern and traditional Irish life', which 'offered little resistance' to the desires of the ruling government.[75] There is also a balance of the country and the city, with Dublin a felt presence in the village. For example, the town is intimately connected to the capital by the Dublin-born parish priest, who demonstrates

[72] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Preface', in Maura Laverty, *Never No More: The Story of a Lost Irish Village* (1943; London, 1985), v-ix: vi, vii, vii.
[73] Jane Southron, 'An Irish Tale', review of *Never No More* by Maura Laverty, *The New York Times* (22 March 1942), 6.
[74] O'Faoláin, 'Preface', viii.
[75] Clair Wills, *The Best Are Leaving: Emigration and Post-War Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2015), 91.

'the general queerness of Dublin people'. A more complex sense of orientation than O'Faoláin allows in his introduction is demonstrated by Delia, who in one instance notes 'from living so near the Curragh with its English population we had grown apathetic about such improbable things as Irish freedom… the three Reddin boys were the only Ballyderrig men who went up to Dublin in Easter week'.[76] While the introduction claims that the village lies 'indifferent' to 'the Curragh racecourse and in the great red brick military camp across the plain', Ballyderrig's proximity to the Curragh is explained as the reason for the town's apathy about Irish freedom.[77] Echoing Ogla Fielden's *Island Story* (1933), the village is also apathetic to British nationalism, with the First World War solely considered as 'the golden opportunity' for the village farmers. Ballyderrig even becomes an ideological battleground for the Irish Civil War—another conflict interpreted as a clash between Dublin and the margins—as the Reddin brothers are killed by the 'Staters' in the course of the novel, but not before the Dillonite Dubliner Father Dempsey exacts the 'full force of his clerical condemnation' upon them.[78]

The emphasis throughout, however, is on place rather than time, which is described as 'a small village that was saturated with the natural prudery common to all small villages'. The knowledge this implies demonstrates the narrator's awareness of the network of settlements within the countryside. While the novel is predominantly an elegy for Delia's grandmother, 'Gran', the divergence from this narrative in the form of nostalgic tales about the rest of the villagers nuances the identity of Ballyderrig as a village. For instance, in an early passage the mentally disabled Rafferty speaks a 'flow of beautiful words in the accent of some place that was certainly not Ballyderrig. Where did he get these words? Not from the people among whom he lived. And the world of books was, of course, closed to him'. Words are intimately connected to this particular place, as it is later claimed: 'The outside world calls it strong sex appeal. In Ballyderrig we call it "The rale stuff"'. With a lack of a sustained plotline, the novel takes the form of an extended series of introductions to the stories of villagers like Rafferty, who are often represented as fixed in their own ways by a natural inclination or impediment. With a few exceptions, they are always considered as being *of* that particular place, epitomised by the lazy poet Jed 'Britches' Healy who had emigrated to America for work at 'a bottling store' only to come back home because '[s]ix months of it had been enough'. This is not a return to a bucolic civilisation, however, as Ballyderrig is often a liminal space of involvement in parochial and world affairs, with the library of the Quakers showing a type of access to the modern world which unveils Delia's 'love of books, a love of all that printed paper stood for: romance,

[76] Laverty, *Never No More*, 52, 52.
[77] O'Faoláin, 'Preface', vii-viii.
[78] Laverty, *Never No More*, 324, 224.

tolerance, wisdom, culture – all the things that those of us who were born and bred there mistakenly believed were scarce in Ballyderrig'. Whatever about the self-image of the villagers—an image surely created and sustained by a consciousness of the city—the presence of the library, with works by 'Shakespeare and Voltaire, Dickens and Victor Hugo, Milton, Thackery, Sir Walter Scott' as well as 'school primers, medical books, weighty legal volumes and paper-backed novels by Ouida and Mrs. Henry Wood and Charles Garvice', illustrates a village which is intrinsically connected to both traditional and modern life.[79]

The particularity of Ballyderrig is underlined by the experience of its villagers elsewhere, and the trauma of migration to Kilkenny at the end of *Never No More*, the result of the grandmother's death, exemplifies the deep sense of loss that leaving the village elicits in Delia. The novel resists the kind of developmental narrative endorsed by *The Land of Spices*, where only the convent provides a route into urban Europe: Delia is never comfortable in the surroundings of her National School. Relatedly, for all its connection to the culture and society of the modern world, Ballyderrig is disconnected from a distinct temporal narrative, as both Wills and Cronin notice.[80] Although ostensibly set over four years, it includes a composite of historical incidents from 1920-1928, with the grandmother dying 'on the twenty-third of September, nineteen hundred and twenty-eight'.[81] Cronin describes this temporal confusion in *Never No More* not as a mistake on the part of Laverty, but a 'deeper structural disjunction' between a

> realist attempt to accurately capture a historically rural community that is now 'lost', a folkloric tendency to situate this community in a 'traditional' temporal plane outside of history, and a utopian gesture towards imagining an ideal rural community that is not so much lost as yet to be created.[82]

Perhaps the only certainty about the date is that it charts the gestation of the state from the vantage point of village Ireland, a perspective which was esteemed by aspects of the political establishment. But the structural disjunction is also stylistic, with the novel often innovatively collapsing into the forms of cookbook, vignette, poetry, diary entry, and the short story, in its relentless attempt to capture its ideal village. *Never No More* is, above all else, a composite of different people and times which is bounded only by its place. The retrospective tone of the novel is far more concerned with an archival nostalgia than proselytising for a liberal-capitalist sense of development: a reflective nostalgia rather than a restorative one.

[79] Laverty, *Never No More*, 20, 253, 170-1, 97, 97.
[80] Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, 91; Michael G. Cronin, *Impure Thoughts: Sexuality, Catholicism and Literature in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Manchester, 2013), 162.
[81] Laverty, *Never No More*, 280.
[82] Cronin, *Impure Thoughts*, 163.

Michael McLaverty's continuing urban homesickness

In an early passage, *Never No More* reflects the market for stories of small-town Irish life in which it was operating. Capitalising on a 'golden opportunity' which was analogous to the Ballyderrig farmers' success during the First World War, Delia writes the stories of the village for an urban audience: 'I always thought of the Reillys with gratitude, for their departure for Edenderry provided me with inspiration that won ten-and-six for me in the Poet's Corner of a Dublin weekly paper'.[83] With faint echoes of O'Faoláin's repackaging of his visions of Ireland for a British audience, the transfer from village story to literature in *Never No More* is entirely in keeping with the publishing contexts of the War. Wills describes that Michael McLaverty and Mary Lavin in particular

> produced literary versions of this homesickness for the recent past. Though there was often rather more sting in the tail of their depictions of rural life, they contributed nonetheless to the phenomenon of rural – or at any rate, village – Ireland being recycled for consumption in the cities and towns.[84]

Despite the more overt political concerns in the northern writer's work, *Never No More* shares similarities with McLaverty's *Lost Fields* (1941), a novel which examined rural and urban life from the viewpoint of a nationalist family in mid-1930s Belfast. Each text displays a generational stability which informs the reading of space, with the exceptionally strong grandmother figures in both being fictional embodiments of moral and cultural values. This connection to other writers on the island is despite what Guy Woodward's *Culture, Northern Ireland, and the Second World War* (2014) describes as a dominant view of the war as 'an instrumental factor in the post-war divergence of north and south'.[85] McLaverty's work appeared in *The Bell* and *The Capuchin Annual*, and his fiction was continuously influenced by Daniel Corkery and Liam O'Flaherty before, during, and after the Second World War.[86] Building upon the representation of *Call My Brother Back*, McLaverty's second novel focuses on the fall-out from a Great Depression Belfast, as the marginalised community of the Falls Road is represented by three generations of the Griffin family. In being centred upon three generations of a family, his depiction of Belfast and its surrounds is also beholden to his aforementioned admiration of *A Nest of Simple Folk*.[87] As with his earlier novel, geographical confusion is coterminous with political and ontological confusion. However, despite the influence of Russian writers on McLaverty, there is no Europe or project of Europeanisation in

[83] Laverty, *Never No More*, 86-7.
[84] Wills, *That Neutral Island*, 195
[85] Woodward, *Culture*, 20.
[86] See the previous chapter for an outline of McLaverty's construction of an all-island literary genealogy.
[87] Michael McLaverty, *In Quiet Places: The Uncollected Stories, Letters, and Critical Prose of Michael McLaverty*, ed. Sophia Hillan King (Dublin, 1989), 76.

Lost Fields, which barely betrays a sense of the elsewhere beyond the village of Toome in South West Antrim or the west and centre of Belfast: Cyril Connolly's description of an Ireland stuck in 1938 might also have been validated here. With the Griffins and many others in the West Belfast community disrupted by the intrusions of police, debt collectors, and bailiffs in *Lost Fields*, the family's desire to escape from the grimy Belfast is an obvious cipher for an escape from the state.

McLaverty's thematic focus on the plight of northern Catholics did not significantly change with the onset of war in Europe and its eventual destruction of much of Belfast in the Blitz of April 1941. As Sophia Hillan King notes, while the devastation of the Blitz provided an intensely detailed passage of observation in McLaverty's journals, which 'captur[ed] the spirit of comradeship and resilience that seems so to have characterised the people of the city at that time', the war did not enter into any of his later novels.[88] *Lost Fields*, the writing of which was already well underway by the time of the Blitz anyway, focuses on the social and economic marginalisation of the West Belfast Catholic community in the 1930s, with fuller ambitions towards an epic representation than the episodic patchwork of his earlier novel. If, for Georg Lukács, the novel offers a greater capacity 'to expose and develop in breadth the entire process arising out of the social condition of modern life', McLaverty's embrace of the generational format allowed forms of memory rooted in experience of place to be set in dialogue.[89] In adopting a more classic familial narrative, *Lost Fields* is thus able to diagnose the enforced poverty in West Belfast in contrast to the freedom of rural subsistence on the farm in Toome in a more coherent way than the overdetermined contrast of island and city in *Call My Brother Back*. This also enabled McLaverty to establish the values of the rural and urban over the wide expanse of a cross-generational period, with the always-anticipated migration of the Griffin family to Toome rejected by one of the sons. This is the same familial split that occurs at the beginning of *Never No More*, exemplifying a deeper portrait of Belfast than the earlier novel.

But the symbols of *Call My Brother Back* work recur. Like the Bog of Allen in Laverty's novel, the central image of West Belfast as a wasteland in *Call My Brother Back* is returned to again and again in *Lost Fields*, with the patriarch Johnny Griffin caught gazing 'at the desolate mill chimneys and their ragged windows' in an early passage, lamenting that '[t]his wing of the city is done… and when the brickyard goes there'll be nothing left'. Johnny's own migration from the countryside was facilitated by employment in the cotton mill, and after its closure he

[88] Sophia Hillan King, 'Conscience and the Novelist: Michael McLaverty's Journals and Critical Writings of the Forties', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 78.309 (1989), 58–71: 61.
[89] Georg Lukács, 'Art and Objective Truth', in Arthur Kahn, trans., *Writer and Critic* (London, 1978), 25-60: 54.

is left doing 'odd jobs around the docks' and 'carrying round travellers' hampers in his handcart'. His unemployment is explicitly linked to the Belfast environment. An early piece of scene-setting depicts the clay-coloured river which flows behind the houses of the district:

> It was in flood, and piles of tin cans with loose labels were carried under the arch near the brickfields; it flowed down past the backs of more houses, under arches, past football grounds with tin advertisements and away under roads to the sewage of the city and the open sea. The river itself came from the mountain that overlooked the backs of houses. At one time it had been contaminated by the soapy outflow from a bleach works and a steamy exudation from a cotton mill. But these were closed down now and there was nothing to discolour the river except the natural clay from the banks.[90]

Like Cathal O'Byrne's imaging of the city, the passage symbolises a fallen Belfast, the river returning to nature because of industrial underproduction.[91] It is also a crude microcosm for Johnny's own narrative arc. Just as the river has a rural source, but was contaminated by the city, he and his family eventually escape from the unhappiness of Belfast to the titular 'Lost Fields' of his childhood. The contamination of the Colin River by the cotton mill is symptomatic of the way in which McLaverty represents the city and industry across his work. Here it is contextualised in the Belfast of the 1930s, which was demonstrably worse on the whole for the Catholic district of McLaverty's novel than other parts of the city.[92] The pessimism and anti-materialism which ended the first novel is revisited, with the city-centre a place where Johnny is tricked by a 'yellow-faced porter rubbing his hands and smiling like a hangman' and an advertising-heavy cityscape.[93] Similar to the earlier novel, however, the countryside is a deep community of known relationships from whom the only state interference comes in the form of the postman.

If the sole coherent view we get of inner-city Belfast is of advertising hordes which dominate the inner city, this only evokes a contrast with the frugality of economic hardship: 'the familiar hoardings with their coloured advertisements and heard the faint punching of the tickets and the rattle of the coppers in the conductor's bag'.[94] While Edna Longley argues that the Catholic quarters of McLaverty's Belfast provide 'a half-tantalising, half consoling glimpse of the countryside', there is little consolation to be found in West Belfast here, and even less in the city centre.[95] The contrast with the earlier novel is predominantly in the different domestic and economic temporalities in the city, which is also figured as a generational change: 'there's

[90] Michael McLaverty, *Lost Fields* (1941; Belfast, 2004), 8-9, 9, 8.
[91] Richard Kirkland, *Cathal O'Byrne and the Northern Revival* (Liverpool, 2006), 208.
[92] For an overview of the sectarianism in Belfast in the interwar years, as well as the northern state's response to it, see Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789–2006* (Oxford, 2007), 457-463.
[93] McLaverty, *Lost Fields*, 24.
[94] McLaverty, *Lost Fields*, 155.
[95] Edna Longley, '"A Barbarous Nook": The Writer and Belfast', in *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Newcastle, 1994), 86-108: 91.

big changes coming over the people now. They're not like the old ones… there's no neighbourliness in the city'.[96] However, the grandmother of *Lost Fields* offers the key narrative emphasis as well as the most consistent clash of spaces and temporalities in dialogue and interior monologue. The 'cranky, generous old oddity who is the pivot of the whole', as Kate O'Brien's review considered her, is uprooted from her Toome cottage into the slums of West Belfast, figured in purgatorial forms.[97] On one of her first mornings in the city the biggest difference the grandmother notices is time:

> she would listen with impatient dread to the strike of other clocks in the neighbouring houses: how different they all were – as different as human beings… Their irregularity irritated her, and time and again she would cover her head with the clothes, but the sound always baffled her, swinging into her mind and nagging it to a peevish wakefulness.

For the Grandmother, to be moved from what is figured as the simplistic life of the countryside into the personal and economic complications of city life is to be moved from the comfort of tradition into the squalor of modernity. The novel constantly returns to what it terms the 'sinister inconsistency' of the 'neighbouring clocks', rupturing the sense of community that Jamesy felt in *Call My Brother Back*. As her health gradually worsens throughout her time in the city, their striking becomes a symbol of her imminent death: 'There's the clocks, the clocks, the clocks – they're going to strike'. Her passing precipitates a piece of pathetic fallacy reminiscent of the last scene of 'The Dead': 'The snow had fallen and the roofs, the sills, and the window sashes were hushed with its quiet softness'.[98]

The novel ends with the Griffins, tired of 'living on nothing else but hopes for the past six years', and thus leaving Belfast for the ancestral homeland in Toome where they will have to 'liv[e] from hand to mouth.[99] Only the older sibling stays on in the city. In the context of a unionist identity which was economically and aesthetically nourished on the success of the very industries he describes in detail, the anti-partitionist message behind this portrait of the Griffin family's pious sufferings are hardly difficult to decipher. As Eamonn Hughes writes, the representation of the move to Belfast from the countryside tended 'to be clouded by regret, nostalgia and feelings of loss, as can be seen in Michael McLaverty's Belfast novels'.[100] The aesthetic contours of this were echoed in the reverse journey from country to city in Hugh MacCartan's deeply nostalgic 'Belfast: Some Backward Glances' in *The Capuchin Annual* of 1943. This appeared as part of a special anti-unionist edition alongside such pieces as 'The Real

[96] McLaverty, *Lost Fields*, 91, 84.
[97] Kate O'Brien, 'Fiction', *The Spectator* (5 March 1942), 18.
[98] McLaverty, *Lost Fields*, 77-8, 125, 171, 172.
[99] McLaverty, *Lost Fields*, 205.
[100] Eamonn Hughes, '"Town of Shadows": Representations of Belfast in Recent Fiction', *Religion & Literature* 28.2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 1996), 141-160: 143.

Case Against Partition' by the writer Ultach (a pseudonym of J.J. Campbell), 'The North East by Aodh de Blácam; 'The Difference' (i.e. between north and south) by Daniel Corkery, and a series of poetic vignettes and historical political speeches against partition. MacCartan's countryside was an 'inner circle' of 'close communal unity' in its easily remembered (Catholic) names. By contrast his description of Belfast offers the city as immediately alienating on an aural and visual level, with its 'harsh crescendo of noise to which a hundred discords contribute… the interminable rat-tat-tat of countless rivetters on the skeleton ships down the Lough'. The only refuge from this nightmarish industrial cacophony is a familiar retreat, as the narrator 'caught a glimpse of the mountains in the background, and of the Cave Hill with the calm, Napoleonic face of the Mountain Sleeper clearly outlined against the burning sky'. The logical destination for the Catholic MacCartan is, like McLaverty, through the 'The Falls Road' to a nearby village, albeit one that 'was slowly but surely being devoured by the encroaching city'.[101] Of a piece with McLaverty's novels and Cathal O'Byrne's nostalgic Belfast articles in *The Irish News* and *The Capuchin Annual*, MacCartan's equally sentimental reminiscences corroborate the broader deployment of nostalgia for the unbroken traditions of the past as an alleviation to the historical situation of partition.

Mary Lavin and the epic migration novel

There is a similar sense of generational stability to *Lost Fields* in Mary Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street* (1945), although mostly in terms of the fictional Coniffe family on which the novel focuses. Adopting the same form of a three-tiered family narrative – albeit with the *bildungsroman* the most prominent strand – the novel was initially published in the United States before later being repackaged in Britain under the Penguin Classics label, and subtitled 'a family story of Irish small-town life'. On the fly leaf of the first American edition, Lavin offered some biographical padding: 'We came to Ireland when I was young to feel resentment for the loss of what was always home—New England. I suffered a child's nostalgia for tangible things'. This homelessness, as she explains, was quickly alleviated when she came to Bective House, where she was 'always alone, wandering with idleness and aimlessness, but grateful now to think that every leaf and bud and bird was forming those images that the heart can never forget'. [102] While this description repackages Ireland as the epicentre of nostalgia, *The House in Clewe Street* is a more intricate and weighty historical novel about rural to urban migration, in which a character's position in society is intimately bound up with their place and class. In

[101] Hugh MacCartan, 'Belfast: Some Backward Glances', in *The Capuchin Annual vol XXXIII* (Dublin, 1943), 171-178: 172, 172, 173, 173.
[102] Mary Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street* (Boston, 1945), [sleeve matter, n.pag].

the wider historical context that its narrative engulfs, which roughly charts the post-Famine period to the early days of the Irish Literary Revival, it offers another alternative developmental history of modernisation in Ireland. In lieu of any references to the Famine, the Land League, Parnellism or any kind of political history, *The House in Clewe Street* is heavily thematised around the country and the city, with constant narrative pauses on the social and cultural differences between each place, and a careful attention to the details of the landscape. The first pages of the novel introduce the reader to the ruins outside the town, features which have 'no geographical importance and appear on no known map'. This opening section develops into 'a view' of 'King John's Castle', placed at the 'centre of a wild park, overgrown with trees. This park figures largely on the Ordnance Survey map of the district, and actually covers two fifths of the area occupied by the entire town'.[103]

Writing of this Ordnance Survey's legacy in more canonical Irish writers like Synge, Joyce, and Beckett, Cóilín Parsons theorises that there is a 'naturalisation of the cartographic idiom' in Irish writing.[104] *The House in Clewe Street* is perhaps a less subtle assimilation of the Ordnance Survey's technique than these modernist writers, but Lavin's engagement with the history of the landscape at this early stage of the novel captures the ontological authority that the narrative derives from the map. This initial description of the landscape in *The House in Clewe Street* is not that of a single viewpoint, but a collocation of perspectives: it assumes that from the town bridge a person can 'immediately recognis[e]' the town 'for what it is', with the intense details of the scene proof of a narratorial omniscience which is obscured as something easily acquired by a human eye. But the supposedly easy ability to instantly capture the function, history, and even the beauty of this 'simple architecture' is actually the result of a socialisation which the aforementioned disinterestedness attempts to obscure.[105] For the reader can only recognise these buildings and their location within the historical development and ruin of Castlerampart with the narrator's guidance. To borrow Richard Kirkland's description of the faithful mapping of the city in late 1990s Belfast narratives, 'the recognition of the authentic this [strategy] provides counterpoints with the symbolic and the fantastic found elsewhere in the works'.[106] As the society and politics of Castlerampart is described by Heather Ingman, '[i]t is a world dominated by class, property and Catholicism with the Coniffe family at the center as the largest property owners of all'.[107] This early piece of scene-setting therefore forms a partial synecdoche of the small town's place within the rhetoric of the southern state.

[103] Mary Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street* (1945; London, 1986), 5, 6.
[104] Cóilín Parsons, *The Ordnance Survey and Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford, 2016), 2.
[105] Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street*, 6, 6.
[106] Richard Kirkland, *Identity Parades: Northern Irish Culture and Dissident Subjects* (Oxford, 2002), 120.
[107] Heather Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction by Irish Women: Nation and Gender* (Farnham, 2007), 120.

This synecdoche is complicated immediately after this passage when Theodore Coniffe is described in detail as a man with 'smooth white hands' which 'made it clear that, whatever way his money was made, it had not been by manual labour'.[108] As Raymond Williams described this type of viewpoint,

> [a] working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation. It is possible and useful to trace the internal histories of landscape painting, landscape writing, landscape gardening and landscape architecture, but in any final analysis we must relate these histories to the common history of a land and its society. We have many excellent internal histories, but in their implicit and sometimes explicit points of view they are ordinarily part of that social composition of the land – its distribution, its uses, and its control – which has been uncritically received and sustained, even into our own century, where the celebration of its achievements is characteristically part of an elegy for a lost way of life.[109]

The sense of separation and observation with which the reader is initiated into *The House in Clewe Street* is unfettered by any reference to the traumatic upheavals on the land in Ireland. Instead – like Kate O'Brien – Lavin elegises the lost way of a forgotten Catholic upper-middle class in the countryside, although not without some criticism of the patriarchal structures of this society. The first section of the novel features another marriage of rural and urban geographies and mentalities, joining the Coniffes with the stranger Cornelius Galloway a solicitor come from 'a Dublin office' who 'thought he'd set up on his own account in a country town'. This ambition is achieved almost instantly by the advances of Coniffe, who tries to arrange a wedding with Galloway and one of his elder daughters. However the Dublin solicitor eventually ends up with his teenage daughter, Lily, rather than her much older sisters Theresa and Sara, which precipitates a tragic narrative of hubris and social mobility. Again, Galloway's ambitions are couched in terms of space: 'As soon as we can have a house built in the country I think that Lily and I should get out… Living in town is in itself an admission that one attaches too great an importance to money-making'. After his successful move to the country house, this first section of the novel ends with his death in a hunting accident, which is explicitly explained as due to his inability, as a Dublin Catholic, to enter the closed world of the Anglo-Irish Big House-owning gentry: 'cities are full of such young men, who feel that were born for better things, but to most of them this is only a cause of hopeless despair and bitterness'.[110]

Thus in this initial book, which is something of a preamble to the main *bildungsroman* narrative which follows, *The House in Clewe Street* is not so much realist novel as a fabular and fatalist narrative about social mobility, which both socially and aesthetically establishes the

[108] Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street*, 7.
[109] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 120.
[110] Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street*, 39, 80, 90, 91.

adhering representation of the country and the city for the rest of the novel. At the end of this first book, the narrator laments the loss of a 'life story' in a great metanarrative: 'The story of the parish is lost in the national story, and even that story is lost itself, in the immensity of the great story of the universe'. This passage is not only self-reflexive in its reference to the use of archives, but also foreshadows an ending in which one of the great archival repositories of this era—the peasant—will be lost in the 'immensity of the great story' of modernity. For the narrator, the logical option instead for a man like Cornelius is the revolt of 'some literary or artistic movement, where they can eventually persuade themselves that their poverty is Revolt, and that their squalor is Reality'. [111] In this link between literature and art, this offers a fairly coded reference to an almost too subtle self-reflexivity in the novel. Rachael Sealey Lynch has posed a counter-analysis to what she considers those more 'oblivious to Lavin's potent deployment of irony and point of view', thus assuming the writer's sympathy with 'the conventional bourgeois attitudes she depicts'. Instead, for Lynch, as a 'darkly satiric' novel *The House in Clewe Street* 'derives its force from… an insider's understanding of Gabriel's limited perspective'.[112] The limited perspective is often revealed in its attitudes towards class. This is particularly evident in its description of the Soraghans, a peasant family who 'lived in a small cottage under the ramparts about half a mile outside the town', as practically exotic:

> The differences between the Coniffes and the Soraghans, between the inhabitants of Clewe Street and the inhabitants of the cottages under the ramparts, were many and great. These differences may have come from their different financial status, but time and custom had led the families in the town to consider things from a particular rather than a general attitude.[113]

As Lynch identifies, Lavin's portrait of the small-town life critiques the structures of a class-bound and patriarchal society in which some women are complicit. The specific geography of the town, with closeness to the rural peasantry, allows a visible contrast and dialogue between the haves of the Coniffes and the have-nots of the Soraghans.

The middle section of *The House in Clewe Street* details a kind of love-across-the-class-divide narrative between Gabriel, Lily and Cornelius's son, and Onny, the youngest of the Soraghans and servant to his aunts. Again, Joyce is an overt example for this narrative, and the sexual as well as spatial politics of the relationship are so reminiscent of 'The Dead' that the shared name of the male figure is almost certainly not incidental, with both Gabriels representing the Catholic upper-middle classes. Ingman suggests that the wilderness of the countryside where they 'hold their trysts' represents an escape from the 'stultifying middle class

[111] Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street*, 91, 90
[112] Rachael Sealy Lynch, '"The Fabulous Female Form": The Deadly Erotics of the Male Gaze in Mary Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street'*, *Twentieth Century Literature* 43.3 (1997), 326-338: 336.
[113] Lavin, *The House in Clewe Street*, 113.

values' of those Castlerampart families like the Coniffes.[114] Derek Hand also describes how the novel 'attempts to move away from a narrow provincialism', but Gabriel's 'male bourgeois gaze can ultimately be seen as destructive'.[115] While both of these readings ring true in terms of the plot, in its descriptions of place the narration frequently collapses into the bourgeois perspective of a classic nineteenth-century painterly landscape. This collapse is consistent with much of the rest of her work. As Ingman writes: '[m]any of Lavin's stories feature such a wilderness outside the town walls'.[116] The wilderness offers an escape from the town and a site of possibility for the union of the middle-class townsman and the peasant. It also offers Gabriel, like his grandfather, a view 'over the whole town; over all the ramparts and over the fields. You can see your cottage… You can see the dancers at the crossroads and you can hear the music gloating up through the air'. The appeal of this vision is specifically corroborated with reference to Onny, who performs a general representational function for the loosely defined peasant class. As the narrator states: 'Before he had claimed her company, her evenings had been spent at the crossroads with the boisterous young people of the town and countryside'. The suggestion is that Gabriel believes he is rescusing Onny from the constrictions of a small-town life in which her place is known:

> The fields were infinite. They stretched away to the hills, and the hills stretched away to the hills of other countries, and they in turn stretched down to the fringe of towns of which Onny had never heard the names, even when she was a flighty youngster sitting on the schoolhouse bench.

This encapsulates the broadness and the limitations of Gabriel's viewpoint. On their eventual escape to Dublin, the same kind of vision reveals his inherited snobbery: 'the backs of the houses were exposed with all their squalor. In some houses the blinds were being let up, and dull, unwashed faces stared out for a moment, mechanically'.[117]

The shock of modernity which the city represents is registered through the sceptical eyes of Onny, as someone who 'had come to [the city] unprepared even by the slender preparations of the imagination… she had never been out of her own town'. Where Onny can only say that '[e]verything was lovely—buildings and statues, bridges and steeples', Gabriel is 'dazzled by the pinnacles and domes, pillars and statues, steeples, towers, and glittering vanes'. Where Gabriel finds the people he meets in the street 'merely a nuisance to him', for Onny 'above all else the people that passed them by in the street interested and excited her'. However, to the reader the 'shock' of Dublin is perhaps all too familiar, as the novel fulfils the standard

[114] Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 120.
[115] Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2011), 196.
[116] Ingman, *Twentieth-Century Fiction*, 120.
[117] Lavin, *Clewe Street*, 304, 289, 329.

representational coordinates of the city: '"This is College Green", said Gabriel, when they came out on to Dame Street, after looking at the Cathedral. "There is Trinity College, and there is the Bank of Ireland." He consulted the guidebook. "The Bank of Ireland was once the House of Parliament."' Gabriel's sense of past and future is the opposite of Onny's present-mindedness. As Lynch describes their initial entry into Dublin, Onny 'resists Gabriel's controlling guidebook narrative, his attempts to direct her gaze toward what she refers to as "stupid old buildings" insisting instead on viewing Dublin through her own eyes'.[118] The male gaze of Gabriel on the city forms a link with the similarly touristic opening to the book, but he is unable to exert the control which his grandfather Theodore had over Castlerampart. Instead, he indelicately links the Bank of Ireland with the ruin of Castlerampart in a vision of the future when people 'will stare at this very building, glassless and deserted, dug up out of a forgotten city, and they will try to imagine the life that was led by the unimaginable people who inhabited it in its time!'. This Ozymandian vision of Ireland on the one hand reveals Gabriel's emasculation by the city, but is also shadowed by the ruin of the real Europe at the time of the book's publication. Onny, however, ignores this grandiose speech, instead concerned with the fate of 'two birds about to pass each other' on top of the building. The dismay which this engenders in Gabriel, 'uncomfortably aware of the way Onny differed from him in manner and vocabulary', gives way to a 'curiosity and tantalisation' when he contemplates her 'difference deeper than any of these surface differences, a deep difference of nature'.[119] Onny's nature is an embodiment of a deep Ireland, their move to the city an acceleration of the antinomies between Onny and Gabriel, which are not just located in social class but space.

When they set up rooms in Kildare Street, a companion tells both of them 'socially speaking, the lower you were at home, the higher you are here'. Onny is at once fêted by the cabal of artists whom she and Gabriel socialise with, but also exploited as a subject for art by him. As he says to the painter Telman: 'You must paint Onny! You must paint her as Queen of the Tinkers!'. While Gabriel struggles both with finding employment and sexual jealousy, and eventually decides to return to his home town, she refuses to be budged: 'I wouldn't go back to that little town now, for all the money in the world!'. This city part of the narrative rapidly escalates, culminating when Onny is revealed to be pregnant by Telman, seeks an illegal abortion, and dies in the process. In the aftermath of her death, in a heavily loaded scene, Gabriel flees from the prospect of an inquest. As he does so, in a prolonged piece of interior monologue, he dreams of making for Castlerampart, which 'appeared suddenly to shine with the golden innocence that for some time past seemed to have shone over his childhood'. Gabriel longs to

[118] Lynch, 'The Fabulous Female Form', 333.
[119] Lavin, *Clewe Street*, 331, 331, 330, 330, 332, 333, 334, 336.

return 'without even going back for one moment into that intolerable city from which he had fled'. But as he momentarily looks back towards the city, a sense of adult responsibility overtakes him:

> Dublin lay outstretched below him, its pinnacles gleaming in the morning mists like the pinnacles of a dream. Nothing was seen from this height of the lower reaches of the city… They were all huddled together out of sight in the low levels between the tall buildings. But up into the bright air, the steeples, spires, and domes, the lancing pinnacles and towers of church and court and college, rose resplendent, as the city carried aloft her triumphant testimony of man's mighty struggle to cut through ignorance and doubt a path of sane philosophy.[120]

The House in Clewe Street is bookended by two intensely mapped visions of an Irish settlement from the outside. Each offers a heavily subjective spatial history of the settlement from the male gaze, establishing the primacy of place in the novel's imaginary. In its opening and closing recourse to the painterly vision, the novel ironically frames the landscape of Ireland – rural and urban – within a touristic, nostalgic mode.

Such retreats to a peaceable country and the past represented a Deep Ireland in the war years, offering a far more complex perspective on the country than the travelogues of O'Faoláin and Connolly. The emphasis of all four of the novels discussed in this chapter has been on generational change, most obviously signposted by the presence of death in all four. In each narrative death functions as a reinscription of place. Likewise, traditional values are embodied in an older parental or grandparental figure whom is synonymous with the space that the novel describes in intimate detail. Professor Archer is associated with the freedom of continental Europe in the nineteenth century, Gran with the balance of tradition and modernity in Ballyderrig, the Griffin's grandmother with the continuity of rural Ulster in Toome, and Theodore Coniffe with the ruins of Castlerampart. As such, the death of the figures in Laverty, Lavin and McLaverty's novels are analogous to Tomás Ó Criomhthain's death in the late 1930s, with all three couched as elegy for 'rural' values and tradition, and synonymous with spaces that complicate the dominant cultural geographies of nationalism and unionism. By contrast, in *The Land of Spices*, Anna Murphy's departure to the limited possibilities of Dublin is registered with a sense of loss, but the maternal figure of Helen Archer also provides a gateway into developing a liberal-intellectual cosmopolitanism which is located beyond both Dublin and Ireland. Despite their differences, each of these alternative visions of Ireland's recent and distant histories stage a nostalgic retreat from trauma and socioeconomic hardship into the safety of knowable communities in the countryside.

[120] Lavin, *Clewe Street*, 408, 409, 440, 459, 460.

5

‘never the feeling of a wet day in Royal Avenue’: the country and the city in the northern novel, 1946-1951

‘as far as this part of Ireland is concerned’

For many historians the post-war era marks a break from an ‘all-Ireland’ framework in cultural terms. This break follows from the declaration of an Irish Republic in 1948 and the repeal of the External Relations Act in the Dáil, as well as the United Kingdom’s response in the form of the Ireland (Eire) Act of 1949. R. F. Foster, for example, echoes many other analyses of the period in arguing that these moments demonstrated that a united Ireland ‘was now further away than ever’.[1] The guarantee in the Ireland Act that the status quo could only change with the consent of the northern parliament has thus been interpreted as a catastrophic failure for the then coalition government in the south. However, as J. H. Whyte and Richard English contend, it actually signalled ‘an abrupt reversal of alliances’ in the context of the 1940s. Whyte’s account of the immediate post-war years describes how the Conservative-aligned Unionist government in Belfast had felt left ‘out in the cold’ by Clement Attlee’s Labour Cabinet in Westminster, since the ruling British government had been remarkably friendly with the southern government until this late development in the decade.[2] Others shared this opinion, with an article in *The Spectator* in December 1948 accusing Attlee’s government of being ‘almost quixotically indulgent’ of the rainbow coalition government in the south of Ireland.[3] The uncertainty of these years may have been lost by the end of the decade, but as this article suggests, there was continuing anxiety for northern unionists towards their status in the United Kingdom up until the Ireland Act was passed. Indeed, the years of uncertainty arguably made the Ireland Act an even bigger achievement for unionism. As James Loughlin states, the later Prime Minister of the northern statelet Brian Faulkner ‘did not exaggerate when he described the Ireland Act of 1949 as having afforded Ulster unionists over twenty years of constitutional security’.[4] As discussed below, this new-found constitutional security had some knock-on effects for cultural life in Ireland, with official representations in both states reflecting a wide-ranging rebranding of their image.

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[1] R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Harmondsworth, 1989), 566.
[2] J. H. Whyte and Richard English, ‘To the declaration of the Republic and the Ireland Act, 1945–9’, in J.R. Hill ed., *A New History of Ireland, Vol. VII* (Oxford, 2003), 261-277: 277, 262.
[3] [Anon.], ‘Eire’s Achievement’, *The Spectator* 6284 (3 December 1948), 718.
[4] James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), 29.

South of the border, there was also a sense of change which was propelled by the sedimentation of 'the Republic' and the copper-fastening of constitutional structures on the island. Mark Quigley argues that these changes were occurring against 'a backdrop of wider intellectual and cultural shifts in the 1930s and 1940s' which eventually propelled the Lemassian modernisation of the state.[5] The declaration of the Republic was an important signpost in these developments. As Ronan Fanning writes, the Republic of Ireland Act 'ended the era inaugurated by the treaty split', meaning that thereafter independence was no longer up for debate:

> Ireland *was* independent – neutrality has proved as much - and all party support for the 1948 act, mirroring all-party support for neutrality, merely affirmed what de Valera had told his Clare constituents in the 1948 election: "At any rate we have achieved freedom as far as this part of Ireland is concerned".[6]

This sense of achievement mixed with political enervation found a familiar platform for its expression. 'It is the essence of nationalism', wrote Seán O'Faoláin in *The Bell* in 1951, 'that as soon as it achieves its object it dies as a force'. There was no ambiguity for O'Faoláin, since this assertion came in an article entitled 'Nationalism is Dead', an evisceration of recent Irish history which offered a long-ranging and comprehensive interrogation of the aims and objectives of the Irish revolution. The terms of the article were similar to the declaration of independence from the 'rural' past in the magazine's first issue: 'whereas the peasants had won their land and were fast changing from peasants to yeoman farmers, what future lay before their children in the towns and cities?'. Answering his own question, O'Faoláin claimed that the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was 'purely urban' in its being 'equally fostered in London and semi-Anglicised Dublin, led by men of such mixed blood or foreign experiences as Pearse, Griffith, de Valera, Collins, Burgess or Childers'. Proclaiming that the 'social aspect of the 1916-1922 revolutionary movement has not been realised', he argued that the false antiquities in vogue in the new Republic were ill-suited to a contemporary world in which nationalism was morally and intellectually bankrupt. Or, as he more succinctly put it, 'the past never gives birth to revolution'.[7]

For O'Faoláin, the break from the past which he so vociferously argued for in the 1940s had finally arrived, the object of Irish nationalism achieved by the declaration of a Republic. However, just as with his revisionist history of O'Connell, the writer was implementing a thorough thematisation of nationalism in Ireland as a modernising struggle between rural and

[5] Mark S. Quigley, 'Modernisation's Lost Pasts: Seán O'Faoláin, the Bell, and Irish Modernisation Before Lemass', *New Hibernia Review* 18.4 (2014): 44-67: 44.
[6] Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin, 1983), 176, 176; Fanning's emphasis.
[7] Seán O'Faoláin, 'The Death of Nationalism', *The Bell* 17.2 (May, 1951), 44-53: 44, 47, 48, 47.

urban forces, with the city the only winner. The heralding of this victory was a recurrent strategy in his repertoire of the late 1940s, as his 1949 essay 'The Dilemma of Irish Letters' attests to:

> The life now known, or knowable, to any modern Irish writer is either the traditional, entirely simple life of the farm (simple, intellectually speaking); or the groping, ambiguous, rather artless urban life of these same farmers' sons and daughters who have, this last twenty-five years, been taking over the towns and cities from the Anglo-Irish.[8]

As well as a savage indictment of Irish writing, 'The Dilemma of Irish Letters' figured urbanisation as a form of proof that the liberal capitalist project of emancipation he was firmly wedded to was ineluctable. But in its description of the knowable communities of the farm, or the city with a farm memory, his formulation was also practically interchangeable with the writing of Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City*. Nearly a quarter of a century later, Williams would write how, after '[t]he growth of towns and especially of cities and a metropolis… any assumption of a knowable community—a whole community, wholly knowable—became harder and harder to sustain'. For all the similarity in their terminology, O'Faoláin's reification of urbanisation as a form of 'takeover' is also symptomatic of what Williams calls a 'subjectivist and fatalist form'.[9] Similarly, in his analysis of naturalism in twentieth-century Irish writing, Joe Cleary has suggested the pervasiveness of 'Whiggish' interpretations of twentieth century Irish literary history.[10] This is particularly popular in the years after the Second World War, in which development was a dominant concern for Irish criticism. A fatalist attitude towards urbanisation developed as a recurring mood in Irish writing after the war, with the increasing changes in the landscapes and cityscapes of Ireland a prominent concern for Irish writers and critics.

The Problem of Urbanisation in Irish Fiction

Development and modernisation were particularly dominant emphases for the novel and the first theorisations of 'Irish fiction'. While O'Faoláin constantly wrote on these topics throughout his journalism and criticism in these years, he tended to find his fullest Whiggish voice with reference to the novel. In an article for *The Observer* in 1946, for example, he characterised the Irish cultural elite as suffering from a 'prolonged hangover' from the 'artistic binge' of the 'Irish Literary Renaissance of thirty-forty years ago'. For O'Faoláin, Irish literature had presented with the symptoms of 'age, exile, and individualism'. As he argued, '[i]n this atmosphere of headache, it was perhaps natural that the short-story and the novel,

[8] Seán O'Faoláin, 'The Dilemma of Irish Letters', *The Month* 2.6 (1949), 366-379: 373.
[9] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; Frogmore, 1975), 202, 367.
[10] Joe Cleary, *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), 76.

practical and social documents, should develop and poetry decline'. With little in the way of state support, only the release-valve of emigration and an encouragement to publish with American and British firms allowed Irish writers to survive amidst a place in which the 'quality of life is intellectually unadventurous and uncomplex, as is probably true of all cautious, peasant countries'.[11] Again, the writer's conceptualisation of a simplistic and cautious state was ideated in terms of the rural and urban, Ireland once more resisting a programme of intellectual and economic modernisation. But there were also echoes beyond O'Faoláin's output. Benedict Kiely's *Modern Irish Fiction* (1950), one of the first attempts at writing the history of the post-partition Irish novel, also signposted artistic development through urbanisation in its analysis of novels published in the period 1918-1945. For Kiely, echoing the complaints of O'Faoláin, the Irish novel had failed in the past because '[o]ur remote ancestors had not the urban sense that would have impelled them to build cities. Our immediate ancestors even when they were city-dwellers had not developed the urban sense that would make them write about cities'.[12] Kiely argued – although not without some bias – that more fiction had been produced in Ireland since the First World War and 1948 than any other period in its history, which he related to the patterns of urbanisation in the south of Ireland. John Wilson Foster suggests that this claim is actually untrue, and instead stems from a rejection of a 'more inclusive criteria' which allows 'popular novels by Irish writers, male or female, set inside Ireland or outside'. In any case, Kiely's attempt at theorising or typologising both Ireland and Irish fiction had many predecessors, with Foster noticing that it shared with these 'a perspective on Ireland that is native and Catholic, with the peasant at its centre, the Catholic middle class off-centre, the Anglo-Irish at its historical margin, and the Ulster population essentially (even in Kiely's case) off-camera'.[13]

Kiely's argument that the 'urban sense' was beginning to develop in Ireland was not true for all its novelists in the 1940s, for some of whom a general confusion towards Ireland's burgeoning modernity was already beginning to emerge. For example, when Frank O'Connor began his piece on 'The Future of Irish Literature' in *Horizon* in 1942, he compared his subject to 'writing of the future of the Lancashire industrial towns: the subject is a question mark'.[14] Here O'Connor encapsulates the general reaction of the 'older generation' of Irish literature to the increasing urbanisation and transformation of the landscape, which could not help but draw upon the same value-heavy representation of rural and urban landscapes which their works

[11] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Eire To-Day: The Artist As Outlaw', *The Observer* (17 March 1946), 4.
[12] Benedict Kiely, *Modern Irish Fiction: A Critique* (Dublin, 1950), 43, xi, xiii.
[13] John Wilson Foster, 'Revisitations: Kiely's Literary Criticism', *Irish University Review* 38.1 (2008), 72-88: 78; 86n, 77.
[14] Frank O'Connor, 'The Future of Irish Literature', *Horizon* 5.25 (January 1942), 55-63: 55.

reflect. By the post-war era these values were becoming even more confused. Writing for *The Spectator* in 1948, for example, Kate O'Brien was wondering 'very much to see a few once lost and unsequestered fields of home become, as by magic, a focal point of all the restless, unpredictable forces of the hard, wide, anxious, hurrying world'. This article recorded the emergence of Shannon Airport, which was established some twelve years before her wonderment in fields a mere twenty miles away from Limerick (for which O'Brien's Mellick was the fictional stand-in). Shannon's arrival elicited spatial and temporal confusion for O'Brien: 'Almost a few days ago it was some lost, wet fields; today it is a nerve-centre of a too rapidly pulsating world'.[15] As Maurice Harmon later wrote of the group of Irish novelists after O'Faoláin and O'Connor, they were 'not affected by old ideals' and yet 'grew up in the Ireland that O'Faoláin and O'Connor found almost unbearable'. While for Harmon the older writers could not stand the new Ireland, the 'country itself was changing. The country moved from an economy based primarily on agriculture to one based on industry', and young writers 'turned outward because of the pressure of world events'.[16] It is hardly surprising to note that 'change' is here synonymous with urbanisation, with a general suggestion of the middle-stage or adolescence of the southern Irish state. What Harmon emphasises, however, is the emergence of 'new generations' who, unlike O'Faoláin, O'Connor and their peers, were able to see these rapid changes with fresh eyes.

Yet the same fatalist and subjective mood of O'Faoláin saturated the analysis by 'young' Irish writing in *The Bell* number of October 1951, with contributions from Mary Beckett, Valentin Iremonger, Francis MacManus and others. In organising this symposium of 'Young Irish Writers', *The Bell* obviously felt that a new generation of Irish writers had emerged in the post-war period, but the references to development generally persisted throughout. The poet John Montague's contribution, for example, claimed that 'Ireland is at present in the awkward semi-stage between provincialism and urbanisation, and the writing that will best serve should deal with the problems of the individual against this uneasy semi-urban setting'. Montague considered young Irish writers as departing from the 'old tradition of close natural description and poetic undertones, as exemplified by a whole school of writers under the guidance of Edward Garnett'. As he went on,

> I feel, in some way, that writers using this approach to material are not moving on new ground but recovering old, that in some way they are speaking for an Ireland that no longer exists. Such writers as follow them, without rethinking their problems as a completely different generation, seem to hanker after the easy give and take of village life, still carry the mind of the smaller community

[15] Kate O'Brien, 'Shannon Airport', *The Spectator* 6221 (19 September 1947), 359.
[16] Maurice Harmon, 'Generations Apart: 1925-1975', in Patrick Rafroidi and *Maurice Harmon,* eds, *The Irish Novel in Our Time* (Lille, 1975), 49-65: 55.

> around with them, and would rarely, for instance, write a story about a tractor, a cinema, a fight in a dance-hall, or a carload of drunken young man riding to a seaside resort.

In expanding on this view of Irish writing in the past fifteen years, Montague suggested that the 'heavy neurotic shadows' of O'Connor's *Dutch Interior* (1940), Francis MacManus's *Watergate* (1942), Patrick Kavanagh's *Tarry Flynn* (1947), and O'Faoláin's *Bird Alone* (1936) were generally focussed on the 'theme of frustration, the sensitive striving to exist within an unsatisfactory society, where the intellect and the flesh are almost regarded as ancient heresies'.[17] However, in both his and Kiely's typology of the Irish novel, the north is almost left out completely in these constructions of literary heritage – an omission made all the more glaring for the fact that both writers were from Tyrone.

The north of Ireland: the real Ireland?

The third chapter of this thesis outlined how the construction of the northern state led to rigid forms of official cultural representation, many of which were geared towards the imaging of urban modernity and industrial growth within a specifically defined territory. This propagation was intimately attached to the anxieties and insecurities of their position. As Cleary contends, the cultural expressions of unionism were 'trapped in a bind of conflicting imperatives' between asserting 'Protestantism and Britishness to accentuate its separateness to the rest of Ireland'. These imperatives necessitated the exclusion of 'the Catholic and Irish nationalist minority, [which] thus deprived the state of the consent it needed to translate political dominance into a more secure cultural hegemony'.[18] However the state began to undertake a number of departures from their identarian struggles in the 1920s and 30s, abandoning some of the cultural dichotomies which had energised much of their cultural representations before the war. In a tactic familiar to the *Irish Press*, the Official Unionist party organ *The Voice of Ulster* featured a 'Provincial Journey' which, in one instance, wrote of the Twelfth of July celebrations that

> it was really not until the city outskirts were behind us that we began to feel the heart of Ulster pulsing with a patriotic fervour that set our spirits aglow. Town, village, hamlet, even the individual cottage, offered tangible testimony of the unalterable attitude of the Ulster people.[19]

The periodical also featured an 'Ulster Roundabout' column, which in its first appearance quoted an Australian visitor who called Belfast 'one of the finest villages I ever visited'. The same column also claimed that 'Rural Ulster is certainly keeping in step with the times. Soon,

[17] John Montague, 'The Young Writer', *The Bell*, 17.7 (October 1951), 5-12: 7, 6, 6, 11.
[18] Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and The Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, 2001), 71.
[19] Editor, 'Provincial Journey', *The Voice of Ulster* 2.11 (August 1949), 1-3: 2.

perhaps, he will be a brave man who dares to suggest that the town is a better place than the country'. The periodical was careful, however, to make some distinctions between north and south. One columnist, 'Northerner', compared the 'charming' border settlement Milford, one of 'the tidiest villages [he had] ever encountered' with 'the neglected hamlets of the Republic'.[20] Radio broadcasts also followed this ruralist trend. Patrick Kavanagh wrote in his diary for the first issue of *Envoy* in 1949 that 'it is a curious paradox that in the Six Counties you find much more of the traditional Ireland… The Belfast BBC, for example, is much more Irish than the Dublin radio'.[21] Damien Keane argues that this station 'was determined as much by the relative institutional autonomy of on-air production… as by… motivations generated by the border', but the increasing inclusion of Irish folklore and music marked a change from the territorial imperatives of the previous decades.[22]

If, as the maxim went, rural Ireland was the real Ireland, then in this period the official cultural representations of the northern state were more visibly 'Irish' than that of the Republic. As James Loughlin argues, this move towards a ruralist aesthetic came at a time in which the state 'proved incapable of delivering sustained economic progress', because the classic 'urban' industries of linen and ship-building were affected by 'lower-cost foreign producers [which] together with the effects of modernisation resulted in large-scale employment reduction'.[23] Official representations of rural life and agriculture in the six counties emerged in this period too, redefining its relationship with the rural landscape in terms more familiar with their previous characterisation of southern nationalism. *Ulster Story* (1947), a tourist travelogue sponsored by the Ulster Tourist Development Association, claimed that the north, 'like most of the rest of Ireland, is mainly agricultural. The life of most of its people is rustic and simple, and in many respects there has been little change with the passing of centuries'.[24] The government-funded 1951 propaganda film *Land of Ulster* also appropriated the ruralist rhetoric which official Unionism had previously so deplored. Ostensibly explaining the popularity of the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society's Balmoral Empire Week Show – an extant agricultural festival which was held in south Belfast from 1896 until 2013 – the programme boasted that 'the province' contained half a million agricultural workers and eighty-nine thousand farms. According to the narrator, a rural inspector from Tyrone, 'no other country in Europe except France has such a high proportion – over a quarter of a million – working on the land'. Although it went into more specific detail about the practicalities of farming, including the effects of

[20] Northerner, 'Ulster Roundabout', *The Voice of Ulster* 2.11 (August 1949), 17-18: 17, 17, 18.
[21] Patrick Kavanagh, 'Diary', *Envoy: A Review of Literature and Art* 1.1 (December, 1949), 87-90: 89.
[22] Damien Keane, 'Contrary Regionalisms and Noisy Correspondences: The BBC in Northern Ireland circa 1949', *Modernist Cultures* 10.1 (2015), 26-43: 27.
[23] James Loughlin, *The Ulster Question Since 1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), 33.
[24] Paul Barralet and Richard Fischer, *Ulster Story* [film] (Belfast, 1947).

legislation and the situation of the Second World War, there is a repeated emphasis on the rural heritage of the population: 'most Ulsterman come from the farm… Even in Belfast the people are only a generation removed from the soil'.[25]

The Antinomies of Regionalism

This had a knock-on effect in unofficial cultural representations emanating from the north, and although 'Ulster' regionalism was well underway during the early 1940s, by the time of the post-war era it deeply resonated with the northern state's reorganisation of its economic image. Tom Walker and Guy Woodward separately note that, in the 1940s, John Hewitt and Roy McFadden developed a pastoral vision of the six counties which stressed what the latter termed 'near[ness] to the soil' in a place 'where industrialism has not entirely blighted us'.[26] This development also came at what Connal Parr terms 'the high watermark of regionalist thought' in Britain, coinciding 'with the radical measures of the UK's post-war Labour government' which more generally suggested an interrogation of political nationalism as the cause of the recent war.[27] But Hewitt and McFadden's reclamation of Ulster as a rural haven, although influenced in part by the former's commitments to socialism, was hardly a radical aesthetic undertaking. Writing from a more critical perspective, Ray Ryan argues that for Hewitt

> space is fixed and undialectical, permanently inscribed, and immune to the contingencies of history… The politics it enables is thus primarily defensive: the regional space cannot be radically overhauled or expanded, simply secured against that which it is not. The imaginative basis of his regionalism is finally barely distinguishable from the ethnic, territorial nationalism Hewitt decried.[28]

Whether it was a radical form or one deeply rooted in a partitionist mentality, the recovery of a rural aesthetic for the north of Ireland, or the vague geographical unit of 'Ulster', came at a time when Ulster unionism was similarly engaged in reclaiming its rural hinterland. Indeed, Hewitt often used the rhetorical devices of the territorial nationalism he found abhorrent. At a speech given to the PEN Writers Club in Dublin, entitled 'The Case for Ulster Regionalism in Verse and Prose', Hewitt argued that the land 'tends to be a main source of inspiration to the Northern writer, and Belfast has not the predominant position in intellectual life that Dublin has in the South'.[29] Echoing the rhetorical constructions of each city in the 1920s by unionist intellectuals and politicians, the terms again position the rural-urban binary as one between the capital of the

[25] Trident Films, *Land of Ulster* [film] (Belfast, 1951).
[26] Roy McFadden, 'A Note on Contemporary Ulster Writing', *The Northman* 14.2 (Winter 1946), 20-25: 25, qtd in Tom Walker, *Louis MacNeice and the Irish Poetry of his Time* (Oxford, 2015), 79; Guy Woodward, *Culture, Northern Ireland, and the Second World War* (Oxford, 2015), 133-135.
[27] Connal Parr, 'The pens of the defeated: John Hewitt, Sam Thompson and the Northern Ireland Labour Party', *Irish Studies Review* 22.2 (2014), 147-166: 151.
[28] Ray Ryan, *Ireland and Scotland: Literature and Culture, State and Nation, 1966–2000* (Oxford, 2002), 72-3.
[29] [Anon.], 'Ulster Regionalism in Verse and Prose', *The Irish Times* (21 March 1950), 5.

state and a vaguely defined 'land'.

In the 'city-region' of the north, with only Derry as a comparable centre, this was a much less complex affair than in the arguably more composite twenty-six counties. But either way this frame serves to reinforce the spatial hegemony of state centralisation, conforming to what Peter Leary terms 'an essence of "north" and "south" to be found respectively in the Presbyterian environs of Belfast and in Catholic, if anglicised, Dublin'.[30] Across his career Hewitt repeatedly compared Belfast and Dublin as political and cultural entities, a comparison which, as the third chapter of this thesis argued, was used by writers with unionist sympathies in order to consolidate a perception of cultural differences in everyday lived experience. For all his protestations that a rural conception of Irishness had blighted the creation of a genuinely innovative art, Hewitt's own ruralist focus aided his development of a distinct form of Ulster regionalism. This focus was a point of attack for a new body of northern nationalists who positively identified with the city of Belfast. For example, writing from a republican perspective in *Kavanagh's Weekly*, the Falls Road art historian and journalist Gerald Keenan abrasively dismissed the dichotomous constructs which characterised Hewitt's poetry:

> Somebody has asked if my remarks are to be confined to this city or was it my intention to turn my gaze on our rural hinterland. I replied that no dichotomy existed in my mind. By experience, breeding, and interest I am a city man. Never had hole been worn in the heel of my blue-stocking by dander beyond Finaghy, Hannahstown, Glengormley or the Garneville road. I had learned the word dichotomy from Mr. John Hewitt. In a recent issue of the *Irish Times* Book Page he had a poem with it for title…[31]

The offending poem was a sonnet in which Hewitt 'fill[s]' his 'brooding mind' on an assortment of rural images, such as 'ploughed land and braided corn', as they are opposed with the 'clay-red town' of Belfast and the 'thronged, anxious lives its walls contain'.[32] While for Keenan there is only the city, Hewitt's outward projections onto the rural landscape claim the country for the city in a manner which reflected the embrace of the landscape by the northern state. This is a conspicuous reversal of the embellishments of the aesthetic battles in the 1920s.

Hewitt's regionalism had been conceived before the end of the Second World War. As his 1945 declaration in 'The Bitter Gourd: Some Problems of the Ulster Writer' went, 'undoubtedly regionalism is in the air'.[33] However, and particularly in view of the diplomatic controversies that the declaration of the Republic instigated between both states in Ireland and Britain, in the late 1940s there were many other political attachments 'in the air' as well. While

[30] Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border 1922-1972* (Oxford, 2016), 18.
[31] Gerard Keenan, 'Mr. Hewitt's Folly', *Kavanagh's Weekly* (3 May 1952), 5.
[32] John Hewitt, 'The Dichotomy', *The Irish Times* (11 April 1952), 8.
[33] John Hewitt, '*The Bitter Gourd*: *Some Problems of the Ulster Writer*', *Lagan* 3 (1945), 93–105: 93.

the territorial emphasis of the Ulster regionalist project was at least geographically in sympathy with the cultivated self-image of the northern state, some offered different models for interpreting the society and economy of the island. Others like Denis Gwynn, historian and son of the Irish Parliamentary Party MP Stephen Gwynn, offered a countervailing view of Ulster and Leinster as increasingly similar because of southern urbanisation:

> There is much exaggeration in the general belief that the Six Counties, as an economic unit, are differently organised to the rest of Ireland. Many people talk of the "industrial north-east" as though it were a highly organised industrial area like Lancashire or South Wales. Forty years ago, when the Ulster agitation began, there was certainly far more contrast between the industrial area around Belfast, and other parts of Ireland, than there is today… even if we compare the Six Counties now with Leinster as it stands today, the resemblance is remarkably close.[34]

Despite these supposed similarities there was no sense of an emergent Leinster regionalist movement. This encapsulates 'the scale problem' which David Harvey descries in regionalism more generally, which 'enters in, with a hierarchy of labels often deployed that begin with neighbourhood, locality and place and proceed to the broader scale of region, territory, nation state, and globe'. For Harvey, '[r]egion then becomes territorialisation at a certain geographical scale'.[35]

Whatever the political or artistic motivations that lay behind this recovery of rural Ulster, the development of its culture – or lack thereof – is again explained by its degrees of urbanisation. This turn towards a regionalist aesthetic thus relied, like the observations of John Montague, Benedict Kiely, and Seán O'Faoláin, upon relative perceptions of development. As Raymond Williams writes in *Keywords*, 'a novel set in the Lake District or in Cornwall is very often called regional whereas one set in London or New York is not'.[36] Regionalism thus defined depends on the construction of a hegemonic relationship in which a large metropolis is a silent presence as opposed to the loud absence of the countryside. In her study of nineteenth-century American regional fictions, Stephanie Foote explains that literary regionalism, especially in the form of the novel, 'is often sustained by its ability to fill an imagined need in its urban readers'. Foote's description of the nineteenth-century influence in the United States even accords with the similarly Victorian inheritances of the 'Ulster' novel:

> Despite the totalising claims made in its name, the contemporary United States has inherited from the nineteenth-century its preoccupation with more minute

[34] Denis Gwynn, 'Partition – Thinking It Out', *Rural Ireland* (1947), 83-92: 87-88.
[35] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh, 2001), 225. The process of identity formation according to a region or place is parodied in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), where Stephen Dedalus lists his location as: 'Class of Elements | Clongowes Wood College | Sallins | County Kildare | Ireland | Europe | The World | The Universe'; James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* ed. Seamus Deane (1916; Harmondsworth, 2003), 12.
[36] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (rev. edn; New York, 1983), 265

> matters – specifically the legal and social status of gendered, raced, and ethnic identities in a nation that presumptively is politically unified. Like the nineteenth-century, the twentieth is troubled by claims for recognition and representation by marginal people. Because it is a form that works to preserve local customs, local accents, and local communities, regional writing is a form about the representation of difference. As such, it offers critics a way to analyze one of the nineteenth-century's most effective literary strategies for managing the conflict between local and national identities.[37]

For Mathew Hart, writing of the earlier ruralist impetus in the English novel of the 1930s, 'the apparently oppositional force of regionalism can be undercut by the way it also works to make geographically organised inequalities appear normal and natural within ostensibly unified states'.[38] The effectiveness of regionalism as a means of mediating between local and national identities through representing difference explains its usefulness in the fractured social and political climate with which northern writers dealt. However, while it is a form or mode that allows the preservation of local customs, accents, and communities, it can also expose the contradictions of these preserved traditions within a wider national identity.

The Festival of Britain

The increasing inequalities within the regions of the United Kingdom after the war were perhaps most visible in one of the biggest cultural festivals to take place there, rejected by Winston Churchill as 'three-dimensional Socialist propaganda'.[39]Organised by Clement Attlee's Labour Government, and held in the months before his electoral defeat in October 1951, The Festival of Britain was the visual embodiment of a 'Deep England'. It was also an embodiment of the concept of a 'network of settlements', since rather than centralising festivities in the metropolitan centre it actively encouraged every town, village, city, and region to celebrate the post-war mood of achievement and progress. As a self-styled 'act of national autobiography', the Festival was a government-mandated demonstration of the social and cultural cohesion which the United Kingdom supposedly enjoyed after victory in the Second World War: 'Cities and towns throughout the country are presenting their own account of themselves, of the industries, trades and crafts in which their citizens are employed, their local traditions and entertainments, their practice and appreciation of the art'.[40] As Robert Hewison describes this was part of a wider construction of the consensus state: 'for the Arts Council and the Council

[37] Stephanie Foote, *Regional Fictions: Culture and Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Madison, 2001), 5, 4.
[38] Matthew Hart, 'Regionalism in English Fiction Between the Wars', in Robert L. Caserio, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge, 2009), 89-101: 94.
[39] Winston Churchill qtd in Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and Its People* (London, 2012), 34.
[40] Festival of Britain, *Official Book of the Festival of Britain 1951* (London, 1951), 66.

of Industrial Design, the Festival [was] a coming of age'.[41] It was also a coming of age of sorts for the northern state's cultural self-image. The 'Ulster' contribution to the Festival of Britain came by way of a 'Farm and Factory Exhibition', a marked change from their principally industrial effort of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in the 1920s. However, if this was an attempt at strengthening ties with Britain, then on an aesthetic level it failed. Becky Conekin has shown that, where at the Festival exhibitions in the British cities of London, Glasgow, and Cardiff, 'evocations of the past were chosen for their appropriateness for the post-war "New Jerusalem", an imagined world of equality', Belfast's incorporation of an 1851 farmhouse was an aberration in the wider pattern.[42] In some respects, this inassimilability of the six counties into the fabric of British national culture was a logical outworking of the reluctance of Britain to incorporate Ulster into the fabric of Britishness in the earlier interwar period. As Stephen Howe writes, the 'classic interwar expressions of Britishness as subsumed within a southern English ruralist myth… effectively excluded Ulster from the British nation, contrary to the overt Tory statements of support for Ulster between the wars'.[43]

Unlike the earlier exhibition at Wembley, there was also barely any mention of the Empire, with the British 'struggling with the question of how to reconcile the discrepancy… between being the bearers of freedom in opposition to the "barbarism" of the Germans and their own history of colonisation and empire-building'.[44] The Festival had initially been conceived as a centenary celebration of the Great Exhibition of 1851, as well as a successor to the exhibitions Wembley in 1924, and Glasgow in 1938. But with Attlee's accession to power and the onset of a policy of decolonisation, the emphasis had shifted from colonial to regional pride. The Festival encapsulated Jed Esty's analysis of how, in what he calls the 'anthropological turn', a body of 'English intellectuals translated the end of empire into a resurgent concept of national culture'.[45] The late arrival of 'Ulster' to the ruralist myth of 'Deep England' exhibited more of a contrast than a complement to the national autobiography, reflecting its complicated position within the United Kingdom framework. The art which the Festival commissioned and inspired – the John Luke Mural of the foundation of Belfast in the City Hall, for example, or John Knox's statue 'The Gleaner' which celebrated rural subsistence as a principle of life – was thus concerned not just with the present, but a continuous narrative of a modernity which was present from the Ulster Plantation onwards. In particular, the 'Ulster' take on the Festival of Britain celebrated and promoted the cultural achievements in the north since the war, and

[41] Robert Hewison, *In Anger: British Culture in the Cold War, 1945-60* (Oxford, 1981), 55.
[42] Becky Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Exhibition of Britain, Representing Britain in the Post-War World* (Manchester, 2003), 80.
[43] Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford, 2000), 195.
[44] Conekin, *Autobiography of a Nation*, 183.
[45] Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton, 2009), 2.

codified them within a specifically regional framework. As Gillian McIntosh details in *The Force of Culture*, the Festival of Britain also featured a popular exhibition on 'Our Ulster Heritage in Town and Country', with the use of both town and country, like 'Farm and Factory', suggesting an often indelicate admixture of industrial and agricultural imagery which encompassed their vision of the state.[46]

Heritage publications which were commissioned by the Festival Committee also reinforced this image, such as Gilbert Camblin's *The Town in Ulster: An Account of the Origin and Building of the Towns of the Province and the Development of their Rural Setting* (1951). Written as a long history of development in the six counties, the study was window-dressed by the usual ethnotypographical descriptions of 'the Irish': 'it is generally agreed that the Irish, although excelling in the arts of music and literature, have until recent times been rather indifferent to the art of architecture'. In contrast to this racial indifference to architectural innovation, Camblin claimed that 'there is probably no part of the civilised world in which the science of town-planning has played a more important part in shaping the physical environment of a people than has been the case in the Province of Ulster'.[47] Thus even in its attempts to examine 'Celtic Ulster' in the present day of post-war reconstruction, *The Town in Ulster* still relied upon the binary terminology which had served the unionist state and its cultural outputs in the 1920s and 1930s. It also conformed to the chronology of protestant settlement in Ulster as a positive force in the social, cultural, and economic development of 'the province'. In other outputs from the festival, the Second World War was also suggested as a fundamental schism between the culture and society of north and south. What was figured as the proliferation of 'Ulster' literature and culture was described by Sam Hanna Bell in *The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium* (1951) as 'this new growth from 1939'. Describing what he termed a 'vivid, voluble, and involved community', Bell's introduction to this Festival-commissioned volume *The Arts in Ulster* endorses the efforts of historians like Cyril Falls, T.W. Moody, R.B. McDowell, and Hugh Shearman, *inter alia*, in 'reassessing' a history which was 'still warm from the hands of zealots'. In its beginning, such efforts are intrinsically linked to the changes occurring with the mechanisation of the villages and farmyards of the countryside:

> The nineteen-twenties, of course, brought great changes to the Ulster Countryside. A pattern of life that had shifted little in three hundred years became suddenly, and not too silently, transformed. The first tractors sputtered into the fields, and occasionally sank in them. The travelling steam-thresher… became an irritating obstruction to the thrilling new motor-buses as they roared through the narrow country roads.

[46] Gillian McIntosh, *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Cork, 1999), 111.
[47] Gilbert Camblin, *The Town in Ulster: an account of the origin and building of the towns of the Province and the development of their rural setting* (Belfast, 1951), 1, vii.

For Bell, the invasion of machinery into the countryside is at once a sign of development and also the source of a fundamental loss. But couched within the regional framework adopted by Bell in *The Arts in Ulster*, such changes are the 'alembic through which the new awareness [has] passed', a conception of Ulster art and culture ostensibly married to extant unionist interpretations of history and geography.[48]

However, some discrepancies in this regional identity were evident in *The Arts in Ulster*. Bell's article, for example, made a salient point which echoed the earlier contention of Seán O'Faoláin that cultural life in Ireland was 'all done from the metropolis'.[49] This introduction also contended that poets and novelists in the north tended to focus on 'the wee farm at the hill foot' and 'the cabin by the moss side. Yet, mind you, the writers are, most of them, townsmen. Never the feeling of a wet day in Royal Avenue, the train tickets stuck like leaves to the pavement'.[50] Exemplifying this narrow focus, John Hewitt's 'Painting and Sculpture' section in the same volume was ostensibly a long complaint that 'the potential artist… has lacked the strong body of traditional usage inherent in the urban milieu'. This lack was explained by his brief history of the region, which had supposedly left Ulster culturally and materially bereft since the sixteenth century:

> We must also remember that the English and Scottish colonist of the Plantation could have had not the vestige of a share in the Gaelic past, and that the surviving Northern Irish [sic] were, after their rebellion of 1641, a broken people, lacking all material wealth; we must therefore begin with a blank sheet.

The anachronistic reference to the state here aside, in locating 1641 and the Plantation as origins of northern identity, Hewitt betrayed the closeness of his regionalist enterprise to the *tabula rasa* of unionist historiography. Thus he reimages Ulster, in its 'suffering from the deficiency in these urban benefits', as a place far more inclined to produce 'poets, storytellers, singers, actors, whose activities can be fostered in small poor communities and carried upon by single individuals wherever they may find themselves'. For Hewitt, without the 'broad stage of city organisation, wealth, tradition, leisure', the artist had to try his hand at the supposedly rural forms poetry, drama, or song.[51] The stress here was markedly rural, with the image of a burgeoning Belfast which lead the world in many industries largely disappeared. This contention firmly placed Hewitt's own pastoral writing in an Irish context and restated the connection of industrial or urban development with artistic inspiration. His complaint also

[48] Sam Hanna Bell, 'Introduction: A Salute From the Banderol', in Sam Hanna Bell, Nesca A. Robb, and John Hewitt, eds, *The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium* (London, 1951), 14-21: 19, 17-18, 16, 19.
[49] Seán O'Faoláin, 'Provincialism', editorial, *The Bell* 2.2 (May, 1941), 5-8: 6.
[50] Bell, 'A Salute From the Banderol', 18.
[51] John Hewitt, 'Painting and Sculpture in Ulster', in Sam Hanna Bell, Nesca A. Robb, and John Hewitt, eds, *The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium* (London, 1951), 73-98: 73.

reversed the rural-urban binary which had served the purpose of consolidation for writers like St John Ervine and Herbert Morrison Pim in the 1920s. Furthermore, unlike the development of the novel as a practical social document for O'Faoláin's south, the focus was on poetry and painting.

According with this analysis a few years earlier, Denis Ireland had described the north as 'so far remarkable for the absence of great novels'.[52] Bell's introduction was more capacious, however, in reasserting the importance of literature to the regionalist enterprise, arguing that 'it is often through the eyes of the poet, the novelists, and the playwright that we first make our acquaintance with the region'.[53] Ireland's perception of a remarkable dearth of fiction was also contradicted by John Boyd's survey of Ulster fiction for the volume. Within often overbearing editorial constraints, Boyd generally attempted to recast the work of previous Ulster writers as regional efforts, including St John Ervine and the recently deceased Forrest Reid. Bullock in particular was described as the 'regional writer *par excellence*'. For Boyd, Reid 'was a regional writer in the sense that he had a passionate feeling for Northern Ireland – for the country round Belfast, for the Lagan Valley, for the Mourne Mountains, for Ballycastle'.[54] These years also led to a proliferation of fiction which represented the rural life of Ulster through a more complicated lens than this simple regionalism, such as Tomelty's *Red is the Port Light* (1948), Anne Crone's *Bridie Steen* (1948), and Sam Hanna Bell's own *December Bride* (1951). Despite his own exclusions in *Modern Irish Fiction*, Kiely was also active in these years, troubling the stream of Ulster regionalism in his debut novel *Land Without Stars* (1946). What emerges from these novels is not always the simple portraits of the 'region' found in *Arts in Ulster* which repeatedly emphasised its separate identity. Considered beyond the editorial constraints of that volume, the northern novel contests such notions of a homogenous region, with the representation of the country and the city again actively involved in that challenge.

Semi-urban Ireland in Land Without Stars

The *bildungsroman* form offered some Irish novelists a way to question the terms of the construction of Ulster regionalism, undermining the stability of that project by sponsoring an

[52] Denis Ireland, 'Red Brick and Its Dramatist: A Note on St. John Ervine', *Envoy: A Review of Literature and Art* 1.4 (March 1950), 59-67: 59.
[53] Bell, 'A Salute from the Banderol', 20.
[54] John Boyd, 'Ulster Prose', in Sam Hanna Bell, Nesca A. Robb, and John Hewitt, eds, *The Arts in Ulster: A Symposium* (London, 1951) 99-130: 106, 115-116. As Sean McMahon notes, this piece was strictly edited by Nesca Robb, a unionist academic who was overseeing the publication along with Bell and Hewitt. Robb demanded that any prose work published after partition had to be from the six counties. McMahon's account of the arguments around the inclusion and exclusion of certain figures like Peadar O'Donnell and Patrick Magill in *The Arts in Ulster* suggests the political character to the editing process, detailing also the removal of a quote from James Connolly in Dennis Kennedy's piece on Theatre which had criticised the regionalism of the Ulster Literary Theatre; cf. Sean McMahon, *Sam Hanna Bell: A Biography* (Belfast, 1999), 68-69.

increasingly globalised consciousness. As Jed Esty writes in *Unseasonable Youth Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (2012), 'the developmental logic of the late *bildungsroman* underwent substantial revision as the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference'.[55] While Esty is writing specifically of the 1890-1920 period, the epidemic of emigration was certainly testament to an increasingly global consciousness in Ireland. Michael G. Cronin has written of 'the strategic position' of the *bildungsroman* in the Irish novel as it is used to negotiate between 'individual and cultural crises of sexual formation and the historical crises of modernisation'. For Cronin, the Irish novel frequently 'connect[s] these crises in symbolically powerful ways'.[56] But so, too, has Irish intellectual and critical culture used the paradigm of adolescence and maturity to characterise its take on the relative development of literature. This is certainly true of Benedict Kiely's *Land Without Stars*, which despite being published years before the 'Young Writers Symposium', was perhaps a more elaborate example of the 'semi-urban' setting John Montague so desired. As a Second World War *bildungsroman*, the action mostly takes place in a time around 1939 and 1941 in a town near the Irish border. This is probably based, as Guy Woodward notes, on Kiely's hometown of Omagh.[57] The preface to the novel, while ostensibly protesting the fictitiousness of its narrative, also takes pains to reinforce that 'there is an island called Ireland, divided by a political boundary into two fragments, the smaller of which is misnamed *Ulster*, the larger misnamed *Eire*'. While this political fragmentation is, for the author, an unwelcome imposition, 'more natural boundaries divide the island into thirty-two counties in which counties live about four million people, none of whom appear in these pages'.[58]

This claim that the thirty-two county structure is more natural than partition is exceptionally contradictory, not just because that structure was a product of Ireland's colonisation, but also because the partition of Ireland used that exact structure as a means of making the division more natural. But both in terms of the representation of landscape and the dialogic and monologic expositions on the country and the city, another 'more natural' divide in the novel is that of the rural and the urban. Indeed, the marriage plot of the novel is focussed on the local woman Rita Keenan and her courting by two brothers, Peter and Davy Quinn, which is partly figured as a choice between the material benefits of life in the city or the nationalistic rebellion with the country.[59] The preface is thus an unhelpfully brash and even

[55] Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (Oxford, 2012), 6.
[56] Michael G. Cronin, *Impure Thoughts: Sexuality, Catholicism and Literature in Twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2013), 11.
[57] Woodward, *Culture,* 61.
[58] Benedict Kiely, *Land Without Stars* (London, 1946), ix.
[59] The structuring of the novel around two brothers who are divided not by political motivations, but whether these

haphazard introduction to the novel, since *Land Without Stars* is not as uncritical of Irish republicanism as its opening salvo would suggest. Nor is it always as overtly political, demonstrating some anxiety with the misrepresentation of rural Ireland and a search for new forms and styles that could correct it. As such, Woodward suggests that the novel is 'structurally polyphonous' in its adoption of free indirect discourse, with one chapter each taking the perspective of each brothers but the majority featuring a third-person narrator.[60] However, this stylistic experimentalism and the use of competing *bildung* narratives does little to undo the novel's clichéd representation of landscape. From the first sentence of the fictional narrative, a link is forged between the two men: 'The brothers came home on the same day'. Both brothers coming home for Christmas from different directions, a difference which has added significance in the context of the war. Whereas 'Davy came southwards on the train from Derry' on his way 'from Glasgow, the great clanging city, mother of ships', where he is conscious of the dark situation descending over Europe, Peter instead 'came an hour later, northwards on the train from Dublin'.[61]

This is not the only geographical opposition which Kiely represents through the 'two brothers' structure. As another early comparison between the brothers suggests, their experience of place is a crucial difference between them, as Peter remembers 'Davy's one visit to Dublin':

> the talk afterwards, the excited descriptions… across the river the Four Courts and the flag above the dome; the tricolour, flapping, folding and unfolding. The flag of the Republic…. The sound of Irish spoken in theatres, cinemas, at dances, football games, in buses, in the streets. Croke Park where thousands sang the National Anthem while the footballers or hurlers stood straight and strong on the green field… Poor Davy. The book was: [Terence MacSwiney's] *The Principles of Freedom*. Would he ever learn?

Kiely is characterising Peter, with his knowledge about the reality of Dublin rather than the almost ritualistic memories of Davy, as possessing a healthy scepticism. The narration thus often assumes his rather than Davy's thoughts, and in this instance Peter's recollection of Davy's account suggests his brother's belief in Dublin as an experience of a genuinely Irish national(ist) culture and society. Davy is generally represented as an uncompromising believer in physical force republicanism: not just in his involvement with the Irish Republican Army, but also his cultural activities. For example, while he is learning Irish in Donegal, an already obvious demonstration of his nationalist sentiments, he betrays both his political attachment to

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are best achieved with physical force or constitutional means, mimics that of Michael McLaverty's *Call My Brother Back.*

[60] Woodward, *Culture*, 61.

[61] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 1, 1-2.

the south and his anachronistic political beliefs by reading 'yesterday's *Irish Press*'. While Peter similarly constructs Ireland's capital as a place of desire, rather than this deep national affiliation, Dublin is a place where he could 'lose himself' from the 'little town mean eyes slanting out of dark doorways, clacking tongues'. However, towards the end of the novel his own nationalist sympathies become clearer in his use of terms similar to Kiely's introduction: 'At least Dublin was a city; and compared with that tortured north-eastern corner of Ireland, Dublin knew its own mind. Dublin knew that it was an Irish city'.[62]

The contradiction with his critique of Davy's cultural nationalism and his own simplistic view of the capital is indicative of the *volte face* which Peter's narrative of development elicits. In each brother's vision of the city, Dublin offers a positive point of contrast with the segregated community of the hometown, while Belfast is instead routinely associated with politics, violence, or both, loosely embodied in the man who 'helped to murder the three lads at Ennismore back in twenty, during the big Belfast riot'. Somewhere in between these two extremes lies the semi-urban Omagh. However, it is still not immune from sectarianism, especially where Peter describes the houses facing the 'huckster's shop' which stood 'apart and separate' from his own: 'a block of grey houses, silent, with half-drawn blinds. All Protestants that lived there; their houses had a solemn, fur-capped Calvinistic appearance. The shoemaker's, the force, the poultry-dealer's yard, the block of white shabby houses. All Catholics'. The separation of space also represents an economic separation, and in the early stages the descriptions of the market-place, where 'customers [come] in from the country' are reminiscent of the enervation of *Dutch Interior*: 'In the corner near the river a herd of hobby-horses made their solemn circle, rising and falling, rising and falling. The tinny organ blared, warming up for the business of the day'. For all this inherent bigotry and economic stasis, *Land Without Stars* in its early stages, and in this scene in particular, presents the fictionalised Omagh as an economic centre in its own right. It also offers, for Peter Quinn, an escape from the cloistered environment of the seminary in his argument with the similarly spoiled priest Dowdall:

> "Very tiresome. I want Dublin."
> "Dublin?"
> "You're country, Peter. You'd never understand."
> "Country town," I said "A country town with two cinemas, a laundry, a lunatic asylum, a hospital, a county court, fifty pubs."
> "No difference," said Dowdall. "It's country. Genuine rural life. You've no theatres, no cafés open late at night, shining lights, pretty waitresses."
> "You're in the wrong place for that here.".[63]

[62] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 6, 114, 60, 198.
[63] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 177, 19, 22, 55.

In his protests towards a qualified form of civilisation, Peter seems to at least initially recognise the sense of a separation between the small town and the rural countryside, somewhat complicating the description of the novel's environment as 'rural'.[64] Throughout *Land Without Stars*, Peter himself expresses the feeling that he is in the wrong place in another passage reminiscent of *Dubliners*: 'he was sick of it all: the town, the people, the streets, the river, the circle of hills, the blue pigeons, the towering steeples'.[65]

Peter gradually begins to forcefully condemn his place of origin, culminating in a dialogue with another Dubliner in which he describes Omagh as a place of 'Small-town jealousies and small-town social activities. Year after year. One season of flood and one season of drought'.[66] This trajectory away from his small-town background is constant throughout the novel, but it is only precipitated by the resolution of both the marriage plot and Davy's involvement in the Republican movement. This resolution is foregrounded in the emotional and spatial difficulties of the prolonged middle episode where he goes with Davy (who is on the run after robbing a bank) to learn the Irish language in the Rosses. Coming at this crucial juncture in the narrative, this move to the Rosses epitomises what Thomas O'Grady writes of *Land Without Stars* as a whole, in that it demonstrates a more 'integrated sense of plot and place' than Kiely's other writings of this period.[67] For example, the remote location demonstrably gives Peter a form of 'escape' in being 'neither in Europe nor in America; but placed on the sand-eel strand, a vantage-point above the woes of Europe and the woes of men'. Its status as a haven for the Irish language is also couched in terms of its development: 'The sheer cold poverty of those rocks had never meant anything to the enterprise of financial civilisation… the idiom of commercial civilisation stayed in warm, comfortable places: cities, towns, green valleys'. This comparison is repeatedly made, with 'the cities, the towns, the cultivable rural places, the seaside resorts with their little bit of Brighton and their faint, faint echoes of Atlantic City' all presented as Anglophone places. The ironically-named Carson, a caricature of the vehement Irish Revivalist and anti-partitionist, offers a more uncompromising version of this dichotomy when he tells Peter: 'You belong to the cities that are now mostly American. Or to the Six Counties that are neither British, American nor Irish. But this is Gaelic Ireland, and here Ireland speaks'.[68] Reinforcing Peter's protestations to Dowdall, in this hegemonic (and hyperbolic) representation of west Donegal, the novel sets up a distinction between the Rosses as a place of Irish cultural preservation and what is termed the rest of the island's English or

[64] Woodward, *Culture*, 60.
[65] Kiely, *Land Without Stars,* 173.
[66] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 184.
[67] Thomas O'Grady, 'Provincial Life: The Early Novels of Benedict Kiely', *Irish University Review* 38.1 (2008), 20-37: 23.
[68] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 107-8, 105, 103, 104.

American pollutions.

This distinction is quickly exploded by the presence of the Irish Army marching to an English chant – '[t]he sound of their feet went back through the centuries' – and the Belfast teacher May asking Peter to recite a Yeats poem, namely '[t]he one about the Irish airman'.[69] As this passage suggests, there is a discrepancy between the moral and social values that are suggested by the dialogue of the rural and the urban and their actual experience in the novel: a discrepancy which Kiely is unable to resolve. Touching upon this, in escribing the writer's relationship to place in his early novels – both *Land Without Stars* and *In a Harbour Green* (1949) – O'Grady claims that each displays 'an overt antipathy' to Omagh.[70] O'Grady muses that Kiely's critique of the tradition of exile in *Modern Irish Fiction* marks a significant development in his attitudes towards the town, in his claim that a writer 'may abuse the island and stay away from the island but all the time the basic feeling is the nostalgia that has produced a hundred sentimental ballads'.[71] Whether Omagh can truly be interpreted as the island writ large is difficult to determine, but O'Grady's reading of Rita as an embodiment of 'the elusive spirit of Ireland, conventionally feminised' whom the brothers with different political 'methods' fight for suggests that it can.[72] However, with both Peter and Davy returning to Omagh to compete for Rita, whose father is a retired policeman, there is arguably more a sense of her identity being interchangeable with that of the town. The ending in which Davy is caught and killed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Omagh, precipitates the rejection of the town by Peter, who moves to Dublin and views it from the train window: 'The shabby houses with their intimate backyards dropped behind; the wide road leading to the fresh country; the bare expanse of the Red Lion yard; the spies'. The prolonged account of the train's entry into Dublin is reminiscent of Agnes Romilly White's *Gape Row*, but with a more positive twist:

> Then the fields were gone and there were houses and spires, and to the left the ugly arms of the quayside.
>
> Dowdall was on the platform. They went down the steep steps to the footpath, walked up Talbot Street towards Nelson's Pillar.

As Dowdall tells Peter when he alights: 'Dublin will make you a demigod. Wait and see. You'll love it. I love it. The only civilised spot in this country'.[73] The implication is that Peter's vision has won out, and the city is shorn of the Irish nationalist signifiers that characterised Davy's earlier experience. Instead, in a scene which recalls the anti-English and anti-American rhetoric in the Rosses, Dublin is metaphorised in a clichéd manner, which signals Peter's entry into a

[69] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 136, 150.
[70] O'Grady, 'Provincial Life', 20.
[71] Kiely, *Fiction*, 110; qtd in O'Grady, 'Provincial Life', 20-21.
[72] O'Grady, 'Provincial Life', 27.
[73] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 217, 220, 221.

loosely defined modernity: 'The glass revolving-door spun around and around. People came in and people went out. Through the wide window they watched the traffic go up and down the street'. *Land Without Stars*, like *The House in Clewe Street*, is thus bookended by two prolonged meditations on the built environment – the first rural, the last urban – once more offering a vision of rural to urban migration through descriptions of landscape as a fundamental feature of the Irish novel. As the last image of the ambiguous ending of the novel, this vision of Dublin offers a view of the city as a place of anonymity and possibility as set against the aforementioned '[s]mall-town jealousies and small-town social activities' of Omagh. [74]

Fermanagh Again

Anne Crone's contemporaneous novel *Bridie Steen*, however, is less ambiguous both in terms of the focus it places on location and a narrative style which is heavily indebted to nineteenth-century realism. As such, although John Boyd included *Bridie Steen* in his survey of Ulster fiction, he merely suggested that the novel demonstrates that Crone 'has obviously studied the great Victorian novelists'.[75] This widespread perception was emphasised even in the novel's introduction. Crone, like Mary Lavin, was published on the word of Lord Dunsany, who wrote its preface in strikingly familiar terms to O'Faoláin's 'Deep England' inflected effort for *Never No More*:

> Many counties, or at any rate one generation of them, are so preserved, Kent by Dickens, Sussex by Kipling and Belloc, Dorset by Hardy. But I have never heard of anything of the sort being done for Fermanagh, until this unforgettable novel fell into my hands.[76]

Although Dunsany's claim that it was 'one of the great novels of our time' now seems generous, *Bridie Steen* was a critical and commercial success in its own time. In 1949, *The Irish Press*, writing of *Bridie Steen*'s popularity in Britain, claimed that it is 'already a best-seller in America', which in itself reflects the paucity of interest in the novel in Ireland.[77] Contemporary reviews of the novel in *The New York Times* and *The Chicago Tribune* largely endorsed Dunsany's judgement.[78] Each reviewer, like Boyd, noticed the strange, old-fashioned effect of the novel, with Kesley Guilfoil in the latter suggesting the novel 'so Victorian in feeling and style that one can scarcely believe that its time is not so long ago'.[79] James Stern's effusive

[74] Kiely, *Land Without Stars*, 221, 184
[75] Boyd, 'Ulster Prose', 124.
[76] Lord Dunsany, 'Introduction', *Bridie Steen* by Anne Crone (Bath, 1973), v-vii: v.
[77] Terry Ward, 'In Britain Today', *Irish Press* (26 January, 1949), 2.
[78] *Time* magazine's reviewer, by contrast, suggested that the description said more for Dunsany's 'generosity than it does for his literary judgment'; [Anon.], 'BRIDIE STEEN', *Time* 42.8 (23 August 1943), 90.
[79] Kesley Guilfoil, 'Irish Novel Better Than Common Run', *The Chicago Tribune* (22 August 1948), Books Section, 3.

praise for the novel went further, claiming that 'you are left with the impression that its author has not read a work of fiction written in this century'.[80]

Crone was a Dublin-born, and Oxford-educated teacher in various schools in Belfast, including Methodist and Victoria Colleges, as a short biographical article in *Fortnight* by Elgy Gillepsie reveals. As Gillespie also writes, nine publishers turned down the manuscript of *Bridie Steen* before it was sent to Dunsany, and the American firm Scribners eventually published it on his recommendation.[81] Despite repeated comparisons to Hardy, however, the obvious predecessor to the novel, with its focus on Lough Erne, is Shan Bullock's *The Loughsiders*. As opposed to the strictly defined Protestant community in Bullock's novel, Crone attempted at least some sort of engagement with the Catholic minority. But the repeated references to the nineteenth-century style pick up on Crone's adoption of a conservative language and her adherence to the formal and thematic concerns of that century's fiction, again forming a link with *The House in Clewe Street*. But it also suggests the continued attachment in its representation of a region to Thomas Hardy, an attachment which Dunsany's introduction reaffirmed. As Esty has contended writing of the 'motif of the marginalised and trapped provincial woman', in what he terms the 'canonical Victorian novels of development' like George Eliot's *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1871) and Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* (1891), the reader often finds 'female protagonists tied fatefully to some kind of modernising landscape in which they can neither thrive nor survive'.[82] This is certainly true here, although the modernisation of the landscape is somewhat fraught with the religious and political difficulties that characterise life in Fermanagh. Set in the post-partition period, its titular character is the product of a mixed-marriage who grows up in a sectarian Fermanagh Catholic milieu: 'She had already divined that to abhor Protestantism was as essential a part of the religion taught her as the telling of her beads'.[83]

In the first passages, Bridie is introduced to the reader as an orphan whom was sent to live what is repeatedly identified as a peasant life with her aunt Rose Anne – a caricature of Catholic bigotry – and her Uncle James. The plot centres upon her discovery of her patrilineal Protestant grandmother, who essentially rescues Bridie from the bigotry and poverty of her upbringing. Through a fairly routine characterisation, Catholicism and Protestantism are ostensibly set up as spiritual and ideological antipodes, but this is not the kind of Mercutian plague that would characterise later depictions of the sectarian divide. Instead much more

[80] James Stern, 'An Irish Story in the Tradition of the Great Novels', *The New York Times* (22 August 1948), 5.
[81] Elgy Gillespie, 'Quiet Passion in a Narrow Field', *Fortnight* 212 (1985), 21–22.
[82] Etsy, *Unseasonable Youth*, 223n.
[83] Anne Crone, *Bridie Steen* (1948; Bath, 1973), 5.

attention is given to discovering the Protestant (here meaning non-conformist) side of the family. The wonder with which Bridie discovers her heritage is, as ever, spatialised, in the opposition of the bog and the Big House: another instance in which the 'areal differentiation' of religious identity in the north, but which is here central to the narrative progression.[84] As such, John Cronin writes that 'Fermanagh is not merely well described – it is made to matter profoundly to the youthful heroine'.[85] As the first sentence records, '[t]he bog was beautiful, or so it always seemed to Bridie in the days when she played house in little sheltered nooks behind the turf-stacks'. Again life and landscape are intertwined, with the agricultural life on the bog possessing 'an equally simple inevitability' to her own life, 'part of the scheme of creation'.[86] This monotonous existence is reminiscent of D.A. Chart's positioning of the Catholic peasantry in his *longue durée* of Ulster history, who from a 'harsh soil… wrested a scanty subsistence, full of bitter memories and confronted daily with the sight of those whom they regarded as their supplanters'.[87] But this overwhelmingly fatalist disposition also contrasts with the aristocratic world to which she is about to be introduced, a development catalysed again by the death of a paternal figure in the form of her Uncle James. Bridie is then rapidly made a servant girl in a Protestant Big House, where the novel introduces Bridie and the reader to the obstinately unionist character Jerem, 'the most ardent of Protestants' who is 'encircled by foes'.[88]

Jerem initially seems intransigent, but *Bridie Steen* outlines his sufferings during the Irish Revolution in detail, such as when he and a few men protected 'their homes from possible attack from the south or west'. Although he plays a minor part in the action, the detailed exposition of his character leads to an expansion of scale in the novel, as he directs his contempt towards the south:

> As for the Irish Free State which had emerged from those troublous times, Jerem could show his contempt for it in no stronger way than completely ignoring it. From its creation, the Ireland which lay girdled in blue mountains a few miles beyond the lough no longer existed for him. He had turned his back upon it. In the old halcyon days, when the remotest postman on the wildest craggy mountainside was a servant of His Majesty, he had not infrequently ridden towards those same blue mountains to spend the day in a small town there for, as he confessed afterwards, "a bit of a spree". Now it was not only increasing age which caused such places to know him no more. When directly questioned on the subject, he always answered that he had never put a foot across the border and never would. He had completely adjusted his vision to narrower bounds.

The 'wildest craggy mountainside' is here a synecdoche for the south as a whole, but more

[84] Leary, *Unapproved Routes*, 41.
[85] John Cronin, 'Lonley [sic] Souls, Sectarian Torment', *Fortnight* 209 (1984), 22.
[86] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 1, 3.
[87] David Alfred Chart, *A History of Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1928), 19.
[88] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 53.

generally it recalls what O'Faoláin perceived as the geographical enclosure in Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September*, for which the 'Ireland outside' of Danielstown is obscured.[89] Unlike the ephemeral abstraction of the outside in Bowen's novel, this is not dialogue but the voice of the narrator in free indirect discourse with Jerem. This culminates in a pique of unionist rhetoric: 'had the province of Ulster been reduced to one county instead of six, nay, had it been reduced to "The Point", he would indubitably have done precisely the same thing'.[90] In other words, the emphasis on this mental geography of Jerem mimics the intractability of the planters. But this intractability, as Peter Leary has shown, was against the grain of what he calls the maintenance of 'the old local connections' which survived as 'alternative points of reference to those that the politics of the time (and its failure) had determined'.[91]

Jerem's choice – to turn his back on the Free State – necessitates the kind of discerning knowledge of political geography that is not present in Bridie, the extremity of a subjective character who is even described as having 'neither the education… nor the intellect' to switch to Protestantism by her fiancé. For Jerem, who is presented as an erudite and well-rounded character, '[t]he state of Ireland apart, he was the most amiable and obliging of creatures'. After Jerem politicises and spatialises the landscape of Ireland, the geographical constrictions of Bridie's viewpoint are laid bare in the next chapter which locates the narrative in a series of geopolitical referents. Here the 'wayward spirit' of 'Upper Lough Erne' is revealed as unknown to her, since she 'did not know… that, little more than forty miles from where she sat, the great Atlantic Ocean was swirling the now so placid waters of Erne'. In terms more familiar to Bullock, the constrictions of her geographical inheritance are made even clearer: 'The eyes of the loughsiders were turned downwards into the waters of what was for them their own inland lake'. This introverted and narrow-minded viewpoint is located within a national and geopolitical context that she cannot grasp:

> No suspicion dawned upon her that peaceful Fermanagh… was itself the fringe of such an incredible Ireland as that which the ocean wind buffeted on the purple summits and lonely, rocky headlands of Donegal. Nor would any of those who passed their lives with her have been more interested… North- and south-eastwards was civilisation, rich, cultivated lands where prices were decided; the cities of Belfast and Dublin; and beyond these England, the centre of the world. North-westwards, so near, yet unheeded, the barren peaks of Donegal rose in lonely defiance.[92]

This repeats the standard conception of the east as civilisation and the west as barbarity, in

[89] Seán O'Faoláin to Elizabeth Bowen, qtd in Victoria Glendinning, *Elizabeth Bowen: Portrait of a Writer* (Harmondsworth, 1985), 120-121.
[90] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 54, 55.
[91] Leary, *Unapproved Routes*, 197.
[92] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 168, 56, 59, 58, 59.

which Ireland is 'dominated by the putative division between barbarism and civilisation. Civilisation still defines itself as a system of law; and it defines barbarism… as a chaos of arbitrary wills, a Hobbesian state of nature'.[93] The passage also lays bare one of the didactic messages of *Bridie Steen*, which is – much like *The House in Clewe Street* – to know one's place in society. This framing of the narrative as a civility-barbarity dichotomy is couched, as ever, in terms of the 'lonely defiance' of Donegal as figured against the 'cultivation' of Belfast and Dublin.[94]

Though there are some complications, mostly by way of the more suitable Protestant rival to Bridie, the incestuous marriage-plot of the novel – in which she ends up engaged to her father's cousin – is a possible means of redemption from this ignorance. The brief possibility for her to reclaim the estate owned by her family is also a means of redeeming Bridie's planter lineage: 'the original Musgraves who had come with the Plantation and rooted themselves in the Fermanagh soil. The land they strode upon was theirs'. The main obstacle to this symbolic act of reclamation is her religion, and her Grandmother Alicia, despite being only vaguely attached to the church, continually attempts to convert her to non-conformism. She eventually dies, but not before leaving the farm to Bridie in her will. This development precipitates one of the few dialogues about space, and indeed one of the few interruptions of modernity in the novel. This dispruption comes in the planned honeymoon in the capital city:

> "The city!" she said with childlike wonder, Belfast always having appeared to her as a sphere of gold rising in misty sun-tinted splendour even above the awesomeness of Enniskillen.
>
> "Yes, the city, where there are lights and tram-cars and buses and always crowds of people. It will fascinate you".

However, the promise of Belfast, even more 'awesome' than Enniskillen, is denied by the denouement of *Bridie Steen*, as her Aunt Anne Rose comes back to prevent the mixed marriage with the help of the parish priest. When he comes to interfere, Bridie absconds from the house and flees to the bog, with the narrator explaining this development by falling into the stereotypical register of the Irish peasant: 'a still greater yearning which, when it rises in the heart of the Irish peasant, quenches all lesser loves'. Apart from the overtones of a Celtic mist descending over the narrative, the narrator also describes Bridie in quasi-racial terms: 'in her mother's blood in her veins stirred the passionate, irreconcilable Celt, who in his distresses turns his eyes to the hills, the crags, the open spaces of his native soil'.[95] She drowns in the bog and dies, and the narrative gives way to a rumination on the narrow-mindedness of sectarianism

[93] Seamus Deane, *Civilians and Barbarians* (Derry, 1983), 11.
[94] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 59.
[95] Crone, *Bridie Steen*, 109, 324, 326.

which is here associated with the Catholic community. Thus, despite its length, and its cross-pollination of the Big House with the love-across-the-divide trope, *Bridie Steen* is in some respects more simplistic than the contemporary Big House novels of Molly Keane or Elizabeth Bowen. As Anne Fogarty writes of the Big House novels of Keane and Bowen, '[m]arriage and domesticity in these novels are shown to be intertwined with usurpation and disempowerment'. If anything, the opposite is true in Crone's novel, and rather than being 'haunted by violent traces of past traumas, by repressed subaltern histories that it harbours, and by the psychic aftermath of human struggle', all of these potential ironies are significant lacunae in the old-fashioned text.[96]

The Awful Fatalism of Joseph Tomelty

Though not a Big House novel, all of the aspects that Fogarty describes are in play in Joseph Tomelty's 1948 novel *Red is the Port Light*, which like Crone focuses on an intellectually limited Catholic youth. It also features an exceptionally similar ending to *Bridie Steen*. Tomelty remains better known as a playwright, broadcaster, and actor. A founder member of the Ulster Theatre Group in 1940, his film acting career took off after he was spotted by David Lean in Tyrone Guthrie's production of George Shiels's *The Passing Day* (1937), which was actually part of the Festival of Britain programme.[97] However *The McCooeys* was by far his most popular output in these years, a radio serial for the northern BBC which depicted 'an ordinary Belfast family of unidentifiable religious background who spoke in the accent and dialect of the city'.[98] The show, as part of a new regional emphasis in the wider organisation, was an unprecedented success for the BBC in the six counties, and Bell was a key figure in the gestation of a show which was described by Jonathan Bardon as 'the most popular and most discussed programme ever broadcast in Northern Ireland'.[99] Lance Pettitt argues that the broadcast demonstrated how the output of BBC Ulster in the 1940s unveiled 'a number of recurrent contradictions within Ulster Protestant cultural identity [had] come to the surface'. Yet in its attempts to find an aggregate of the competing political and religious identities in the north, *The McCooeys* arguably represented a utopian ideal. As such, Pettitt describes that the titular family lived 'in a close-knit urban community' with 'an extended family structure'. There was also a marked industrial character to the occupations that they all had: 'the head of the family in

[96] Anne Fogarty, 'Ireland and English Fiction', in Robert L. Caserio, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel* (Cambridge, 2009), 102-113: 107, 107.
[97] Sam Hanna Bell, *The Theatre in Ulster: A Survey of the Dramatic Movement in Ulster from 1902 until the Present Day* (London, 1972), 75.
[98] Henry Patterson, 'Brian Maginess and the Limits of Liberal Unionism', *The Irish Review* 25 (1999), 95–112: 101.
[99] Jonathan Bardon, *Beyond the Studio: A History of BBC Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 2000), 18.

Belfast's key industry (the Harland and Wolff shipyard) with the son an electrician, grandfather a retired railway worker, and two working daughters in a clothes shop and an office, the mother a housewife'.[100] In an interview with Tomelty, John Gray glossed the widespread impact of the show:

> for the first time outside the field of documentary, the still relatively new medium of radio enjoyed an unprecedented success in which ordinary Ulstermen and women heard their own voices, rather than distant and more anglified tones. Sam Hanna Bell recalls… how walking down the main street of Waterfoot in the Glens of Antrim on a sunny day one could follow an entire episode of the McCooeys emanating from doorway after doorway.[101]

The stress which Bell places on this country-town enjoying the urban radio show is telling in terms of his own penchant for examining the rural-urban divide. But on one level, the show's popularity was not surprising considering that the programme 'contrived to avoid all references to religion, so that nobody could actually ascertain the religious or political affiliation of the eponymous family'.[102] The only nuance to their urban identity was the elder McCooeys having emigrated from the countryside.

In contrast to this representation of an urban working-class community, Tomelty's debut novel *Red is the Port Light* begins and ends in the County Down village Portaferry, and focuses on the individual journey of the protagonist Stephen Durnan. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, Norman Vance briefly considers the novel 'grim but effective' as a 'bleak melodrama'.[103] This grimness and bleakness is registered from the start of the narrative, since the first scene details the trauma of the death of a parent, with the funeral of Durnan's mother. His subsequent departure on a merchant ship, however, figures this tragedy as a form of geographical dislocation. As a villager offering his condolences to him states, 'you were never that often at home'. In his bereavement Durnan betrays an early desire for escape from Portaferry, with some of the first lines in the novel a dialogue about arranging a job as a lamp-trimmer after the funeral: 'The *Glendry.* She's discharging coal at the quay right now'. A sense of homelessness pervades these first passages, since his father is not only absent, but a flashback also reveals that Durnan was ostracised from his Catholic schoolmates because he is a 'by-blow', a colloquial term for a child born out of wedlock. This early displacement from home, both as a location and as a general concept, heightens his enmeshment in the limited topography of the Ards Peninsula. His job as a seaman represents that displacement, and the possible list of

[100] Lance Pettitt, 'Queering Broadcast Boundaries: An Episode in Northern Ireland's Radio History', *Media History* 11.3 (2005), 207–224: 212, 212, 212.
[101] Joseph Tomelty and John Gray. 'Joseph Tomelty', *The Linen Hall Review* 1.3 (1984), 9-11: 10.
[102] John Horgan, *Irish Media: A Critical History Since 1922* (London, 2012), 76.
[103] Norman Vance, 'Region, Realism and Reaction, 1922-1972', in John Wilson Foster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2006), 153-170: 161.

destinations expands Portaferry's network in a manner similar to Belfast in *The Wayward Man*: 'Aberdeen, Whitehaven or maybe Maryport'.[104] But this also suggests, as in Esty's description, how the 'relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference' in the literature of this era.[105] Similarly, an early reminiscence about his childhood dreams reveals some quasi-nationalist sentiments, as he chooses 'grand names for his ships, the names of Irish presidents. The *President Parnell*, the *President Healy*, the *President Cosgrove*, and the names he had for his deep-sea boats were: the *Irish Republic*, the *Irish Hero*, the *Irish Volunteer*'.[106] This strange conflation of actual and imagined Irish Presidents suggests the loose attachment that Durnan has to nationalist politics, also hinting at his later disillusionment from the northern state.

A wider sense of alienation pervades the first part of the novel, which takes the form of a series of interior monologues that blend his anxieties into the landscape. As such, John Wilson Foster's description of the novel as 'realist' does not really hold throughout *Red is the Port Light*, which instead mixes its melodramatic narrative with interior monologues which filter the disillusionment of Durnan through to the reader.[107] One particular image of the Portaferry coastline depopulates it of all life and beauty:

> He kept looking out to the sea until he rounded the bend. Then he turned his head to the banks. These banks were lifeless… They looked as if some great cloud had vomited them from the sky.
>
> Some day, he thought, the water licking and seeping under the muddy road would topple them into the sea. This had always been one of his nightmares; these banks crashing down on top of him. Even now as he turned into the loanen that led to his home, he shuddered.[108]

The threat that nature and the landscape poses here evidently denies any kind of romantic attachment to the landscape. The coastline is not a source of comfort, but offers a blank canvas upon which to map his anxieties. In these early dystopian nightmares of being toppled into the Irish Sea, the ontological stability that Hewitt and McFadden often derived from the landscape is here instead a place, if not a source, of alienation. Writing of other fictional acts of 'diluvian re-engineering', John Brannigan has argued that the 'trope of a submerged archipelago… is the *deus ex machina* which compels an end to prevailing conditions in order to expose their contingency'.[109] As discussed below, this particular iteration of that trope is linked to what is

[104] Joseph Tomelty, *Red is the Port Light* (1948; Belfast, 1997), 12, 9, 18, 12.
[105] Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, 6.
[106] Tomelty, *Red is the Port Light*, 23; Tomelty's emphasis.
[107] John Wilson Foster, 'Strangford Lough and its Writers', in *Between Shadows: Modern Irish Writing and Culture* (Dublin, 2009), 129-140: 135.
[108] Tomelty, *Red is the Port Light*, 15.
[109] John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism: Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970* (Edinburgh, 2014), 3-4.

eventually revealed (although not named) as Durnan's post-traumatic stress disorder, along with his desire to depart from the bleakness of his coastal surroundings. But though the novel reveals Portaferry's connections to the rest of the archipelago, the feared disaster event is instead couched in more local terms, offering a conspicuous rewriting of the ontological stability that Ulster regionalism derived from the same coastlines.

The sense of fatalism recorded in his envisaged disaster is enshrined when Durnan ends up on *The Glendry*, a small tanker which is figured as a potential escape to 'Aberdeen, Whitehaven or maybe Maryport'. This ship is captained by Frank Norton, the man whom years earlier he had saved from drowning and then testified against for causing that fatal shipwreck on a journey to Iceland. The triggering of Durnan's post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as the resurfacing of his fears of repetition, are projected via an interior monologue onto the narrator's descriptions of landscape as they depart: 'The houses were gone, and… the land… seemed to shrink and get smaller. Dimly, Durnan could see the ploughed fields, the scabby-looking furrows… the sky was heavy with black ropes of twisted clouds'. However, as the landscape gradually disappears, a 'great howl from the wind… gather[s] darkness from the ship' and *The Glendry* is foundered, killing all but Durnan and Fenner, the shipmate whom he saves, ending the first part of the novel.[110] In this first section, as in much of the narrative, there is little consolation to the protagonist, and no prospect of escape either from Portaferry or his mental disorder. For Brannigan, the sea in Michael McLaverty's *Call My Brother Back* – a novel Tomelty admired – is considered 'a means of passage, communication, and connection rather than as an insulating boundary'.[111] While *Red is the Port Light* does reveal the manifold connections to the maritime economy that Strangford Lough possessed, for Durnan almost the exact reverse is true here, and the tantalising possibility of escape which is offered in the first chapter is left unrealised. Upon regaining consciousness, Durnan finds himself being tended to by Frank Norton's widow Winnie in the fictional south-east Down coastal village of Barholm.[112] After recovering, he eventually marries her, an event which practically and symbolically occurs in a Belfast both far away from the prying eyes of her local community and which is constantly referred to in the novel as an administrative capital.

As an attempt to escape from the deep-rooted paranoia which plagues Durnan in the first section of the novel, this marriage is similarly doomed. Tomelty had earlier written of McLaverty's debut novel that 'we glimpse the famous Falls Road, its Catholic people, their

[110] Tomelty, *Red is the Port Light*, 12, 39, 41.
[111] Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism*, 153.
[112] There is an area of Portaferry called 'Barholm', but as John Wilson Foster discusses in 'Strangford Lough and its Writers', *Red is the Port Light* 'constructs a fictional geography' in 'suggesting that "Portaferry" is south of Barholm'; Foster, 'Strangford Lough and its Writers', 136.

habits, their awful fatalism'.[113] Thus even the fact that the marriage of Durnan and Norton's widow takes place in St Peter's Cathedral on the Falls Road suggests its limited potential for happiness. The novel elsewhere gives ample space to describing his discomfort in Belfast: 'Where they were to search for quietness in this busy city, Durnan didn't know… he felt if he took a tramcar to its terminus, they must come to the city boundary, and beyond that there must be the country'. Even the bleakness of this countryside is reemphasised as the couple return from their marriage. On this journey Durnan 'point[s] out things of interest on the road home', such as 'the scattering of islands that dotted the lough, the tip of the peninsula from Bradshaw's Brae; the black swans at Mountstewart, the huge rock with Eternity painted on it, the ruins of Castleknock Monastery'. The interior shoreline of the Ards Peninsula is transformed into a Gothic landscape of Durnan's own anxieties, with the black swans, the ruins, and the particularly Hardy-esque 'eternity' message on the rock: bleak symbols of impending doom. Durnan and Winnie Norton's marriage instantly turns into estrangement, and the early onset of marital difficulties leads to Winnie's murder by Durnan during a violent argument. Shortly after, as he surveys the village from his front door, looking 'down at the lough', another projection of his mentality upon the landscape is made, as the 'evening heaviness of the fields made the atmosphere thick with the broody silence, as if everything was asleep on the land… Here in this spot he felt remote from everything'. As he contemplates the effects of his crime, the prospect of the city inspectors coming to the quiet village is practically what frightens him most: 'These quiet fields would be searched, the silent cottage turned inside out, the hedges combed, every footprint examined, Susan and Robert questioned and re-questioned, until these tall men from the city found their clues… that was what murder meant'.[114]

Tom Clyde notes that the structure of *Red is the Port Light* is practically theatrical, with its 'almost epic sense of an isolated group of people, their world circumscribed by ignorance, taboo, and a continual struggle to survive'. As such, he terms it 'a most atypical Ulster novel, having more of the feel of writing about the West from Synge onwards'.[115] At times the fatalistic narrative of Tomelty's novel resembles *Riders to the Sea* (1904), characterised by a similar sense of doom, but the overwhelming influence in both is Thomas Hardy. However, there are other points of reference too: in marked similarity to Gabriel in *The House in Clewe Street*, the novel ends with the refusal of Stephen to face up to his crime in the city and he eventually goes insane in a countryside whose isolation is synonymous with his psychosis. Moreover, this fatalist ending again recalls Tomelty's reading of McLaverty and West Belfast, connecting with

[113] Joseph Tomelty, 'The Best Books on Ulster', *The Bell* 6.4 (July 1942), 252.
[114] Tomelty, *Red is the Port Light*, 134, 164, 190, 190-191, 191. 'Castleknock Monastery' is probably a pseudonym for Grey Abbey, the ruins of a Cistercian Monastery in Greyabbey village, Ards Peninsula, County Down.
[115] Tom Clyde, 'Picking at Scabs', *Fortnight* 290 (1990), 5-6, 6.

a general frame of representation for Catholic writers from the north at the time. Mary Beckett's examination of the 'Six Counties' in the 'Young Writers Symposium' in *The Bell* encapsulated how partition in particular was figured by some quarters as a clash between different forms of development:

> As for us here we don't have growing pains for the simple reason that we don't grow. At least adolescence is natural; this in [sic] a case of retarded development. If ever the leading strings are removed we'll suffer agony in every soft muscle, and you, by then an adult society, will probably have little patience with us.[116]

The metaphor of the physical agony of Beckett is matched in Tomelty's text with the mental anguish of Stephen in *Red is the Port Light*, and the general air of underdevelopment that both writers create. As Esty writes, 'Modernism exposes and disrupts the inherited conventions of the *bildungsroman* in order to criticise bourgeois values and to reinvent the biographical novel, but also to explore the contradictions inherent in mainstream developmental discourses of self, nation, and empire'. What he terms 'developmental logic of the late *bildungsroman*' is thus a conspicuous rewriting of the nineteenth-century novel's civilising imperatives.[117] This description of the modernist *bildungsroman* serves equally well for *Red is the Port Light*, especially as it contrasts with the discourses of modernisation and development, which were dominant in its time. Apart from a pessimistic exposition of notions of personal development and artistic escape, Tomelty's novel also offers a unique critique of the discourses of belonging that were being propagated in the 1950s by Ulster regionalism.

Ulster Gothic

The marriage plot and the imagery of physical incapacity in *Red is the Port Light* recall a scene within Sam Hanna Bell's *December Bride*, in which Frank Echlin, one of the main characters, is beaten so badly by members of his own community that he is crippled for the rest of his life. Elsewhere in the novel, a child born out of wedlock in the novel, Andra Echlin, is discovered to be deaf. However, instead of the identarian anxieties that troubled Beckett's contribution to *The Bell*'s Young Writers Symposium, *December Bride* is also testament to the connections between writing north and south, as well as forming part of a wider response to modernisation in Britain and Ireland. Bell supported his literary career by working for the BBC. He had initially secured this job by way of his pitch for a programme called *The Drift from the Land*, later retitled *Their Country's Pride*, which examined rural to urban migration in the six counties. Thus, it was fitting that O'Faoláin, as a 'distant literary mentor' to Bell, encouraged him to turn

[116] Mary Beckett, 'The Young Writer', *The Bell* 17.7 (October 1951), 18-20: 19.
[117] Esty, *Unseasonable Youth*, 3, 6.

the family story of two brothers whom had become involved with a servant girl into the novel *December Bride*.[118] The specific advice which the Cork writer gave him signals the northern turn towards what was stereotyped as a southern aesthetic: 'You have, I feel, so far been a little fogged by the inevitable inarticulateness of peasants'. As O'Faoláin went on to write, 'I feel this is an old problem with Irish novels, and I am inclined to turn to Hardy to see again how he gets out of the difficulty'.[119] The epigraph to the novel, from Thomas Hardy's 'Honeymoon Time at an Inn', shows that he had heeded the older writer's advice.[120] Aside from the influence that such all-island creative networks wielded upon Bell, more locally the novel has been described by McIntosh as 'highlight[ing] the unique, often violent, nature of life within a religiously dominated society'.[121] Following McIntosh's analysis, Derek Hand argues that it demonstrates 'how insular and isolated country life can actually be and how speech itself becomes truncated and limited in this world of inherent and inherited distrust'.[122] While these readings certainly ring true in terms of the domination of religion and the inherited traditions of the rural lifestyle that envelop the community of *December Bride*, Bell also examines the synergy between the settlements of the Ards Peninsula and the Belfast industrial enclave.

The first scene of the novel immediately introduces the reader both to the traditions of silence and the hostility of the village community towards its central characters. Eschewing the potential for a 'happy' marriage, which even Tomelty and Crone's narratives briefly allow, as well as replacing the familiar instigation of the 'plot' element of many other northern novels – the funeral – *December Bride* begins with the marriage of two of its protagonists, Hamilton Echlin and Sarah Gomartin. With Bell's removal of the 'plot' development that the title teases, the reader is immediately confronted with the ritual of marriage, and the entire novel is a retrospective precursor to this scene: 'Echlin took his bride's hand, and with her assistance managed to press the ring over the first gnarled joint of her finger. But the lower knuckle… was too large for the ring and Sarah timorously drew back her hand'. The repeated emphasis on the actions of both minister and married couple is uncertain, and entangled with an acute sense of embarrassment. While the priest 'scrawl[s]' his signature on the certificate with 'practised carelessness', and nods 'abruptly', the couple also 'hesitate uncertainly' as they move out of the church into the yard. This movement from the interior of the church to the exterior renders the marriage in phenomenological terms and as the description gives way to these villagers,

[118] McMahon, *Bell*, 72.
[119] Seán O'Faoláin, qtd in Paul Clements, 'An Irishman's Diary', *The Irish Times* (1 December 2009), 15. The quote relates to a letter which was on public display in the centenary exhibition about Bell, *A Man Flourishing*, which was held in the Linen Hall Library in Belfast from December 2009. However, Bell's correspondence with O'Faoláin is now in private ownership.
[120] Sam Hanna Bell, *December Bride* (1951; Belfast, 2005), [front matter; no page number].
[121] McIntosh, *Culture*, 196.
[122] Derek Hand, *A History of the Irish Novel* (Cambridge, 2011), 203.

described as both 'country folk' and 'peasants', who fix 'curious eyes on this joyless bridal procession' mostly in silence. The little dialogue that does take place in this scene reveals a general suspicion towards the family: 'He's as bad as the rest – there's bad blood in the whole bloody tribe'.[123] Rathard is defined in negative terms against the married couple, but both this surveillance by the villagers and the inefficacy of its rites frame the representative function of the ceremony. In her consideration of love and marriage as themes and plot devices in the Irish novel in the immediate wake of the Act of Union, Claire Connolly writes that they are '[n]ot only subject to particular forms of narrative inscription that ultimately determine their meanings but also deeply embedded within a political moment'.[124] The same narrative function is being used here, and like Bridie's doomed return to her Protestant patrilineage, the union of a singular rather than plural geography suggests the inwardness that pervades the novel.

However, unlike the idealistic construction of marriage as a way out of poverty in Crone's novel, or Kiely's rejection of love as a symbolic reclamation of the nation, *December Bride* is foregrounded by a burlesqued account of this easy resolution. While McIntosh at once argues that Bell is in sympathy with Hewitt's brand of regionalism and that he 'actively sabotages the notion of a homogenous protestant enclave', the opening symbolism of *December Bride* offers a critique of the inwardness of 'Ulster regionalism' which is extended to the treatment of space in the novel.[125] The reaction of the villagers to the marriage not only introduces the reader to the conservatism of the Rathard cmmunity, but as McIntosh again notes it renders the entire structure 'fatalistic', with the rest of the narrative followed by flashback. The marriage is registered as belated both by the community and the title itself, and towards the end of the novel we find out that it is merely a way for their daughter, Martha, to get married and move to Belfast. Thus, the marriage is at least partially motivated by resignation towards urbanisation and a rejection of the rural community. In one of the last pieces of dialogue in *December Bride*, when the Reverend makes this clear, Sarah 'swe[eps] her eyes disdainfully over the countryside' and declares that she is 'too old now to be caring what they think'. Again, the community is so deeply embedded in the countryside that their identity is interchangeable. After this titular marriage, the novel examines the roots of this union. *December Bride* details how the two brothers Frank and Hamilton Echlin, more 'prosperous cottiers, the farms of which absorbed all the labour that each family could expend' from Rathard, become embroiled in a love triangle with their house servant Sarah, with more than faint recollections of *Land Without Stars*. She has moved with their mother from the neighbouring village Banyil 'where tenants of

[123] Bell, *December Bride*, 4, 5, 6, 6.
[124] Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (Cambridge, 2011), 88.
[125] McIntosh, *Culture*, 196.

a vanished demesne' resided to help the Echlins after the death of their mother.[126] The brothers are orphaned early in the novel with the death of their own father, Andrew, who is drowned in the Lough after a trip to a cousin's house, and this quickly leads to an affair between Sarah and Frank.

While the dialogue makes an identification with the community and the landscape, the descriptions of space do not. In the first description of the landscape in which much of the novel takes place, there are palpable anxieties over the repossession of the land which emerge in a Gothic representation of the landscape in the novel. Neal Alexander has convincingly described the later city scenes in the novel as falling within the wider Irish tradition of 'approach[ing] Belfast with considerable trepidation', but there is certainly some early trepidation in the countryside too.[127] Jarlath Killeen, in his redefinition of the modality or tradition of 'Irish Gothic', writes that 'regional space' is traditionally considered as being 'a classic site of Gothic energies'. For Killeen, 'even novels which offer putatively realist accounts of Ireland are continuously disrupted by the Gothic mode'. [128] True to this description, in the dominant historical realist mode of *December Bride* such Gothic disruption initially appears in its mapping of Strangford Lough. In the first register of the setting for much of the novel – the Rathard Farm that the Echlins live in – 'the hill' nearby, which has been settled on 'for centuries', is described as '[s]welling gently from the shores of Strangford Lough'. This tranquillity is disrupted as the narrator notes that '[b]ehind the dwelling house lay an ancient rath from whence an earlier people had looked down on the sinuous waters of the lough. Now nothing more martial was heard than the cry of a cock'. There are constant intrusions of the past in the landscape around the lough, and the villagers are readily able to read these as kinds of relics: 'At the beach nearest the mainland was the shell of a monastic settlement surrounded by smooth grassy mounds, which, Andrew told Sarah, were "the graves of ould kings"'. Like those in *Red is the Port Light*, these ruins are acknowledgements of the usurpation of some ambiguously defined past feudal order that remains firmly in the background, but here this order is neatly circumscribed within Ulster. While the timeframe is *fin de siècle* Ireland, the south does not feature prominently in the narrative but fulfils the function of a distant horizon that is weakly connected to the community by minor characters. For example, Sarah's father Charlie, a thatcher by trade, 'die[s] on a Sligo road among tinker people', while a Mr Lalor Bourke 'pour[s] out' his landed family's inheritance 'on the racecourses of Leopardstown [and] the

[126] Bell, *December Bride*, 261, 11, 11.
[127] Neal Alexander, 'Strange City: Belfast Gothic', in Godela Weiss-Sussex and Franco Bianchini, eds, *Urban Mindscapes of Europe* (Amsterdam, 2006), 113-125: 120-1.
[128] Jarlath Killeen, 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction', *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 1 (October, 2006); <https://irishgothichorror.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/ijghsissue12.pdf/> Accessed 3 August 2017.

Curragh'.[129]

Belfast is the most sustained disruption to the quietness of Bell's portrait of farm life, not only through the commanding figure of the Reverend Sorleyson – a Belfast native who strictly controls the villagers according to puritan values – but through the two set pieces that outline the different experiences of the city. Both of these passages, coming in the first and the last parts of the novel, bring forward the plot while detailing the acceleration of modernity. This is opposed to the 'rhythm of life' in the country, which 'moves sluggishly in the winter months'. The earlier of these set-pieces outlines Sarah's first ever journey to Belfast on the offer of Hamilton. With her visit occurring in the middle of her affair with his brother Frank, Sarah is the lens through which we see Belfast: 'Although living only twenty miles from Belfast, Sarah had never been in the city before'. This focus on the viewpoint of Sarah – rather than Hamilton, whose occupation makes such trips routine – means that the narrative, again, frames Belfast as a discovery of *terra incognita*. The journey from Rathard to Belfast is a symbolic journey along the stages of industrial development, with the remnants of the past being replaced with the technological advances of the modern. It is also a narration of the emergence of Belfast and, by extension, a separate northern culture:

> Then came a row of white-washed cottages, once the village of Castlereagh but now chained to the city by row upon row of red-brick houses. Hamilton reined the horse down to walking pace as they joined the long jolting cavalcade of carts arriving in from the townlands lying to the south and east. Towering among them, the horse trams lurched slowly towards the city centre.

Despite Bell's intentions towards exacting the shock of the new in Sarah, the early Belfast chapter outlines a network of settlements, both in terms of economy and experience, in two distinct yet related ways. Firstly, *December Bride* represents this journey as a collective one, with the 'cavalcade of carts' from the townlands signalling an almost harmonious and even ritual dependence on the city. Indeed, the passage is bookended by a recognition of the collective nature of the journey: 'Their cart was one in a long procession of carts, moving back through the dusk of the winter evening towards the townlands'. Furthermore, the fact that this journey is taken by horse and carriage means that the settlements through which Sarah and Hamilton pass are subsumed into the narrative, with Castlereagh and Ardpatrick – 'an oasis of light in the dark countryside' – both offering interstitial pauses along the way of the journey to and from modernity.[130]

Some Gothic elements feature in the city too, such as the 'the dark crowded shop' in which Hamilton 'made his purchases for the outdoor life of Rathard', amid the crowd of

[129] Bell, *December Bride*, 10, 18, 11, 159.
[130] Bell, *December Bride,* 17, 73, 72-3, 75, 77.

shipyard workers who walk under 'a mass of slender gantries, like a piece of jagged lace, stood at the bottom of a hill'. For Sarah, this experience is overwhelmingly positive. Like Mary Lavin's Onny Soraghan, she is transformed into an object of desire in the city, with a 'feeling of pleasure' coming over her as she becomes 'aware of bold friendly glances from the men' and '[t]hree young shipyard workers… smiled at her, their teeth shining in their oil-smudged faces'. As she catches her reflection in a shop window, 'the innate peasant appreciation of harmonious colour and line in living things was satisfied', her image in the city contrasts explicitly with the earlier description of the 'grey fields… like the faces of spent men'. As well as a place of alcoholic intoxication, Belfast is practically an aphrodisiac: in one of the central scenes of the novel, after they stop at Ardpatrick, Hamilton and Sarah move out beyond 'the last irregular walls of the village'. Like Onny and Gabriel, they have sex in the remote countryside, in a place where the road 'undulated onward through boglands checkered with crisped heather and black peat banks'.[131] As the first instance in which Sarah sleeps with Hamilton, this act essentially forms the entire inspiration for *December Bride*, which O'Faoláin and others were so keen for Bell to turn into a novel. The location of Hamilton and Sarah's tryst beyond the settlements it so delicately records means that the family tale is woven into a metanarrative of modernity that falls back on a characteristically binary representation of space in Irish fiction – the anonymity of the city as set against the knowability of the countryside. The tale thus, in arguably its most unsettling scene, reminds the reader of the spatial and temporal proximity of the agrarian and the industrial, a closeness that has been considered a defining feature of modernism by Perry Anderson and Terry Eagleton. For the latter, glossing Anderson, modernism 'springs from the estranging impact of modernising forces on a still deeply traditionalist order'.[132] In its descriptions of Belfast, *December Bride* records the ensuing alienation that this collision of temporalities, using the motif of the crowd to explicitly contrast the knowable community of the village and the intense anonymity of the industrial city.

In its return to the city in the third part, *December Bride* further exploits this proximity of the industrial enclave and the preindustrial order, as Petie Sampson, a widower and Orangeman, heads to Belfast with his dog Kipper for a job loading cattle and ends up drinking with his Catholic employers. Now useless in the rapidly modernising economy, he has resorted to working for the Ogles, whose religion 'might have deterred Petie in his younger and more obstreperous days'. The symbolism of this chapter constantly emphasises that the modernity which the city exemplifies is in itself intoxicating. Thus as Petie gets more inebriated, he is also

[131] Bell, *December Bride*, 73, 75, 75, 81, 83.
[132] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London, 1995), 297. See also Perry Anderson, 'Modernity and Revolution, *New Left Review* 144 (March – April 1984), 96-113.

increasingly alienated by the experience of Belfast: 'a mill suddenly released hundreds upon hundreds of men and women. They came surging down the pavement, sweeping all before them'. As he loses 'what little sense of direction' he had, the mass of the crowd and the speed of the trams frighten the old man, for whom 'it was a confused blur of hurrying people, the lighted windows of huckster shops, hoardings, dirty brick walls, streetlamps, and people; people scurrying blindly along the pavements or moving forward in patient droves as the tram stopped'. Not just a place of modernity, however, the city is also where the more overt forms of sectarian violence are present, as Petie asks a pub singer for 'The Old Orange Flute', a loyalist 'party song'. After making peace with the predominantly nationalist crowd, Petie gets assaulted by an 'old shawled crone', an obvious cipher for Cathleen ni Houlihan. With the help of a soldier he makes his way to the bus station for another journey – this time a solitary one – back home:

> As the bus crept up over the top of the Castlereagh Hills, a squall of rain struck it, slashing the windows with black and silver. Here and there along the road to Ardpatrick the bus stopped in the darkness and a man or a woman entered or left. None of them gave more than a passing glance at the bowed figure of the old man who swayed weakly to the lurching of the bus, his hands grasping the seat in front of him.

The anonymity of the fellow passengers and the obscurity of the landscape explicitly contrast between the joviality of the earlier journey, but a starker contrast quickly ensues. As he misses his stop, and gets off for the Ravara crossroads instead, Petie walks to his family grave in the churchyard of the opening scene, keels over, and dies: 'At first the rain struck him with a dry pattering noise, merging at last into the dull insistent murmur with which it fell on gravestones, grass, and trees'.[133]

In death Petie becomes interchangeable with the local landscape of Rathard and its forgotten villagers, an almost ritual return to the past occuring the same place as that Gothicised first scene. But this is not the novel's last comment on urban modernity, with a contrasting journey to the capital undertaken in the last chapter. Hamilton and Sarah's second child, Martha, gets engaged to Joe Skillen, a man who has plans to extend his father's shop business to Belfast. Martha, it is mentioned, has earlier been instructed at Ravara National school in 'a system of geography that still contained some pleasant echoes of myth'. However, at the end of the last chapter, when she comes back from her first visit to Belfast, her excitement offers a point of contrast with the earlier confusions of the peasants in a passage recalling the amazement of Bridie Steen: 'She had come back excited by it all; the shop, the tramcars, the picture palaces that promised delights and the unbelievable number of neighbours she would have – a whole city-full, half a million souls!'. Bell's preoccupation with rural to urban migration thus satisfied,

[133] Bell, *December Bride*, 226, 321, 321, 233-5, 236, 238.

the novel enshrines the generational departure not just from a home place but also an entire way of life. This sense of departure from the past perhaps received its fullest voice earlier, however, when the arrival of a new piece of machinery causes massive disruption in the farm:

> As they reached the brow of a hill, the drumming of a heavy engine vibrated in the air, and rising above the trees about half a mile away, the children saw a dark feather of smoke. "The thresher's up at your place, Andra Echlin!" a boy cried. The fair-haired boy strained his ears to catch the sound. "Aye, so it is!" he said. "Come on Martha, hurry up!" and he thrust the ball into his sister's satchel, caught her by the hand, and hurried her along the road.[134]

The use of the verb 'drumming' in this first sentence suggests the subtle usurpation of Rathard's tradition by industrial modernity. The embodiment of the thresher as a symbol of the irreparable ruptures of modernisation offers a non-sectarian symbol in the novel, but also indicates Bell's concentration on the interplay of tradition and modernity as dominant themes in northern life.

Of course, this thresher is, along with the thrilling trams and the motorbus taken by Petie on his last journey, one of the paraphernalia of modernity that caused a massive transformation in the life of the six counties in the 1920s (as Bell had written in his introduction to *The Arts in Ulster*). However, the location of that decade as the epoch of change in the Ulster countryside in *The Arts in Ulster* cloaked the actual source-text for this disruption of the traditions in the region. This is Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), which towards its end features a 'threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves'. The mechanisation of agriculture is complemented, by Hardy, with an almost satanic description of the 'a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness', the thresher's engine-man:

> What he looked he felt. He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denisens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam threshing-machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex.[135]

In his reading of this thresher-engine in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Raymond Williams argues that the writer overcame the difficulties of mobility and modernity to 'centr[e] his major novels in the ordinary processes of life and work'. For Williams this is more complex and realistic than the 'abstraction of rural and urban forces' that the dominant view of Hardy's novels describes.[136] Bell's redeployment of this essential image of rupture in Hardy's novel is similarly in service of representing a regional identity. There is, of course, nothing unique or

[134] Bell, *December Bride*, 200, 258, 201.
[135] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. Juliet Grindle and Simon Gatrell (1891; Oxford, 2005), 345, 345-6.
[136] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 255.

controversial about that perception on its own; R.S. Thomas's 'Cynddylan on a Tractor' already figured this as a disruption of a way of life which had lasted from the feudal age: 'Gone the old look that yoked him to the soil, | He's a new man now, part of the machine, | His nerves of metal and his blood oil'.[137] But in his introduction to the *The Arts in Ulster* he had connected the 'travelling steam-thresher' not just as a central aspect of the ruptures of modernity in the region, but also as a form of evidence for what he had termed a cultural renaissance. Despite these archipelagic similarities, Bell's relocation of the image within the region of Ulster *is* an abstraction of the rural and urban, removing the subtleties of Hardy's image and offering it both as a destruction of the rural community and a creation of a national or regional consciousness. For him, the division of the country and the city was overcome both by recognition of these common traditions and the national identity in which they were contained. As his 1949 BBC radio feature *This is Northern Ireland: An Ulster Journey* had put it: 'Tonight where each man stands and looks out, whether it be on darkling lough or creaming surf or city street, this is our common heritage – This is Northern Ireland'.[138]

For Bell, the rural and the urban formed a source of distraction from the more prominent religious divisions in north, and allowed him to mount an appeal to a common identity in his fiction. Returning to Franco Moretti's theorisation of the prominence of space in the national novel, while human beings cannot grasp their nation-state in 'a single glance', they can 'embrace their village, or valley… the same with the court, or the city'. Thus what Bell saw as the common heritage of northern identity was, like his distant mentor O'Faoláin's project in the south, subsumed into a narrative of modernisation, a strange blend of Ulster regionalism and Cork realism. Apart from O'Faoláin's influence, and the wider echoes in the British and Irish Isles, this should also be placed in the wider context of a rapprochement of the country and the city in the official field of representation in the north of Ireland after the war. As this chapter has argued, there was an identifiable turn towards a rural image in the culture and rhetoric of unionism, aided in part by the state and state-sponsored bodies like the Ulster Tourist Development, the Ulster Festival of Britain Committee, and the Ministry of Agriculture. This was contemporaneous with a regionalist project spearheaded by John Hewitt that sought to codify an 'Ulster' literature as a place deeply concerned with the land, reflecting these wider moves towards recovering the countryside as a site of national identity. In Moretti's words, *December Bride*, like *Bridie Steen*, *Land Without Stars*, and *Red is the Port Light*, turned the complications and divisions of these new moves towards the rural 'into a story', with their

[137] R.S. Thomas, *An Acre of Land* (Newtown, 1952), 16.
[138] Sam Hanna Bell, 'This is Northern Ireland' (transcript), in *A Salute from the Banderol* ed. Fergus Hanna Bell (Belfast, 2009), 8-37: 37.

representation of the country and the city continuing the dialogue between fiction and national identity.[139] But despite the range of styles and moods used in these novels, and the different ideological motivations, place is repeatedly asserted as a key aspect of a character's identity and development, with fiction once again becoming equivalent to 'immediate living experience'.[140]

[139] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London, 1999), 17, 20.
[140] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 46.

Conclusion: 'the geometry of common sense'

Suffice to say, the descriptions and explanations of the country and the city as a defining feature of Irish life did not end in 1951. But as the last chapter contended, the years after the Second World War demonstrate a change in the focus of representations of rural and urban spaces in both north and south. The change in focuses offer some studies a neat symbolism for the concurrent transformations in society. In his recent *Ireland in the 1950s: News From A New Republic* (2010), Tom Garvin argues that the 1950s was a 'crucial period of transition' for the Irish Republic, signposted by the development of a newspaper culture centred in Dublin. One of the consequences of this transition was a recognition that the responsibility for the underdevelopment of the country lay solely within the state: 'the argument that partition itself was the root cause of Irish underdevelopment was one that was commonly made… However, this argument increasingly looked suspiciously like an excuse for failure'. For Garvin this excuse was made all the more glaring given that 'Dublin by 1948 had become recognisably a modern city'. In this precise year – the same as the declaration of the Republic – the capital 'became, and remained, the main conduit through which outside ideas, standards, fashions and books penetrated the popular culture of the country'.[141] Leaving this arbitrary chronology of Dublin and Ireland's modernisation aside, the perception of a change is also evident in Terence Brown's analysis of the same period. *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* argues that the more ambiguous 1950s were a time when developments began to 'alter the shape of Irish society in significant ways'. Brown places a particular emphasis on migration to Dublin as an indication of this transformation: 'the widespread rejection of rural life… in the immediate post-war period quickened into what almost amounted to an Irish exodus'. It is worth pausing briefly on the discrepancy between this observation of a 'rejection' of the rural, and the account of southern Irish society which follows. As he writes of the practice of going home for the weekend,

> The trains and buses at weekends were packed, throughout the 1950s, with new urban dwellers returning to maintain contacts with their roots in the countryside. The pains of urbanisation then were less acute in Ireland than in most other European countries, where simple distance made such relatively comfortable migrations impossible. The process of change was thereby rendered the more acceptable in Ireland, the alienation and loneliness that characterises life in most modern cities effectively reduced. One could always escape for a weekend at home.[142]

[141] Tom Garvin, *Ireland in the 1950s: News From A New Republic* (Dublin, 2010), 8, 8, 9.
[142] Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002* (London, 2004), 199, 206.

As this passage evinces, throughout Brown's *History* there is a sense that the 'urban' means modernisation and the 'rural' means tradition. The language used here – 'escape for a weekend at home' – particularly assumes an oppositional reading of the country and the city, making another construction of Irish exceptionalism in what he calls the simple distance of comfortable migrations.

Even this capacity to escape from the city demonstrates that, while emigration and urbanisation are accelerated in this period, there is no suggestion that this is anything other than an economic imperative. But perhaps more importantly for the purposes at hand, while certainly reflecting the statistical patterns, the urbanisation of Ireland, both in terms of migration and the expansion of the built environment, does not sanction the kind of cultural or intellectual rejection which Brown suggests. Nor does it square with his description of how an 'ideological continuity with the rural past in modern Dublin undoubtedly made the process of urbanisation less painful than it might have been'.[143] Above all else, this particular passage serves as another example of literature being accepted as lived experience, and migration being recognised as a validation of the ideology which rejects rural life. But as this thesis has constantly argued throughout, a literature that rejects the supposed pusillanimity of 'rural life' is not always a reliable piece of testimony for the deep-rooted economic transformations that characterised emigration and migration. Likewise a novel or, indeed a radio broadcast, that valorises the countryside is not necessarily a result of an individual or communal return to the rural. The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the ways in which the representations of the country and the city were crucial to the formations of identity on the island of Ireland in the first decades after partition. In carefully scrutinising the ways in which the rural and the urban have been constructed in culture and politics, I have tried to advance a more nuanced understanding of how these spaces were manipulated for various political and ideological purposes in Irish culture and politics. More than mere geographical markers, the opposition of the rural and the urban occupied a central position in the elaboration of the two states' identity in Ireland after partition, offering both governments and writers a means of territorialisation and continuity with tradition and history. It provided a frame by which to respond to various events that happened in the midst of that ongoing process of identity formation, remaining, as Raymond Williams termed it, 'one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society'.[144] Through speeches at Stormont and the Oireachtas, radio broadcasts, and newspaper articles, major local, national, and global events during this period were glossed or even explained by reference to the country and the city.

[143] Brown, *Ireland*, 208.
[144] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; Frogmore, 1975), 347.

Partition, the Civil War, the Second World War, emigration, migration – these were all placed into an easily understandable and transferrable framework. Thus, as has been repeatedly evinced in the political developments examined in the main chapters of this study, Fintan O'Toole's argument that the contrast or opposition of the rural and the urban 'has been vital to the maintenance of a conservative political culture in the country' is certainly true.[145] But the opposition has also been vital to other kinds of ideological and cultural expressions – including O'Toole's own – and extends well before and beyond his focus on the post-revival period in the south. In the variety of styles and subjects adopted by writers between 1922 and 1951, the contrast has also been vital to the narratives of the novels I have examined.

Going back to Brown's treatment of the 1950s, for all the amelioration of the trauma of rural to urban migration, it actually implies more porosity between the cultures and societies of country and city, which necessitates a different form of analysis. Yet literature cannot always provide this, because the comfortable migrations which he describes are not easily found in any of the novels I have examined. In those novels which deal with rural to urban migration – or vice versa – this is usually a loaded decision which, even in its less dramatic forms, facilitates a fundamental shift in the narrative. Movements between the country or the city are intended to symbolise not just the perceived differences between settlements or communities but also an individual's development. The country and the city are made to matter deeply in and by these novels, many of which feature a move to one from the other as one of the central aspects – if not *the* central aspect – of the beginnings or endings of their narratives.[146] Apart from registering these movements, through its exposition of the characters and communities in the country and the city, fiction also embeds these places with traditions, histories, and values. The Irish novel 'shows' us the social and economic differences between these places, but it also frequently *tells* us the differences through dialogue, imagery, or the general mapping procedures that the realist novel undertakes. This is evinced, for example, by the separation anxiety which Liam O'Flaherty's rural characters are plagued with in Dublin, or what are later couched as the developmental imperatives of the move to the same city by Anna Murphy in Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices*. Dialogues about the rural and the urban which take place between fictional characters are a feature of almost all the novels I have examined. Beyond the confines of the text, writers with as diverse a political background as Seán O'Faoláin and St. John Ervine, while

[145] Fintan O'Toole, 'Going West: The Country versus the City in Irish Writing', *The Crane Bag* 9.2 (1985), 111-16: 113.

[146] At my count, a move either to, or away from, the country or the city, occurs at the beginning or end of St. John Ervine's *The Wayward Man;* Peadar O'Donnell's *Islanders* and *The Knife*; Frank O'Connor's *The Saint and Mary Kate*; Seán O'Faoláin's *A Nest of Simple Folk* and *Bird Alone*; Michael McLaverty's *Call My Brother Back* and *Lost Fields*; Kate O'Brien's *The Land of Spices*; Maura Laverty's *Never No More: The Story of a Lost Village*; Maura Laverty's *The House in Clewe Street*; Benedict Kiely's *Land Without Stars*; Anne Crone's *Bridie Steen*; Sam Hanna Bell's *December Bride.*

writing *bildungsroman* narratives which examined the rural and urban as formative environments, also contributed to a wider polemic about the country and the city, representing them as defining aspects of the burgeoning states on the island. Indeed the *bildungsroman*, whilst prevalent in the context of state construction in this study, is not the only form that contained these representations. The genres and subgenres in the novels I have included here have included dystopian fantasy, thrillers, historical novels, sentimental novels, and psychological melodramas. Despite this variety of uses and genres which a novelist has at their disposal, their central message is often tied up in one of the fundamental paradigms of conceptualising the nation.

These novels also remained faithful both in perspectives on the built environment as well as its geometric co-ordinates. Arguably the most defamiliarising representation of the country and the city included in this thesis, Eimar O'Duffy's devastated inner-city of Dublin in *King Goshawk and the Birds*, is still traceable on the map of the capital city. But perhaps more importantly, what is consistently retained by practically all of these writers is a recognition of Dublin or Belfast as political centres, meaning that the representation of the country and the city is far more than just a thematic concern, but often directly implicated in the critique of the state. This reminds us of the contention about the 'permissible terrain' of the state by Edward Said, which was quoted in the first chapter:

> To a great extent culture, cultural formations, and intellectuals exist by virtue of a very interesting network of relationships with the State's almost absolute power... all intellectual or cultural work occurs somewhere, at some time, on some very precisely mapped-out and permissible terrain, which is ultimately contained by the State.[147]

A related aspect which has also emerged in this study is the centralisation present both north and south, so even supposedly politically disinterested novelists reflect the increasing dominance of Dublin and Belfast after 1922 as centres of economic power. While this function found its most direct statement in the polemical novels of Peadar O'Donnell, it is more subtly present, for example, in the representations of remote hamlets in Shan Bullock and Anne Crone's Fermanagh novels. Thus, with the partial exceptions of O'Connor and O'Faoláin, who were consciously writing an alternative model of the dominant social and cultural development of the Irish nation in Dublin by centring an Irish consciousness in Cork, Munster, and the spaces of the diaspora, the political capital almost always stands in for the urban. Even 'rural' novels like *Never No More* and *Red is the Port Light* are embedded within the contexts of the centralised states. This is as much a reflection of the social and economic structures on the

[147] Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, 1983), 172, 169.

island, before and after partition, as it is of the incapacities of Irish culture to imagine an alternative beyond these polarising and often misused terms. Perhaps what has emerged most fully is not just how constraining the opposition of the rural and urban remains as a way of conceptualising Ireland, but also how reductive and proscriptive the conception of 'rural' and 'urban' places are.

This limiting paradigm has been so eloquently exposed by Peter Leary, in another context, as the result of a critical gravitation towards 'the brighter lights of the island's principal cities'.[148] As Williams argued in *The Country and the City*, 'our real social experience is not only of the country and the city, in their most singular forms, but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organisation'. Instead of these intermediate and new kinds of organisation, however, we get the 'subjectivist and fatalist form', terms which have deeply changed since their use in this post-partition timeframe, but which still have no less currency in the contemporary political and literary culture of Ireland.[149] The overbearing brightness of these lights is not dimmed in literature. It has been forty-four years since Williams's urge for a more complex sense of these organisations, but the frequency of the country and the city as a binary opposition remains intact in many political and cultural representations of Ireland. Even with profound political changes, the continued rural-urban migration, and emigration to Britain, Europe, and America which have taken place since – which is not to mention the infrastructural or architectural changes – the country and the city remain central axes in the political culture of Ireland north and south, with the rural standing in for the margins of the state.[150] John Montague's description of a 'semi-urban setting' in Ireland is the apotheosis of this inability to conceive of literature beyond this straitjacket.[151] The writings of John Hewitt also demonstrate that while the local or regional has been an enduring motif in Irish literature, this has never developed into a more nuanced literary geography either, with little appreciation of the intermediate towns or villages, or movements between, except within that wider unit. As David Harvey writes, 'Geographical knowledges occupy a central position in all forms of political action and struggle. They are all the more powerful for being considered so obvious and so banal as to be unworthy of explicit consideration, let alone careful scrutiny'.[152] The main problem of this banal repetition of the country and the city as a fundamental organising principle

[148] Peter Leary, *Unapproved Routes: Histories of the Irish Border, 1922-1972* (Oxford, 2016), 18.
[149] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 347, 367.
[150] To take one recent example, the Dublin-based newspaper *The Irish Independent* have recently commissioned a 'Living in Rural Ireland' series of articles examining the continuation of the recent recession in the countryside. Claire Fox, '"Recession isn't over in rural Ireland" - says owner of Ireland's most westerly pub', *The Irish Independent* (18 September 2017). <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/recession-isnt-over-in-rural-ireland-says-owner-of-irelands-most-westerly-pub-36034631.html>. Accessed 20 September 2017.
[151] John Montague, 'The Young Writer', *The Bell*, 17.7 (October 1951), 5-12: 6.
[152] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh, 2001), 233

is what it obscures. Its relentless pliability as an essential element or aspect of experience means that many other forms of division that it stands in for – class, religion, politics, gender, to name a few – are hidden within one of the most continuous aspects of representation. Thus the country and the city repeatedly corroborate what a writer perceives as the real, or in Williams's phrase, 'immediate living experience'.

The cartographer Tim Robinson has put one of the central arguments of this thesis more succinctly: 'there are more places within a forest, among the galaxies or on a Connemara seashore, than the geometry of common sense allows'.[153] Both in terms of the places and writers which are included above, I have tried to go beyond the proscriptions of common sense, in search of a fuller understanding of how the country and the city have shaped and defined the representation of the island since partition. The overarching conviction has been to recover these many other places on the island and beyond that were dreamed of, besides Ireland, the country, and the city.

[153] Tim Robinson, *Connemara: A Little Gaelic Kingdom* (London, 2011), 252.

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Individual items for these archives are outlined in the footnotes to the text. In the case of items which were taken from another author's reference, both the archive and the source has been listed in the footnotes, but I have only retained the author's work in the bibliography. The archives which I have quoted directly from are:

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Dáil Debates, Tithe an Oireachtas, <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/>;

Jonathan Cape Ltd Papers, Special Collections, The Library of the University of Reading;

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