

Ireland:
A Colony Once Again

Ireland:
A Colony Once Again

By

Seán Ó Nualláin
Center for the Study of Language and Information,
Stanford University

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

Ireland: A Colony Once Again,
by Seán Ó Nualláin

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2012 by Seán Ó Nualláin

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4085-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4085-9

To the memory of Richard Strohman, late of UC Berkeley,
who always suspected he was really Irish;
and to my daughters Beth and Coralie, the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface: Cry, the Dear Land!	ix
Chapter One.....	1
The Recolonisation of Ireland	
Chapter Two	45
Consciousness and Nation	
Chapter Three	89
The History and Myth of Ireland	
Chapter Four	131
How the Irish became Boring: From the Creation of the Free State to the Celtic Housing Bubble	
Chapter Five	155
So Far from God, So between Boston and Berlin: Ireland in the World	
Chapter Six	197
Software/Bogearra: How the Irish Government Buggered Up Its Native Tech Industries	
Chapter Seven.....	223
Aisling Ghearr/Bitter Vision: The Second Irish Revolution?	
Chapter Eight.....	243
Manifesto for a New Ireland: Actions Required	
References	285

PREFACE: CRY, THE DEAR LAND!

It is worth clearing the ground by stating that this book is not primarily about Ireland.

That the country is Ireland, and the period the first two decades of the third millennium is irrelevant to this section. It deals, rather, with what types of evidence outside the purely historical and economic are allowed and what the theoretical structure underpinning this evidence is.

This preface will hint that a reduction to neuroscience may not be possible; this shall shortly be expanded upon. Yet there is strong evidence that much experimental work of the most morally debauched nature was undertaken by the CIA, *inter alia*, to attempt to break down psychological structures in the individual in order to reprogram them. There is preliminary evidence that certain of the CIA's coups like that in Chile attempted to extend this from the individual to the national level. We shall therefore apprise ourselves of any relevant neuroscience in the course of the book.

Secondly, we use some of the apparatus of contemporary postcolonial thought; “the other”, alienation, inauthenticity, the welding back together of the Cartesian split between mind and matter. It is argued that one's “sense of place” should eschew this dualism. It is further argued that one of the critical aspects of neo-colonization is its violation of “sense of place” expectancies with catastrophic results. The book's specific program is about using the classical resources of Irish cultural nationalism to emerge from the current trap into a stable and just society.

It is further argued that “shock” treatment is in any case not applicable in a democracy. A democracy Ireland has remained, despite the threat posed by e-voting and a financial scam of such proportions that the national debt has quintupled in an attempt to deflate it (rather than undo it). Instead of shock treatment, what has been done is a more subtle nudging of the Irish away from feeling embodied in a particular locale as a particular indigenous population. The methods used were multifarious; massive immigration,

with recent immigrants of all ethnicities labelled “new Irish” by all leading politically correct media; an assault on individuals attempting to create independent expressions of Irish culture through arts and scholarship; destruction of civil society structures, either by incorporating them into the state through agreements like “social partnership” or indirectly by refusing to give them the protection of the law; and so on.

This writer's background has been first, that amorphous set of disciplines called the “cognitive sciences” and, secondly, theoretical biology and experimental neuroscience. In contrast to many cognitive scientists, he believes it important to emphasise that, in his opinion, these disciplines as currently construed have next to nothing to say about political sociology. It is worth spending some time exploring why this is so.

Were it possible to describe mental processes solely in a set of differential equations or other such reductionist form, as the research program called “eliminative materialism” desires, both the cognitive and social sciences would quickly reduce to the null set. There would quite simply be no need for the former; the latter would become a kind of utilitarian “felicific calculus” where beneficial effects of varying policies for the populace (as distinct from citizenry) would be calculated by technocrats. It is worth noting, in this context, that eliminative materialism has ignored the fact of its claim-jump into the political arena. Liberal democracy requires freedom of conscience, even in the face of technocrats describing conscience as an illusion, whether necessary or not. The political will remain an ineluctable realm, whatever progress science makes.

In fact, due perhaps to their common origin in (Francis) Baconian science, the argument for the economization of life due to neoliberalism has a similar structure to that for eliminative materialism. Political argument, as construed by thinkers like Hannah Arendt, is replaced by the competition of various strategies for running the economy on free-market principles. The notion that there are human goals to which economic activity is subservient is, in general, not even considered. Remarkably, such an ethos as emerges from neoliberalism seems to cause economic as well as cultural devastation.

Both approaches are, above all, deeply naïve. Just as we can currently describe mind only with a set of guesses of greater and lesser levels of inspiration based on data that are still incomplete (and indeed largely inchoate), so also the collective action of a multitude of economic actors

ranging in scale from the individual to the superstate (like the EU with its Euro) is very poorly understood. The “new economy” of the 1990's led to the series of economic crashes from 1998 to 2008. It is as foolish to rest a nation's welfare on this received wisdom as it is to bracket the joy and diversity of human existence in the eschatological hope of their being “explained”.

Nor is that all. Previous attempts to reduce psychology impeded its progress, particularly once a coherent scientific realm common to humans and computers emerged from the functionalist ethos. Likewise, government by spreadsheet is totalising, and totally inept in that it cannot plan for disruptive technologies. Remarkably, early 21st century initiatives like Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and the lesser known tribe.org all rested on the individual and her need for self-expression in a neoliberal world.

As construed in this book, the political must harness as much of the psychic energy of the people as possible, even at the expense of “precision”. We are closer to Arendt than Milton Friedman. Political speech is processed by, and social forces experienced by, individual people. Yet these people are coalitions of selves; if not chronically split, at the very least multiply situated in identifications with nations, state, county, town, and so on. It may indeed be the case, a la Plato's Republic, that the individual projects onto the political stage the drama of her internal dynamics, with individual selves gaining power in the name of specific projects and ideas only to relinquish it in the greater history of the individual and political organism.

We shall indeed visit the various schools of thought that have explored coloniality through the prism supplied by phenomenology and, related by logical necessity, existentialism. For the moment, it will simply be stated that the colonial state is one in which the individual cannot comfortably identify with the place in which he lives, nor, as a consequence, with his body. In the vocabulary chosen here, the selves emerging from such identification will not be allowed gain purchase on the total energy of the organism. One would expect consumption of stupeficients, violence, suicide, and all the other symptoms of *anomie* to increase.

The colonising force, in turn, will wish to diminish the prestige of factors leading to a heightened sense of place; the national narrative and other aspects of the chthonic culture (particularly the artistic such, which can be controlled by its being objectified as intellectual property). It may also

attempt a direct attack on sites that bear the imprint of the *genius loci*, while using a new type of colonial administrator to grab materially valuable resources. This preface will include several such examples. Finally, it will attempt to keep the populace busy in the service of globalized corporatism, and portray this kind of frenzied existence as the new patriotism.

It should be evident at this point that all the above are true of Ireland at the beginning of the third millennium CE. However, the standard narratives of nationalism are not true of Ireland; it is fundamentally susceptible to categorisation under the rubrics of a rekindled indigeneity rather than an invented nationalism. That there are aspects of Ireland's official national identity that are invented are beyond doubt; yet so also is the antiquity of the presence on the island of a relatively settled population, and the salience of the country in the colonial struggles of the 20th century.

The purpose of the book is not to rekindle any kind of myopic nationalism, let alone political violence in its service; it is rather to look at what happens when the centre fails to hold and a rather suspect economic theory presumes to become a national narrative. It must be stated from the start that even Fichte's extreme nationalism (see chapter 1) was in the service of a greater cosmopolitanism; likewise, any suggestions here about nationalism are put forward in an attempt to rescue it from its current meaninglessness.

This book also attempts, *inter alia*, to provide a foundation in cognitive science for social science concepts. It begins with the concept of selfhood, which is posited in the writer's experimental work as being founded on data-compression in the brain. In particular, our experience of selfhood qua identification derives from exclusion of data regarded by the organism either as irrelevant or as dangerous to its integrity. Our experience of ourselves as agents is largely a fiction in that we narrate continually, ascribing to ourselves the origins of actions that occurred automatically. However, there is a core of agency within each of us, while manifest perhaps in a conscious "won't" rather than "will".

The social is a higher category to the cognitive, which refers to the processing of information in the individual brain, and to the non-cognitive biological, yet is rooted in both. Insofar as the individual can construe herself as being the object of a norm or value, she is immersed in the social. This can be mediated as intersubjective, and not necessarily

conscious, or – to be more precise - fully conscious. Social pressures can be exerted on the individual, with often devastating results. Some such are artifacts of colonisation; yet that is getting ahead of the story.

The expression of the social is primarily verbal, and that will be our first port of call. It can be argued that all human institutions are created by speech acts, whereby concepts previously abstract acquire rights and duties, and power over the individual; deontic powers. The particular types of speech acts involved are called performative utterances, which take the form “X institution shall...”. And so it can be said, for example, that a certain limited company shall exist within a certain legislative framework for a certain amount of time, including for eternity.

Yet the words alone will not unravel the web in which critical theory finds that humans live. While it is perhaps excessive to state that behind the structure of modernity lies the mediaeval, there is undoubtedly ample room for projection, and indeed scapegoating. The contemporary critic might indeed go further and point to the access of torture and Christian crusade in the early years of the 21st century to suggest something altogether darker. Admixed with freedom of conscience are themes a great deal lower in the brain than the neocortex.

Nationalism famously epitomises these themes for many writers. Remarkably, the advent of global terror organizations has led to an attempt to rescue positive meanings for nationalism, referring to the influence that the enlightenment had in the creation of the 19th century nation-states. In this book, nationalism is proposed as unavoidable, and always to be seen as a step to a greater cosmopolitanism. In particular, nationalism is regarded as a synesthesia of sense of place through the modalities provided by state institutions, and a civil society that is recognisably autochthonous.

This definition of nationalism is obviously compatible with modern environmentalism. In countries that can demonstrate the existence of a long, relatively stable population, it can confront the notion of indigeneity with respect to genetic fact, and thus modern science, and the narratives that have sprung up around the facts of belonging to a particular place. It can also transform whatever violent political struggle has occurred to resecure possession of the place for the natives into a more pacific narrative.

Finally, it can combine several of the arguments above to combat neoliberal colonisation. The experience of recolonisation is experienced as a schism between identifications due to the formal nature of the social structure, and one's experience of one's body as belonging to a certain locus. In particular, the experience of being "othered" by the state is dislocation itself. The existence of a state apparatus that does not hesitate to commit large sections of the population to conditions of alterity, this book argues, was apparent first in Ireland at the beginning of the third millennium, Common Era. As the first nation in the erstwhile British Empire to achieve (partial) modern independence, it is perhaps inevitable that Ireland was the first fully to be recolonised.

As this book was being written, two cases went through the High Court in Ireland. The first featured some rather Victorian punitive concepts, and frankly mediaeval logical leaps. Claiming state permission, the Anglo-Dutch Shell Corporation sought to put a gas pipeline taking gas from the Corrib field through the lands of some farmers around Rossport in County Mayo on Ireland's west Coast. This partly Gaelic-speaking area in question is one of the least densely populated parts of Europe. Five farmers refused to allow the pipeline through, claiming — correctly, as it happened — that the gas pressure planned for the pipeline was unprecedented in engineering history. They held out in the face of high court orders favouring Shell, and were committed to jail for contempt of court.

No-one has yet gone to jail, nor is anyone likely to do so, in the second case. It concerned an appeal against the building of a motorway near the hill of Tara, a site mythologised as the seat of Ireland's high kings. The minister of the environment, Dick Roche, acted against expert archaeological advice in proceeding with the motorway plans. The High Court granted leave to appeal against Roche's decision, but the appeal was turned down — as it turns out, by repudiating the grounds of the leave to appeal. Both these cases have potential significance far beyond their legal specifics.

The Rossport five, as they have become known, were repeatedly brought back to the High Court and asked to "purge their contempt". A ceremonial grovel later, they would have been free men again. Yet, remarkably, it is Shell that was factually in breach of the law of the land and the men's behaviour now appears more akin to citizens' arrest than even civil disobedience. (They have been released, sans grovel). The permits granted to Shell were solely for preparatory work: it has now

become clear that the company had welded together three km. of pipeline in flagrant breach of its permission.

There are two aspects to this case that deserve emphasis and will inform of central themes of this book. The behaviour of the Irish establishment has been truly extraordinary. The supporters of the Rossport five, in turn, have begun to reflect on the continuity of their movement with earlier egalitarian and democratic impulses in Irish history. Their placards now state that while their fellow Mayo man Michael Davitt took on the landlords in the late nineteenth century, they are taking on the corporations. In the upper house of parliament, the flamboyantly gay representative of Trinity College, David Norris, correctly pointed to Shell's behaviour in the Ogoniland culminating in the judicial murder of Ken Saro Wiwa. The placards began to echo this, pointing out that The Rossport five were lucky to be alive. Owens Saro Wiwa, Ken's brother, visited Ireland in support of them, and now distributes their literature on his world tours.

Not one organ of the Irish establishment has sought the jailing of Shell management for breaking the terms of the permissions granted them, and simultaneously insisting on the jailing of citizens who had themselves insisted that the law of the land be upheld. Rarely have the battle lines in Irish Politics been so clearly drawn. Specifically, the confrontation has caused to crystallise groups who see Ireland as a heaven for transnational corporations and, opposing them, those who see it as a nation of radical republicans – or, at the least, Jeffersonian citizens. The latter group see themselves as engaged in a struggle against Ireland's second colonisation; the former group seems prepared to invoke any shibboleth in order to maintain their pole position in Irish Society.

The Tara Skryne Case, as it has become known, did not heat up to anything like this temperature. Tara has perhaps the most potent mythology of place in Western Europe: a country whose dominant commodity for hundreds of years has been mythology cannot remain neutral on this issue for long. The received creation myth of the Irish envisages waves of settlers, starting with the fir Bolgs, Tuatha de Danann and finally the Milesians from the northern part of the Iberian Peninsula. (It should surprise no-one to find that in fact there may be a mitochondrial DNA link from the Irish to the Basques.) The Tuatha de Danann defeated the fir Bolgs at the second Battle of Moytura, and so established their claim to the island of Ireland. This claim was incarnated in stone pillars, and in particular at Tara the Liath Fail, or Stone of Destiny, spoke to attest

the presence of the real high king of Ireland. This trope proved so powerful that British Celts came to see the provenance of the Stonehenge pillars as Ireland.

So Tara speaks both of political legitimacy and the mythologisation, making magical, of the Irish landscape. However, it is so close to Dublin that it was for a while potentially prime building land, or at worst a way station to prime building land. The value of the myth in a secularised time has been weighed against the potential price of the land, and has fallen short. Disenchantment in every sense is the appropriate response. To adapt Paton: Cry, the dear land! It was the reification of land in this way, pushing its value down and its price up, that put paid to Ireland as an independent state.

This book's content concerns a period in which a historical community with an attested history of freedom struggle experienced moral and eventually economic freefall. On November, 15, 2010, a Google search on the words "Ireland" and "default", with only documents which included both words looked up, yielded 55.100,000 hits; restricted only to the previous 24 hours, it was still over 1 million. The game was up, and had been for some time; economic sovereignty was gone, perhaps irretrievably. It was clear that the international financial community, through the press media it owned directly and indirectly, was forcing Ireland to submit to a regime of nationalization of private debt, and quarterly reports to the IMF. In fact, Ireland was to become an experiment in the implementation of economic theory like Pincohet's regime incarnated the Chicago school; not only were unsecured bondholders in Ireland's heretofore private banks to be paid back in full by the citizenry through the state, but this repayment was to be continued even after the banks were taken "into resolution", that is pronounced dead.

Thus, the root of the sovereign debt problem in Ireland from 2010, the mechanism through which the new colonial status was set in stone, was the transfer of debt incurred by private banks to the taxpayer through the mechanism of state. By means of irresponsible lending for property and other devices not yet fully clear, but which involved in at least one attested case an Austrian branch that did money-laundering for the Italian mafia, the Irish banks had run up hundreds of billions in debt, mainly to their European counterparts. German and British banks were both owed over \$100 billion; Belgian banks were owed a sum exceeding 5% of that country's GDP. This vast reservoir of cash had not been used productively;

what happened rather resembles a coup d'état in that a super-privileged elite has been created by this money, and were still being kept in their Cap Ferrat mansions and \$30 million Manhattan townhouses courtesy of the unwilling Irish taxpayer for years afterward. In early 2012, a high court case in London involving the Savoy group of hotels proved this.

It was clear that an Irish default, which is in any case almost certain, would have repercussions for the world financial system. Yet the Irish government's behavior since 2008 has been, by any standards, truly extraordinary. In general, the "senior" bondholders of the Irish banks' debt were held sacrosanct; while this may be standard financial practice, the same status being awarded to junior unsecured bondholders in banks undergoing "resolution" is unprecedented, and suggests something has gone very awry indeed. When confronted in Parliament at the end of 2010 with the argument that the Irish citizenry had "no moral or legal obligation" to bail out the likes of Citibank and Deutsches Bank, Ireland's Minister for finance, Brian Lenihan, rather gave the game away by replying that "Those who think we can unilaterally renege on senior bondholders against the wishes of the ECB are living in fantasy land".

Yet, of course, in the past decade, Argentina, Uruguay, and then Iceland have successfully renegotiated their debt in precisely the way that Lenihan repudiated out of hand. This book explores the cultural mindset of Lenihan and his colleagues as essentially resembling that of colonial officers passing out information piecemeal to the wogs. In fact, Lenihan inadvertently collapsed the government in 2010, finishing off his party as a force in Irish politics, by orchestrating a series of denials that a deal with the IMF was imminent. At the time, he was dying of cancer, and it is fair to say that the media showed some skill in rescinding what could have been serious economic debate by fatwas about giving scandal about the dead.

Since 2008, the government first guaranteed deposits and bondholders after emergency meetings in September, 2008. Remarkably, no attempt was made to renegotiate debt owed to bondholders by the obviously basket-case banks, which even the bondholders expected to happen. Instead, a national assets management bureau (NAMA) was set up, effectively perpetuating the privileges of many of the developers at the state's expense as loans on which these developers had not even been paying interest now became an issue for the public purse. In early 2009, Ireland's notorious mafia bank, Anglo-Irish, was nationalized, but it was

made clear that depositors still had access to all their cash, regardless of their indebtedness. Scores of billions of state money was thrown into the bottomless pit of Anglo and Allied Irish Banks, before the latter was also effectively nationalized in an in camera session of Ireland's High court in late 2010, exploiting the expedited passage of banking laws not seen in peacetime countries.

The incoming government of 2011 had few real options. The central argument of this book is that what went on is an internal Irish problem, with a self-appointed elite exploiting evanescent liquidity in the international money markets to acquire massive wealth and influence for itself. It is now using the ECB to maintain this power-base, which is a colonial move; yet it is but the final stage in a political and cultural process that began decades ago. Removing this new establishment will indeed have repercussions for international finance. Understanding from the international community as we Irish do this is the central plea of this book.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RECOLONISATION OF IRELAND

1.1 Prologue

“Once you accept that profit and - practiced on a mass scale create the greatest possible benefits for any society, pretty much any act of personal enrichment can be justified as a contribution to the great creative cauldron of capitalism, generating wealth and spurring economic growth - even if it's only for yourself” (Naomi Klein, 2007, “The shock doctrine” P. 313)

“Society in general, simply by its effects on men's minds, undoubtedly has all that is required to arouse the sensation of the divine.....The ordinary observer cannot see where the influence of society comes from. It moves along channels that are too obscure and circuitous, and uses psychic mechanisms that are too complex, to be easily traced to its source” (Durkheim, 1995, Pp. 208-211)

Hermann Hesse's “Steppenwolf” has a confusing architecture. When accused of narrative misconduct, Hesse replied that it was in fact the most tightly structured of all his works. It is in fact modelled on concerto structure, with all the themes stated right at the beginning. In order to help the reader navigate through the first attempt to bring early third millennium Ireland into dialogue with modern postcolonial thought, and with this writer lacking the genius of Hesse, this prologue is a modest attempt at orienting the reader. Chapter 7 features a similar effort, based on a set of apparently innocuous broadcasts the author did on national Irish radio in 2006, which resulted in his being banned from the airwaves.

The two quotes above define the extremes of this book's concerns. It is fair to say that, for most of its recorded history, the concept of Ireland has been a moral and indeed spiritual one for its inhabitants, giving rise to acts of great heroism and acts of great institutional abuse as cynics took over the structures established by their heroic precursors. It is also fair to say that, from the mid-1990's, Ireland became one of the more materialistic and crass places in the world. As this book is being read, the result of the bank bail-out of 2008-2010 (and onwards) will still define the Irish socioeconomic

landscape. The shards of the attempted coup of 2002-2008, with its monstrous state institutions and equally institutionalized corruption, will still be visible. These grotesque structures are sufficiently entrenched that an orthodox libertarian approach - or, at least, what looks at first glance like libertarianism - may briefly be necessary for their extirpation.

The book issues recommendations that are fundamentally about returning a sense of place to the Irish in Ireland. This is less about “Blood and belonging” than a sense of connection to the land, implemented through appropriate administrative, cultural, and religious structures both within the state and its civil society. Even that has become controversial; part of the narrative sold by the major media in Ireland was multiculturalism, however incoherent. The more ambitious recommendations in this book involve breaking with many of the institutions of globalized corporatism. Indeed, it is proposed that these institutions are fundamentally creatures of the “Washington consensus”, and symptoms of an underlying imperial impulse. Of course, all of this has been said before, probably better than I can say it.

This writer is aware that the more controversial recommendations, which include in effect returning many immigrants to their place of origin, and nationalizing many resources, are hateful to many apparently reasonable people. They would require a rare crisis in the body politic even to be considered. Yet such a crisis will reign as practically a permanent state of affairs for the second decade of the 21st century in Ireland. By late 2010, it became likely Ireland would default on its international debt within a year, with access to the international bond markets no longer an option as a means to raise capital. Ireland had effectively lost its economic sovereignty some time before with the ECB (European central bank) the only purchaser of these bond issues before the charade was discontinued in Fall 2010. Ireland ceased pretending to issue bonds, and the ECB ceased pretending to buy them, referring Ireland to accompany Greece at the trough of the European Stabilization fund.

In that case, the failure of the establishment parties (including the ex-Marxist Labour/Democratic left) to anticipate this default has left the country open to radical change. For some period before this change is effected, the tight (if unofficial) censorship of the official Irish media will not be sufficient to prevent the rise of demagogues on the extreme right and left, and of those republicans who will argue that the very creation of a 26-county Irish state is a British plot.

Of course, Ireland may continue the impossible project of deflating out of a recession with micromanagement from the ECB and IMF. The hardship being visited on the populace in this case will need to be justified. To take one specific example, the fact that the amount of Irish taxpayers' money has been used to rescue the cesspool that is the (fully nationalized) Anglo-Irish bank exceeds the total largesse from the EEC/EC/EU received since joining the EEC is rather glaring. The government will need to explain why the taxpayers' money is being spent in this counter-intuitive manner, and why certain anomalies have been allowed to continue. The first is that Anglo-Irish continued to refuse to release critical documents about its fall to the Irish corporate enforcement authorities, to the point of refusing point-blank to issue passwords for encrypted documents. A second is why debtors in the 9-figure range (and higher) still had access to their deposits after the bank was nationalized.

Anglo-Irish is in fact the tip of the iceberg. Here is a prediction; no explanation satisfactory to the Irish citizenry will ever be offered. In its absence, the authority of the state will weaken exponentially – perhaps no bad thing, given its current pervasiveness. The time taken to write this book is in fact a bet that the apparently radical remedies it espouses are in fact moderate compare to the forces about to take the Irish political world by storm.

Therefore, *a la maniere de Hesse*, what is eventually proposed in this book is a set of recommendations for how the economy, the arts, and technology should be managed. Or not, as the case may be; the state's incursions into the civil society structures that had withstood half a millennium of quite brutal colonialism quickened during the Ahern years, and show no sign of abating. This author's own experience (which features in chapter 8) as a software and music business entrepreneur as a university lecturer, and indeed as a long-serving member of National council of the Green Party, is of a small team of Irish people creating something of excellence, only for the state actually to destroy it, often by allowing criminals on its payroll to steal from the artists (in the music business). Alternatively, the state notices a small, excellent entity (some of the university departments) within its own domain and creates a whole sub-division to administer it, with the initial creators being replaced by incompetents (often foreigners) after being shafted.

Therefore, this book is above all a "J'accuse" directed at the Irish state. Ferriter (2004) points out that the De Valera ideal was a state that

governed all aspects of Irish society. That dynamic apotheosized in Ahern; it was misfortune itself that it coincided with roulette substituting for a rational economic world order. As I have documented elsewhere (2004), the state often commits grotesquely criminal acts when encroaching on yet another domain (like music) or, conversely, preparing an attested well-functioning part of itself for privatization.

With perhaps 3.5 million autochtones, and well over a third in the greater Dublin area, a whisper at a cocktail reception, an extra name (in one famous example, that of Ahern's mistress) on a formal reception invite, a police inquiry that doesn't get followed up, all betoken massive power shifts. *In extremis*, of course, there is always the phone – and worse – for more direct types of pressure. Ahern seemed always to see himself as running a club for his friends, rather than anything resembling a country. In fact, when requested to address the houses of congress in 2008, his entourage consisted of a fellow-politician and some businessmen/“property developers”; no other sector of Irish society was represented. Remarkably, his entourage behaved so badly at their hotel that the Secret Service was called.

At its best, Ireland was a country whose autochtones were capable of responding to global developments in generous and self-disciplined ways to produce a postcolonial culture – as distinct from consuming the most degrading of such global trends. Irish people made good emigrants, because often they had experienced the forces in their new lands in rawer form at home.

Sets of outline solutions are proposed in chapter 8, with many detailed recommendations emerging from the separate preceding chapters. It is clear that in 2009-2010, the ECB provided Ireland with a lifeline by providing liquidity to Ireland's zombie banking system. The national asset management agency (NAMA) was set up to buttress property prices, and provides another undeserved safety-net to the banking sector. NAMA, like Hank Paulson's original TARP, involved “buying” “assets” from the banks – essentially non performing property loans – at a discount. This discount was proposed to be around 30% at a time when bankruptcy cases going through the High Court were yielding an 70-80% discount. The balance was to be paid by the taxpayers, as the Minister of finance explicitly eschewed the simple mechanism, available until September 2010, of turning the bondholders into shareholders - approximately what Germany's Merkel was proposing as of late 2010. Even that massive bank

bail-out might have worked, had it not been for the special treatment accorded Anglo-Irish, wherein earlier draft legislation that would require its debtors to access their deposit accounts was laughed out of the legislation. Yet there was a breathing space, as of 2011-2012, wherein things can be returned to normal without any political violence.

It would be very difficult to do worse than the state of play circa 2010. It is also very clear that there was a parcelling-out of various sources of revenue from 2000 or so, quickening with the second Ahern government of 2002. To property developers close to the government went all liquid capital, for the next generation at least, as the NAMA plan demonstrates. Remarkably, in a country which has a large number of non-Irish surnames, practically all the beneficiaries of NAMA – and thus recipients of loans often in the billions of dollars – have Irish surnames (Carroll, Macnamara, Mulryan, Ronan, etc). It can be considered the *reductio ad absurdum* of indigeneity as a movement. In fact, these grotesque loans demonstrate, as does the subversion of the other aspects of the Irish state and civil society perfected by Ahern and his cronies for their own enrichment, that they believed that state institutions, including law enforcement, existed only to benefit them.

To forces close to the Minister for Health, Mary Harney, went revenue from health insurance as a USA-type HMO behemoth was created. Another NAMA client, Sean Quinn, believed he owned this – to the point of naming it “Quinn insurance” – until it was publicly taken from him. (Even more than other places, socialized medicine is a moral imperative in Ireland.) The innovation in 2009 was the possibility of the taxpayer having to maintain this feudal system. The midterm elections that year indicated that the taxpayer has no such desire, and e-voting has been called off; therein lies hope.

In Joyce's time, and until 1970, censorship controlled culture; now, stealing from the artists through mechanisms like IMRO and giving the proceeds to anodyne pop “stars”, often created from within Ahern's innermost circle (i.e. family) does the same. It will be noted that Ireland's only recent original off- (or even close to) Broadway successes were tiny Rough Magic's “Improbable frequency”, a musical tinged with science and espionage, and peopled by such untypical visitors to Ireland as Schroedinger and John Betjeman, both active in their wildly different ways in WW2 Dublin, and the low-budget “Once”, a tiny paean to Dublin in its charming cinematographic form. By contrast, the huge budget of

“Grania” succeeded only in acting as life-support in prolonging the run. Has the lode of the “Celtic Twilight” finally been over-mined? Or was the Grania mistake precisely the opposite; that of bringing in the non-Irish writers of *Les Misérables*?

The epitome of a failed state is a failure by that state to assert its will within its internationally accepted borders. By that token, Ireland still has a functioning police force, and seems not to have failed; yet the grotesque and institutionalized criminality associated intimately with the state since 1997 was not sustainable after 2008. Moreover, the stratospheric costs associated with such essentials as housing, which resulted in the individual's having to compromise with the state merely to survive, decreased rapidly after 2008. (Home-grown food remains the outlier here; it is still very dear).

It is now open to a free Irish citizen (In Gaelic, the word for “citizen is “saoranach”, where “saor” means “free”) to reduce his contact with the terrifying institutions of the Irish state to a minimum while remaining resident in the country – this writer left in 2003 to emigrate to the USA when this was not possible. There will be *Schadenfreude* as the instruments of repression of her native urges toward freedom and creativity, from Anglo Irish bank onward, become revealed for the putrid carcasses that they are. The libertarian's wish for private property and sound contracts will emerge naturally from civil society; the third such desideratum, that of a sound and realistic currency, will emerge after the possible withdrawal from the Euro as costs remain too high to create jobs. The “occupy” movement demonstrated that ownership of public assets needs to be taken seriously; if it is ours, we –not you- will occupy it.

There will come massive political and social opportunity as the dead weight of the Ahern state brings down not only its new fetid institutions, but the British one still in existence nearly a century after “national liberation”. Terrence MacSwiney's dream of a liberation both personal and national will be realised.

1.2 The attempted political coup of 2004

There exists a famous cautionary tale about the limited horizons of intellectuals writing in a national framework. Though there are variants in many countries, the Polish version is the most renowned. An editor, appalled at the navel- gazing tendencies of his nationally- obsessed

writers, in exasperation commands them to write about elephants. Soon enough, learned treatises come his way about “the elephant and the Polish question”.

One of the central goals in this book is to focus rather more on the elephant, and indeed to attempt to approach many issues of universal import by examining contemporary Ireland. In particular, it contends that Ireland’s main positive role in international affairs should be the provision of an Interlingua (common language) through which the rich north and poor south can find means of communication. Anglophone, yet again increasingly implementing Gaelic- friendly legislation; an ex-colony but seemingly comfortable with some aspects of globalisation; saturated by Anglo- American culture yet adept at preserving folkways under the radar, Ireland can show other traumatised postcolonial states how to heal and repossess themselves.

If the reader wishes to familiarise herself with a more conventional postcolonial discourse, collections like Castle (2001) with contributions like those of Kiberd, Gibbons, and Lloyd are perfectly adequate. Since then, however, the debate has quickened, with calls for new decolonial epistemes, sciences, and absolutely different epistemological and ontological foundations. It is in this context that this book has its origins.

Of course, recent history has witnessed a completely different impulse at work in Ireland from that which would seek to achieve moral leadership in the postcolonial world. The 1997- 2008 administration/Ahern government, the most rightwing government in Irish history, repeatedly attempted to make common cause with the Anglo- Saxon elite in the Iraq adventure. This can be contrasted with the early Irish free State which, almost a century ago, and acting almost alone, supported the first native Canadian land claim at the League of nations. The state that in 2001 was investing least in the EU in social protection has little continuity with the revolution on which it is based and from which it claims legitimacy, the 1916 rising initiated by the socialist theorist James Connolly.

Let us proceed straight to the meat. It is a contention of this book that the Ahern government attempted a political coup, culminating in an attempt to introduce a totally unaccountable form of e-voting in 2004. The vestiges of this coup attempt can still be seen in initiatives that now look like mere political kite-flying in these more civilised times. First of all, privatisations on a massive scale were being proposed. That the disastrous failure of the

privatisation of the state telecommunications company resulted eventually in its ownership by “Sir” Tony O’Reilly and George Soros was probably a harbinger of what was really planned.

The outgoing chair of the Higher Education authority, Don Thornhill, argued vociferously during this period for privatisation of the state universities. (There are few such privatisations anywhere in world history; indeed, it is hard to see how the impulse to sell off the granted land and turn the institutions into websites could be argued against. Even in the US, where the landgrant universities receive as little as 7% of their funding from the state in some cases – presumably excluding research funds - the case for privatisation is not being taken seriously). The far-right corporatist (not to mention grossly corpulent) deputy prime minister proceeded to attempt to privatise a perhaps deliberately run-down health service. Plans for the privatisation of the national airline, Aer Lingus, were implemented. That corpus of the accumulated experience of humanity that we call “Celtic music” was privatised, and its current status is still ambiguous, as we see in chapter 7.

In the classic privatisation scenario, corporate enforcement is quickened in the state in order to reassure international investors. Some high-profile soft targets like the ancien regime’s Charles Haughey were publicised, but few prosecutions were ever undertaken. (In fact, the Office of the Department of corporate enforcement – ODCE – has failed successfully to prosecute a single case in its first decade of existence). What makes this process suspiciously akin to the function that Greg Palast famously termed “briberization” was this random application of the law, show without substance. While the largely successful attempt at control of the Irish music industry was being implemented (and how many bands can you think of to come out of Ireland between 1997 and now?), companies who supported the government’s line (pop bands and U2 only please, we’re Irish) were allowed trade flagrantly illegally right under the government’s nose. We discuss this in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 deals with a further aspect of this enclosure of the intellectual commons; the bizarre attempt to centralise all software and digital media development in a Dublin city centre project that featured untenured staff from MIT Medialab as its keystone. The Irish Music Rights Organisation (IMRO), the cornerstone of the music scam, actually appealed for all its activity including the newly-acquired desideratum of the processing of “mechanical” rights (which relate to the physical manufacture of media on

which songs are stored), to become part of a “one-stop” shop. To implement this type of centralisation requires a very powerful bureaucracy, and this empowerment comprised the second part of the political coup.

The classic definition of fascism is the unification of labour and business in a corporate structure under the aegis of state. Since 1987, there has been in existence a much-ballyhooed “social partnership” between the unions and business interests, mediated by the state. There existed in 2005, as there is normally, a cabinet post for a minister for Labour. In summer 2005, the Prime Minister (and would-be President for life) announced that a new department for partnership with a staff of over 100 was to be opened under his direct control, unmediated by either Cabinet or parliament (not to mention the electorate). This became known simply and in sinister fashion as the “implementation” body; interestingly, as in 2007, in 2009 the Labour party explicitly rejected going into government with Ahern’s party before an election. Ahern’s party were in any case too small to form a two-party governing coalition with Labour after the 2011 general election.

The bureaucratization of the country, and incursion of the state into civil society, has continued apace. Grant applications for the arts and sciences are subjected to massive delay as state interest groups extract their pound of flesh. The new class that Ahern created as he massively increased civil servants’ salaries is in truth terrifyingly obstructive to anyone trying to make a life for themselves in Ireland.

None of this holds, of course, for transnationals who want to get into Ireland. The way is made extremely clear; as native entrepreneurship shrinks to vanishing point, weighed down by punitive costs and lack of state support, companies like Wyeth and Intel announced expansions almost weekly from 2002 to 2005. The low corporation tax rate approved by the EU (Lord, make them pay normal corporate tax, but not yet), coupled with the effective prevention of strikes in the public sector and acceptance of epidemic levels of workplace bullying, both the result of the “partnership” agreements, promised to turn Ireland into corporate heaven. The inflated wages in the public sector then pushed prices up to the point where private sector employment became prohibitive as costs spiralled. Quite simply, civil servants pushed up the prices of the good housing and other facilities to levels that made them unaffordable to private-sector employees.

Only the crash of 2008 allowed us gain access to another trend of the Ahern years; the allocation of practically all liquidity within the Irish banking system to a set of carefully chosen “property developers”. These gentlemen (or at least males) proved to be excitable in the extreme; Sean Mulryan, a friend of Bono, produced a property plan of over \$15 billion; Garrett Kelleher paid over \$30 million an acre for a 2.2 acre site in Chicago, with the goal of building America’s tallest building; Derek Quinlan bought the London Connaught hotel, and – a moment which he and his cronies claim moved them to tears - flew the Irish tricolour over it. And so on; China, India, Britain – Ireland surpassed the USA as the biggest external investor in British property during the aughts – and, bizarrely, the Apthorp building in New York was also in Irish hands.

Toys these boys indeed had; Quinlan’s mansion in Cap Ferrat, and the \$30 million New York townhouse he would not deign to live in; Mulryan’s scores of racehorses; helicopters to the point that onlookers described the scene at the Galway races as the “Ride of the Valkyries” scene in “Apocalypse Now”. In Galway, the “developers” came to petition Ahern for even more clemency from the banks (only 25% of the loans transferred to NAMA were found to be paying even interest repayments, let alone principal). The obsession with helicopters is piquant; Ahern’s crony Sean Dunne, his companion at the notorious address to the Houses of congress, where the entourage caused a security alert at their hotel, brought a team of architects, visiting Dublin for the first time, straight from the airport to overfly the near-derelict hotels in central Dublin which were to become his masterpiece. Dunne’s dream never took flesh; nor did the Treasury holdings fantasy of turning a chimney of Battersea Power station into a one-table restaurant. As for McKillen, his “ownership” of the Franklin building in Boston is compromised somewhat by the fact that Anglo Irish, his funder, is also his tenant and his 2012 English court case v. Quinlan.

Coupled with this destruction of normal commercial life in favour of a self-appointed “elite” was to be the denial of electoral suffrage. As electronic voting almost destroyed democracy in America, and contributed greatly to the climate of fear which existed there from 2001 to 2008, it should not have even been suggested for Ireland, which has a robust history of proportional representation. It is fair to say that, even though the Irish showed little understanding of citizenship, we certainly understood voting even before semi-independence. In 2004 an attempt was made to introduce an utterly egregious e-voting system to Ireland. A panel was appointed under the chairmanship of Justice Smith to investigate it. The

firm supplying the software first asked the panel to sign a huge financial indemnification against any leaking of trade secrets. They agreed. When it became clear that the trade secrets were not as valuable as they might have been, in that there was no software ready only 5 weeks before the election in which the system was to be rolled out, the (Dutch) firm in question threatened to sue the panel for libel for its forthcoming report.

When it duly came forth, the report was damning. A typical e-voting system involves about 50,000 lines of code. The author is a Ph.D. in computer science, and can testify that the chances of debugging and testing a bugged program of this length on a security-critical theme in 5 weeks are precisely nil. (Ireland's history of failed computer projects includes E 400 million being wasted in 2005 in the health services on what was essentially a payroll program which had to be abandoned. IBM and Deloitte Touche were the main beneficiaries). We comment about other such lacunae later; the costs of the machines, storage, etc, exceeded E50 million. There is nothing to indicate that this was anything other than an attempt to destroy democracy in Ireland. Ahern's response was to try and force Smith's retirement from the bench. The security for the system was to be handled by a company jointly owned by the British Army and the Carlyle group. All of this information is in the public domain. Only in late 2005 did the Minister in question, moved to another department where he was busily privatising Aer Lingus, confess that e-voting was unlikely for the next general election. Justice Smith will go down in history as an Irish hero, particularly now that the e-voting project has now deservedly reached an ignominious end.

Another innovation was to be Irish involvement in Anglo-Saxon military adventures. While there is evidence that Ireland was originally part of Bush's "coalition of the willing" in the Iraq invasion, and Ahern himself has suggested that Ireland was part of this coalition, we need not focus on this. Ahern later complimented himself publicly on his part in Saddam's downfall, before reversing this after his electoral *annus horribilis* of 2004. While this went on, Ahern broke a pre-election promise in associating Ireland with NATO through the so-called partnership for peace, and allowed Shannon Airport to be used for US soldiers on their way to Iraq as for CIA rendition victims on their way to death by torture God knows where. The fears of a conspiracy theorist will not be assuaged by the news that a tunnel was to be built by a Halliburton subsidiary close to Shannon Airport at a cost of E 372 million to the Irish taxpayer,

complementing that firm's projects in Dublin and Cork (and of course the work with BP in the Gulf that ended so well for everybody involved).

While all this was going on, British behaviour has been audacious. Having manoeuvred the Irish into rescinding their land claim on Northern Ireland through the increasingly unworkable Good Friday agreement, they made it clear that they felt free to suspend any provision of the agreement any time they wished, starting with its fulcrum, the democratically elected assembly. Even Ahern's office wrote angrily to Blair, calling this action "precipitate". The British have also quietly been working to write the Irish out of world history, where possible; the move used is a subsumption of Irish history to the encompassing British narrative of an erstwhile world power gallantly and with magnanimity renouncing its white man's burdens.

The final British gesture of contempt was majestic. Having a score years before declared their lack of "selfish" strategic or other military interests in the North-west corner of Ireland, they decided that a centre of espionage away from the British mainland was a good idea. And so an MI5 building was commissioned, and staffed, in "Northern Ireland". To practise, the staff was given the task of intelligence gathering in that locale; the police service were put out to the grunt work. Yet even that is not the punch line; it is, rather, that no holder of an Irish passport could apply for one of these 400 MI5 jobs. At this time of exquisite Anglo Irish union of hearts, no Irish need apply.

1.3 Irish auto-exoticism

No previous knowledge of, or interest in, Ireland is assumed in this book, and it is explicitly a beginner's guide to Ireland. Few countries its size have been written about so extensively. At the extremes, the English occupation is seen as a civilizing force or the most egregious colonisation in human history. Remarkably, the Irish writer Conor O'Brien achieved both perspectives at different times in the course of a long and varied career. The lack of native styles in the classical arts, sciences, and general administrative structures is alternatively interpreted as being due to native dullness or postcolonial hangover (The massive achievements of emigrant Irish in every realm of high human engagement biases this writer to the latter interpretation). Conversely, the relatively unspoiled physical environment may be due either to Irish love of nature or the lack of