Changes in Contemporary Ireland

Changes in Contemporary Ireland: Texts and Contexts

Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

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INTRODUCTION

CATHERINE REES

The title of this book focuses on the word "change". All the essays enclosed within this volume discuss how much life has changed in Ireland in recent years. Whether it be in political, social or cultural fields, life for many in Ireland has undergone significant change in recent decades, and the aim of this book is to discuss some of the ways in which these changes are reflected in Irish and Northern Irish society. However, while it might be common-place to speak of these fundamental changes, it's crucial to also analyse and explore the term "change" and to ask some supplementary important questions. What has changed? For whom? How can we measure it? At what cost? And can we ever meaningfully speak of complex social and political factors moving together as one in a single and forceful move in one direction? For every "change" is there not another parallel story of compromise, reversion and concession?

The narrative of change in Ireland is well established and clearly there have been numerous important shifts in everyday experience for people living in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Many critics have pointed to significant social changes in both political policy and social attitudes in the 1960s as an instigator of change for the Republic. As Neil Hegarty explains, "The introduction in 1967 of free secondary education, combined with increasing links to Europe and to modern media and the growth of the women's movement, all contributed to the development of a more progressive and liberal civil society" (2011: 330). Developments within global communications and the mass media are often cited as the driving forces of social change and public opinion. Martin McLoone argues that "Television encouraged a more questioning attitude to all kinds of authority" (2008: 115), highlighting "the Irish diaspora; economic prosperity and social changes in Celtic Tiger Ireland [and] the peace process in Northern Ireland" as key factors that have "greatly influenced the ways in which Irish culture and identity is both articulated and understood today" (8). Christopher Morash's study of media over the twentieth century in Ireland claims that through engagement with new

modes of media a "new spaceless geography" (2010: 4) has been created and therefore eroded notions of Ireland as a single or bounded nation.

In Northern Ireland, change has been even more tangible. Brian M. Walker begins his study of Irish politics in the twentieth century with the claim "Recently we have witnessed significant change in Northern Ireland" (2012: x) and later refers again to "recent dramatic change to identity amongst so many people and communities" (xiv). Morash cites the Good Friday Agreement as evidence of "something [having] shifted radically in Irish culture" (220) and Patrick Joseph Haynes and Jim Campbell's extensive study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder after Bloody Sunday refers to the 1994 ceasefire and subsequent signing of the Belfast Agreement (known as the Good Friday Agreement) as "a watershed" (2005: 35).

The language of "change" is thus evident; social and economic factors in the Republic have driven huge cultural developments and political upheavals in the North have paved the way for historical changes in establishing a peaceful society following decades of violence. But to speak of such a complex entity as a nation moving forward in a single direction is necessarily reductive. Although we can clearly measure policies, events and moments that seem to signify change, we must also interrogate claims that suggest that "Ireland" is experiencing any single or simple momentum. As Colin Graham has pointed out, "'Ireland' is a future which is always posited and never attained…Ireland becomes 'Ireland', a 'cited', quoted version of itself which is both excessive and phantasmal" (2001: ix). As such, any attempt to describe a nation, particularly one as historically complex as Ireland, is impossible, as competing forces struggle to map their own account of the country onto a multiple and multifocal series of attitudes, beliefs, values and experiences. In this way, it is important to remember that when we speak of "change", we cannot speak for every citizen and every event. While some may experience profound change and upheaval, others may encounter little difference in their everyday lives. For every political development there are other, less well publicised, failures and losses. Crucially, "change" is often mediated through external channels, and so how people encounter this narrative of change may be not first hand, but through the media or political discourse. The media is responsible for not merely reporting events but also creating memories, both individual and cultural. Graham Dawson has describes how "media memories [have] contributed to the formation of personal memories" (2010: 240) in major events such as Bloody Sunday. Indeed, Greg McLaughlin and Stephen Barker have argued that the media smoothed over cracks in the Northern Irish peace process (2010: 25) and Haynes and

Campbell suggest that the media can conversely exacerbate the violence by "fuelling speculation about whom to blame and influence people's responses, particularly a desire for retaliation" (2005: 54). McLoone argues that films set in Belfast and focusing on sectarian images of the city in decay serve to "prolong Belfast's pariah status and to obfuscate considerably the underlying politics of Northern Ireland" (2008: 53). In this way, we can see that the images and reports we receive about a nation, and events within it, are not uncontested and are not always simple or straightforward. Narratives are always competing and often the most newsworthy is the most prominent, and conflicting or complicating reports are thus often neglected.

Nevertheless, and with this caveat in mind, it is possible to speak meaningfully about developments in Irish society, so long as we remember that "change" is often partial or fractional. The term "change" is in itself charged, stimulating images of forward momentum, positive development and future planning. Those who feel disempowered and disenfranchised in society may find it hard to buy into this narrative of progression. There are also stark differences between experiences in the Republic and Northern Ireland. In the 1960s, when social changes were becoming notable for those south of the border, 1968 saw the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, bringing decades of violence, trauma, political stalemate and economic depression. Although this book studies "Ireland" as an island, and looks equally at both countries, it's important to remember that they remain divided nations, and change impacts on them in different ways at different times. With that in mind, turning first to the Republic, we can chart some significant and important upheavals in the past few decades, and these events create a narrative of globalisation, mass media development, economic boom and bust, scandal and radical shifts in public attitudes.

Change in the Republic: Tigers, Televisions and Transition

Changes in the Republic of Ireland in the past few decades seem to highlight the position of the country in global terms. As social attitudes, political policies and mass media networks reach outwards, Ireland has apparently lost some insularity and has now become part of a global community. Morash tells us that in 2004 Ireland was deemed "the most globalised country in the world" (2010: 1) ahead of more obvious contenders Singapore, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Morash argues that mass media has played a significant role in widening Ireland's position on the global stage. He suggests that as Ireland adopted its own televisual identity in the 1950s and 60s, and began making and showing programmes based on Irish experience and life, Irish society became accustomed to reflecting on and debating long-held values and beliefs. An oft-quoted example of this is the ground breaking *The Late Late Show* which gave guests the opportunity to debate openly and freely, and outside the strictures of the otherwise all-encompassing Catholic Church. Morash argues that a new authority became important, that of information, and that this "was superior to the authority of office–whether of church or state" (2010: 180). Scandals in the Catholic Church, largely related to the uncovering of years of sexual abuse of young children by priests, which was suppressed by the wider Catholic community, also helped erode this authority. Whilst *The Late Late Show* "shaped public opinion" (Morash, 2010: 241) and helped to question the traditional values of early twentieth century Ireland, another factor was equally important in exposing Irish audiences to global products and programming. Satellite television was enormously popular in Ireland and helped the nation define its television viewing in terms of global rather than national boundaries. Access to, amongst other things, pornography, circumvented a national culture of censorship "which had been one of the defining features of Irish life since the 1920s, and which had contributed so much to the sense of Irish insularity" (Morash, 2010: 215).

The Irish economy did not grow as quickly as its media industry, suffering recessions throughout the 1970s and 80s. However, an enormous economic upturn in the 1990s, described as the so-called Celtic Tiger, helped place Ireland even more firmly on the global market. Entry into the European Union, and adoption of the euro, (1973 and 1999 respectively) was also politically significant and "served to further undermine much of the economic, social and moral isolation under which the country had suffered […], and which had been linked to restrictive identities" (Walker, 2012: 133). Mary Robinson was elected to the presidency in 1990 and challenged several traditionally restrictive laws including the ban on artificial contraception and homosexuality (Hegarty, 2012: 331). In 1997 Mary McAleese was elected as president and helped yet further to challenge patriarchal views of women in power, "symbolising the new role of women in modern Ireland" (Walker, 2012: 138). The visit of Queen Elizabeth II in 2011 was also charged with political significance and suggested that "a line had been drawn under the past" (Hegarty, 2012: 340). New access to economic prosperity reinvigorated Irish cultural life too, with literature and theatre especially thriving in the urban centres and

also rural areas. The Irish film industry was also doing well and tourism was a major factor in economic revenue, with global visitors frequently arriving in the country. In fact, a 2003 Irish guide book, *Culture Smart! Ireland*, designed to offer advice on "customs and etiquette" to mainly American tourists declared that "the Irish economy is performing exceptionally well and seems likely to continue doing so" (Scotney, 2003: 67).

Of course, we know now that this prediction was too optimistic and reading these words seems deeply ironic at the time of writing this introduction in 2012. Economic prosperity did not continue in Ireland and economic ruin was only narrowly averted in 2008. As Ireland became more and more connected to global markets, the international financial crisis of 2007 impacted on Ireland particularly hard, and a property bubble in Dublin, based on excessive bank lending, burst spectacularly, and left many Dubliners stranded in homes stripped of value and thus unsellable.

This tale of economic boom and bust tells us that the narrative of change and progression in Ireland is far from straightforward. Neil Hegarty suggests that Ireland was hit particularly hard in the economic recession because "The history of Ireland had propagated a sense of failure and of inferiority" but that the Celtic Tiger offered an opportunity to "put this traumatic history firmly in the past" (2012: 334-335). In this account we can detect a sense of failure and pessimism underpinning the success story of the 1994 Celtic Tiger phenomenon. Whilst great and important changes were being felt in Irish society, culture and politics, it's crucial to remember that these changes were not only one-way, and that other, complicating and more ambiguous processes were also occurring at the same time, or underpinning this narrative of forward momentum and change. For example, Hegarty points out that while sexual abuse in the Catholic Church was being uncovered through the 1990s and early 2000s, a report into the scandal detailed abuse taking place as late as 2009 (Hegarty, 2012: 339), a time when perhaps many felt that this particular problem had been exposed and ended. Writing in the present collection, Sharon Leahy argues that RTE and *The Late Late Show*, so crucial in helping to question traditional values and attitudes, is also guilty of perpetuating racist images of immigrants into Ireland. McLoone suggests that global images of Ireland, so important in selling the country to foreign tourists, consist primarily of "kitsch paddywhackery [and] the cult of alcohol" (2008: 5). He goes on to argues that global Ireland has no choice but to trade on historical tragedies and traumas (2008: 5) in order to sell Irish identity and experience across the globe. These disabling and tragic images of Irish identity are clearly sentimental and based on old colonial

prejudices yet, McLoone suggests, they form a crucial role in commodifying Ireland on the global market. If Ireland must compete in these markets, it perhaps does so at the expense of establishing more positive images of national identity.

While the narrative of "change" is clearly important and evident for the Republic in the 1990s and beyond, we cannot see it as a simply one directional process. As Ireland develops its identity within international markets and travel, it is also bound by more unsettling images of economic recession, the covering up of abuse and the tourist kitsch of sentimentality. However, while change in the Republic was largely progressing well, life for those in Northern Ireland was much more clearly marked by violence and upheaval.

Change in Northern Ireland: Troubles, Trauma and Truce

To move forward and embrace change it is often necessary to accept and agree upon shared views of history. In Northern Ireland, this is notoriously difficult where "there is no consensus about the past" (McLaughlin and Barker, 2010: 37). If there is no agreed upon version of the past, it becomes hard to see where change in the future can develop. In many ways the history of Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 80s is an anathema to the idea of change and transition; it is looking backwards to previous traumas and battles rather than facing forwards to develop new ways of living. Although Northern Ireland was also affected by the global changes of the 1960s and onwards I've charted in the Republic, the historical narrative of Northern Ireland in this time is primarily dominated by the Troubles. Generally understood to begin in 1968, the Troubles describe a period of sectarian warfare across Northern Ireland, although largely focused on the urban centres of Belfast and (London)Derry, in which British armed forces were deployed in the country and the devolved government was replaced in 1972 by Direct Rule from London, giving British politicians the power to administer changes to Northern Irish society and politics.

One way to view the events of the Troubles is through the lens of trauma studies. Haynes and Campbell have reviewed Bloody Sunday through the study of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and make some observations that can be applied more widely. On 30th January 1972

fourteen men[1] were shot dead by British security forces during a civil rights march in Derry, in an event which came to be known as Bloody Sunday. These men were killed by their own state, which is a shocking and unusual occurrence in the United Kingdom. Initial inquiries into the shootings were flawed; they supported the actions of the British forces and suggested that the victims had been likely terrorists. However, subsequent inquires (namely the Saville inquiry which culminated in 2010) dismissed these claims, and concluded that the fourteen dead had been unlawfully murdered. This event is emblematic of the Troubles; it caused widespread hatred and fear of the security services and questioned their role in Northern Ireland as well as representing the tragic loss of innocent life associated with the violence of this period. It has been referred to as a "seminal event of the Troubles" (Dawson, 2010: 230) of "totemic stature" (Conway, 2010: 2).

Many of the families of those killed are, according to Haynes and Campbell, suffering from PTSD. This psychological disorder describes symptoms of anxiety and depression following a traumatic event, usually one threatening the life of the sufferer or that of a loved one. The effect of the trauma is often most acutely felt when the event has been created and perpetuated by humans; "If the trauma stems from a natural phenomenon, it is a disaster; if created by humankind, it is an atrocity" (Haynes and Campbell, 2005: 41). They go on to make a comparison between an abusive family environment and the actions of the security services: "The abusive caretaker in this case […] is the British government, which in family members' perceptions, has blamed the victim, distorted the facts, and continued to perpetuate the abuse. As with child victims, the Bloody Sunday families had no recourse but to suffer in silence" (2005: 176). Within the framework of trauma studies, "change" can be figured as "working through", a process whereby victims confront their trauma and attempt to "gain critical distance" (LaCapra, 2001: 143) by accepting past events and allowing their lives to move forward. This can be seen within the overall discussion of "change"; in Northern Ireland change can be a psychological process as much as a political or cultural one. Indeed, Haynes and Campbell suggest that even after political change has been achieved, some find it "difficult […] to adjust to the notion that suddenly, there is peace" (2005: 130).

Within the context of Northern Ireland we can see that the concept of "working through" might have some relevance to our discussion of

[1] Thirteen were shot and killed on the day or soon after and a further one died four months later from his injuries. Seven of the victims were teenagers.

"change". For those who lived through the Troubles, "change" came to be mobilised though the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) which, following an IRA ceasefire in 1994, paved the way for the end of hostilities and allowed for power to transfer back to Stormont, the Northern Irish government, with newly elected officials. Inevitably, change here did come at a cost. Haynes and Campbell's research found families of Bloody Sunday victims who felt justice would never be done because the GFA forced compromise (2005: 169). They also point out that traditional sources of support, such as religion and political beliefs, might be the very factors that "retard the development of political solutions" (1995: 52). In Northern Ireland it can be difficult to establish any real differences between victim and perpetrator, as both sides can record traumas and grievances. Crucially, "change" and "working through" does not call for these events to be forgiven or necessarily forgotten: "working out does not mean avoidance, harmonization, simply forgetting the past, or submerging oneself in the present. It means coming to terms with the trauma" (LaCapra, 2001: 144). In this context, change is very much related to compromise and discussion, and it would be too simplistic to see these changes as fully completed or over. Nevertheless, there has been significant development in the political stalemate in Northern Ireland and a renewed and rejuvenated interest in its geographical space and future in global economies. Perhaps the "working through" of past traumas is starting to take effect.

Change or no change?

It is clear that "change" has been a watch-word in studies of Irish history in recent years. In many ways it would be churlish to deny the fundamental and significant changes that have occurred in Irish society over a relatively short period of time; great economic development (and then sudden recession) in the Republic accompanied by radical shifts in public opinion, and the political developments in the North are truly momentous and illustrate great fortitude in the people both making the political history and those living with it.

But, as we have seen, "change" cannot be understood as merely one directional and it is not felt by all people equally at the same time. Walker notes in his discussion of the GFA, for example, that "changes must not be exaggerated… many on each side had only partially embraced these changes and there remained a lack of trust" (2012: 148). Hegarty agrees, and points out that life in Northern Ireland remains, for many, still segregated (2012: 329) and so-called "peace lines" still divide Belfast and carve up the cityscape isolating the nationalists and unionists in ghettoised

areas. Similarly, the Celtic Tiger may have brought prosperity and success to many in Dublin, but it brought with it global problems such as "racism, high levels of alcoholism [and] inner-city crime" revealing the Tiger to be "multifarious [and] contradictory" (McLoone, 2008: 6). Global success has a price, underpinning positive change with darker and more troubling images.

Ultimately, any discussion of change can never be completed, because change does not simply "end" or reach a final conclusion. As we saw with the success story of the Celtic Tiger, the subsequent recession undermined the narrative of positive economic rejuvenation in Ireland. Bloody Sunday was a low point in the violence of the Troubles, but only a couple of decades later, peace talks were underway. The GFA brought hope and some tranquillity but recent rioting in the streets of Belfast again complicates this story of reconciliation and harmony. Hegarty points out that "history can never be wished to a conclusion" (2012: 340) and this is an important lesson to remember. Change can only ever be seen as part of a process in which we are all constantly moving and one in which we can only ever really look backwards and reflect on what has already passed. Throughout, changes in experience and identity are a constant process. Irish identity is perhaps particularly "malleable" (Hegarty, 2012: 342). While we can undoubtedly agree that Ireland (both North and South) is now prominent on the global stage, we must also remember that it remains impossible to offer a single or simple account of any nation, especially one with such a complex and contested history (and present). We should also be distrustful of attempts to describe any images of the nation as final, authentic or complete. As Baudrillard tells us,

> When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths or origin and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity and authenticity (1983, 12).

About this book

This book is divided into four sections, "Landscape, Memory and Religion", "Lifestyle and Entertainment", "Media and Film" and "Drama and Literature". Each section deals with specific case studies, and these studies help explore and discuss the subject of change within what we can loosely call "contemporary" Ireland. An exact time frame has not been strictly applied, but generally these chapters address the sorts of changes I've outlined in this introduction and they refer to recent events within both the Republic and Northern Ireland. I have deliberately not divided the chapters into those that deal with the two geographical areas separately;

rather the hope is that the thematic order will be most interesting and useful for the reader. The volume also takes a mutli-disciplinary approach, and the volume has been largely ordered by topic rather than academic discipline.

The first section covers a diverse series of topics; the sexual scandal in the Catholic Church and the resulting loss of faith for many in Ireland, a public art sculpture in the centre of Belfast and artefacts dealing with trauma and memory in post ceasefire Belfast. Peter Guy's "The Casey Effect" provides a fascinating account of recent troubles in the Catholic Church and reflects upon the future for a nation so defined by its association with Catholicism as that influence declines dramatically. This secularisation of Irish society is, Guy suggests, part of wider social and economic shifts in recent times and he argues that the church must now offer what he terms a "postmodern approach to religion" to appeal to new, perhaps more sceptical and certainly more media savvy, church members. Joana Etchart's chapter looks at a piece of public art, the RISE sculpture in Belfast. She argues that although this project was designed to reflect and engage with the local community, the public's voices were not heard in the planning of the art work. Although the sculpture was designed to reflect a peaceful and contemporary view of the city, Etchart's research finds that the inner workings of local governance within Belfast are still too fragmented and contested to properly manage and execute these large-scale, high profile artistic events. Staying in Belfast, Shane Alcobia-Murphy's chapter explores trauma and memory in artefacts produced within the city, including poetry and photography. He suggests that the city must remember the past, and not simply forget past traumas. This recalls the discussion earlier in this introduction which explored the peace process in Northern Ireland through the lens of trauma narratives. Moreover, we can see through Alcobia-Murphy's study that "the political and ethical meanings of memory cannot be viewed as separable from the particular rhetorical, narrative and visual conventions that give it shape" (Burke and Faulkner, 2010: 13); trauma is manifest in artistic artefacts through a conscious and deliberate evocation of memory.

The 'Lifestyle and Entertainment' section of this book includes the exploration of two separate but related cultural signifiers of Irish culture; sport and Guinness. Kathleen Heininge's "Guinness Go Leor" examines the global phenomenon of the Irish pub. Although the image of the Irish as habitual bar room enthusiasts is a stereotypical and disabling colonial myth, the "Irish bar" has spread globally and each establishment tries to emulate "authentic" Irish pubs as much as possible. Of course, as Heininge points out, attempts to "authentically" recreate Irish experience frequently

involves recycling sentimental and partial myths but, interestingly, Heininge's paper argues that as these bars dominate a global image of Ireland, actual pubs in Ireland are forced to change and modify to be more in keeping with the "real" global pubs they are supposed to have inspired. In this way, globalisation creates a homogenised international experience which undermines national distinctiveness. Two chapters go on to explore football and sport in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. David Storey looks at the ways in which Irish society and identity are bound up and mediated through sport. He explores the relationship between identity and globalisation through the increasingly internationalisation of professional sports, and on the identities of professional sports men and women from across the globe, playing in modern Ireland. The chapter also reflects upon the relationship and controversies surrounding sports in Northern Ireland and the Republic, and reflects upon how cross-border migration causes some level of tension but also perhaps serves as a symbol of peaceful north-south relations. However, at its heart, sport relies on a very literal relationship with geographical space, and contested territories make sport in Ireland a heated and often controversial subject. Alan Bairner also looks at football, and takes a more unusual approach, comparing poet John Hewitt and the Northern Irish football team to examine questions of politics and identity within the sport. His argument is that, as long as "Northern Ireland" refers to a process of partition, it is impossible to de-politicise the team, and the choices individual players make as to which team to play for. Bairner uses Hewitt's interest in establishing and discussing a distinct regional identity for Ulster and for the six counties of Northern Ireland to explore the tensions in the terms used to describe these regions, and for the problems associated with assuming a specific and distinct sporting national identity.

The "Media and Film" section of the book is the longest, and encompasses film, television, and on-line technologies. In the first chapter in this section, Sarah Martindale and I look at Martin McDonagh's film *In Bruges* (2008) and compare it to his brother's, John Michael McDonagh, debut movie *The Guard* (2011). The brothers occupy an interestingly liminal space in terms of their Irish identity; they were born in London to Irish immigrant parents but both have set the majority of their work in Irish locations. They are therefore engaging with Irish imagery and experience in a potentially controversial manner. We use an interview with the former chief executive of the Irish Film Board, Simon Perry, to examine the role of national film, and to problematise and critique the limits of national borders in making and understanding movies, particularly as the images of the Irish we are presented with in both films

are potentially troubling. Sharon Leahy's chapter offers a critique of a staple of Irish televisual identity–RTE–and argues that she has uncovered a number of instances of racial prejudice inherent in its programming. She points out that in an era of globalised televisual experience, national identities can be constructed through portrayal in the media and that, in various cases, there are worrying images of ethnic minorities in some of RTE's outputs. As this broadcaster is in many ways held responsible for shaping and moulding Irish national identity and for helping to shift public attitudes towards more liberal and secular thinking, this research is startling, and forces us to question how much power we give television to shape national consciousness. Robert Busby and Paddy Hoey use their chapter to chart the significance of the virtual sphere to politics and political campaigning. They use the example of éirígí, a republican splinter group, to examine their use of the internet to broaden their campaign and public profile. Interestingly, although their politics were primarily of local significance, the medium of the internet positioned their dialogues within a global framework, and their appeal is in combining issues important to a Northern Irish heritage with international debates. This modern approach to political debate perhaps transcends more traditional methods, but the importance of the media more widely in ensuring and creating political presence in the public consciousness is always felt. We return to televisual analysis for Fiona Fearon's chapter, which compares three recent tragic events in Ireland and the way in which the accompanying funerals were depicted in the world of 24 hour rolling news. She charts the history of funerals in Ireland, from events of great significance where mourning is almost celebrated as a signifier of national character, and then more recently as a more private activity. Her chapter suggests that the intrusion of the media into the ritual of the funeral makes mourning a public performance again and that the grief is then, perhaps partially, constructed by the media as they cover the event. She also looks at how fandom and celebrity help fuel the public's fascination with the deceased, perhaps at the expense of more private, meaningful grief. Finally, Fiona Coffey looks at so-called Troubles films, and makes a distinction between "open and "closed" forms of film; those which provide finished narratives and deny alternative endings, and those which defer closure and prefer a more open-ended understanding of the complex political dynamics in Northern Ireland. She also identifies films that present a rather stereotypical binary in their depiction of nationalist or loyalist characters, and whom they suggest we as an audience should sympathise with. Her conclusion is that as the political landscape shifted so radically in the 1990s, so films had to accommodate these changes by offering more reflective and nuanced

filmic depictions of the Troubles. As the peace process unfolded, so too in film did the restrictive and binaried depictions of entrenched political opinions the GFA was attempting to overturn.

The final section explores the ways in which the issues outlined here are addressed in fictional depictions of Ireland–in literature and in drama. We begin with Catriona Ryan's essay on the playwright Tom Mac Intyre and his 2009 play *Only an Apple*. The play deals with a fictional politician (but largely based on disgraced Taoiseach Charles Haughey) and explores, through the use of two fantasy historical figures, the place of Ireland within contemporary European contexts. Adopting a psychoanalytical approach, Ryan describes Irish national identity in the late twentieth century as emerging from a colonial heritage and into a new European framework. She explores the play's use of language to describe deconstructed political and national identities, and she coins her own phrase to describe Mac Intrye's engagement with his national past balanced with the modern-"Paleo-postmodern". This term is used to describe the relationship between the traditional and the new. Cary Shay's study of the female Doppelgänger opens the discussion up to contemporary literature. Also taking a psychoanalytic approach, Shay uses novelist Anne Enright and playwright Marina Carr to explore the splitting of the female subject as a response to the social conditions for women in Ireland. Her focus on feminine identity, and particularly that of the mother, leads her to conclude that despite the significant changes promised by the Celtic Tiger, equality has not been afforded to women, especially in the areas of reproduction and maternity. The volume concludes with Eammon Jordan's chapter on perhaps Ireland's most successful and famous playwright of the 1990s and 2000s–Martin McDonagh. Although he is London-born, McDonagh's plays are based in Ireland and offer audiences comic, yet also sometimes touching, vignettes of life for some economically deprived inhabitants of the rural West. His 1997 play *The Lonesome West* is Jordan's focus here, and he uses the increasingly popular field of masculinity studies to examine McDonagh's depiction of men alienated from hegemonic masculinity's assumed position of power. Jordan argues that these images offer inversions of idealised pastoral Ireland, and he also looks at funerary traditions within Ireland (as we have also seen in Fiona Fearon's chapter in this volume) to comment upon McDonagh's satiric approach to religion and the priesthood.

Some concluding thoughts

At the time of writing this introduction a news story concerning Ireland is featuring heavily in newspapers and television news reports. Savita Halappanavar, a pregnant woman in Galway, recently died after beginning to miscarry. As the doctors could detect a heartbeat, an abortion was denied, despite pleas from the family to act. After the baby miscarried, the woman suffered septicaemia and died. When her husband asked for his wife's pregnancy to be terminated, he was reportedly told "This is a Catholic country" (BBC News, 14th November 2012) and this request was repeatedly refused. The woman in question was Hindu. Abortion remains illegal in Ireland.

It is difficult not to feel shocked when we hear about this story. The continuing relationship between church and state in Ireland, and the conflation suggested here between nation and religion whereby one is defined in terms of the other, is becoming a more and more contested issue, and the intervention here of the Catholic Church over a woman's body and health, particularly when she was not a practising Catholic herself, does make narratives of "change" and "progress" feel rather overstated. There has been fairly universal condemnation of this story in Britain and in Ireland this death is the subject of two separate inquires. However, for as long as the teachings and practices of the church direct government policies, it is difficult to see where change can spring from. Indeed, in Northern Ireland, a private abortion clinic has been the centre of protests in recent months, suggesting that abortion remains a contentious issue both sides of the border, with the law somewhat unclear in Northern Ireland, and one that provokes strong feelings on both sides. Twenty years on from the "X case"[2] this issue is still complex and controversial, suggesting little real development in the law, although it is less clear whether public opinion is still supportive of Catholic views on this issue.

[2] In 1992, a fourteen year old girl became pregnant as the result of rape by a neighbour. She was suicidal, and her parents decided to travel to England for an abortion. They asked the Garda if evidence from the aborted foetus should be kept to enable prosecution against the man who had attacked her. An injunction was subsequently taken out against the girl, preventing her from travelling. This was overturned on appeal but the girl in question (known only as "X") miscarried before an abortion could be carried out. The case remains an oft-quoted example of Ireland's tangled legal position on abortion although, crucially, it did establish the right to an abortion for a woman if her life was deemed to be in danger should the pregnancy continue.

On the other hand, and on the other side of the border, travel guide *Lonely Planet* recently named Londonderry/Derry as one of their top 10 global cities to visit. As the city claims the title of UK City of Culture 2013, *Lonely Planet* suggests that "this vibrant, historic walled city is undergoing a renaissance" (www.lonely planet.com, 2012). This focus on change and regeneration strikes many of the chords this introduction has set out to explore–that Ireland is a place of radical and dynamic change, moving from a place of troubles and trauma to one of renovation and rebirth. This narrative is one that has many subscribers, and it is clearly true that many significant and important changes have taken place in modern Ireland. These two news stories tell us, however, that progress on the island of Ireland is never over, and that change and development is constantly in a state of negotiation and flux–some things change, and others remain tangled in the complex wrangling of Irish political, social and cultural history.

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PART I:

LANDSCAPE, MEMORY AND RELIGION

CHAPTER ONE

THE CASEY EFFECT: THE COLLAPSE OF CATHOLICISM IN IRELAND

PETER GUY

> "We had a conference at *The Irish Times* where we were discussing who we would put on Nelson's Pillar if it were to be re-erected. I suggested Bishop Casey. He caused the whole collapse…" (Kenny, 2000: 329)
> —John Banville

On May 2nd 2012, an hour-long documentary titled "This World–The Shame of the Catholic Church" was aired on BBC television. It sought to demonstrate the culpability of the Primate of All-Ireland, Cardinal Sean Brady, in the Fr Brendan Smyth child-abuse saga. Smyth was a prolific paedophile who used his position of trust to rape and sexually assault dozens of young children over a forty year period. When one of Smyth's victims, Brendan Boland, made a complaint in 1975 Cardinal Brady, then a canon-lawyer and rising star of the Irish Church, sat in on the inquiry–in his words-as a "notary". Boland, then a fourteen year old altar boy, gave the names of five other victims who had been abused by Smyth, only one of whom were subsequently contacted. Neither the parents nor the authorities were informed but Brady argued that he did his job in accordance to the letter of his remit–he conducted what appears to be a token investigation and passed on the information to his superiors and took no further part in the inquiry. Smyth, after an initial censure, continued his spectacularly successful career as a child molester where his activities were only curtailed some sixteen years later. The day after the program was aired Cardinal Brady, seeking some form of damage limitation, made two particularly noteworthy comments as a part-explanation for his role in the affair. One, he argued that, "In 1975 no State or Church guidelines existed in the Republic of Ireland to assist those responding to an allegation of abuse against a minor" (*The Irish Times*, May 3rd 2012: online). Second, he stated, "I didn't have the awareness I now have of the

impact that that behaviour was having on those children" (*The Irish Examiner*, May 3rd 2012: online). To fully comprehend the collapse of Church authority in the 1990s, there can be no better illustration then in these two demonstrative statements.

I

It wasn't always thus. The Church had occupied a special position in Irish life since the inception of the State. When the Irish constitution of 1937 enshrined these terms into the letter of the law it provided, in the words of Brian Girvin, the "synthesis between Catholic, nationalist and democratic values in a way that provided a stable basis for constitutional continuity for the next forty years" (Girvin, 2002: 82). Irish Catholics, who had long endured religious discrimination under the Anglican ascendency, readily embraced this program for renewal and purification, the creation in effect of a spiritual Empire in opposition to more liberal-minded "foreign" trends. The fledgling Irish State was "narrow-minded, and for its own survival it felt that it needed to be" (Kenny, 2000: 117). Thus, the alliance between Church and State was borne out of a mutual need for legitimation and cohesion, "The Church offered the State continuity and stability and in return sought its support for continuity and stability in its own work" (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig, 1995: 609). As late as 1990, it could be claimed that 85% of the adult population of Ireland attended Church once weekly–a 6% decline since 1974 but still the highest in the world (Greeley, 1994: 137). Twenty years on, with mass attendance in Dublin falling to 13% and the harried Primate of All-Ireland facing a singularly hostile "trial by media", how did it come to this?

Part of the reason can be explained through de Tocqueville's maxim that the most dangerous time for a bad government is when it starts to reform itself. The indivisible link between Catholicism and Nationalism had held firm right up to the early sixties. The policy of isolationism may have worked in Ireland's favour during the 1930s but by the 1950s, the Irish economy was stagnant and the servile relationship between Church and State retarded much-needed reform in the field of education and health. The most celebrated instance, the Mother and Child Scheme, serves as exemplar. In 1950, when the then Minister for Health Dr Noel Browne decided to introduce a free maternity scheme for all expectant mothers and healthcare for children under sixteen, his proposal was met with vehement opposition by the Irish hierarchy who regarded the proposal as encroaching on one of their private domains. His fellow cabinet ministers offered no support, for "there was no electoral dividend

to be gained from appearing to stand up to the Bishops" and the Minister was forced to resign (Whyte, 1971: 4).

As for education, the Dublin Diocesan regulations stated, "In the education of Catholics, every branch of human training is subject to the guidance of the Church" (Whyte, 1971: 306). As Tony Fahey states, "The primary purpose of social service provision for the Catholic Church was to disseminate and safeguard the faith, not to combat social inequality or reform society" (Fahey, 1998: 147). By 1960, the number who could afford to go on to second level represented only about 16% of those enrolled in National Schools. When an appraisal of the secondary school curriculum was undertaken by the Council for Education in 1954, it took six years to complete its deliberations and then merely returned the opinion that the dominant purpose of the schools was the inculcation of religious ideas and values (Coolahan, 1981: 80). Coupled with such prevalent social inequality there was also the factor of the effect religiosity had upon Ireland's laggard economic performance, "Even if people were ambitious and successful, they had to deny continually they had done so deliberately", thus, the Church was able to "educate and legitimate the position and possessions of the rich, and discipline and compensate the poor for their lack of possessions" (Inglis, 1998: 253-258).

By the nineteen-fifties, the Catholic Church in Ireland had reached its apex. At that point, "Ireland was producing so many priests and nuns that between one-third and half of them went on the missions" (McGarry, 2006: 32). Perhaps it was ironic then that the first stirrings for reform came not from within Irish society but amongst the Catholic intellectuals. The Jesuit priest, Fr John Kelly, wrote in the influential religious magazine *The Furrow,* "Too many people in Ireland today are trying to make do with a peasant religion when they are no longer peasants any more… we must have a religion to fit our needs" (Fuller, 2004: 61). The Vatican, of all places, appeared to be susceptible to the zeitgeist of the times. The accession of Pope John 23rd heralded a new direction and redefinition of Church practice culminating in the calling of the second Vatican Council in 1962. The Council would produce a new liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilliium,* which put a far greater emphasis on the notion of salvation and the love of God whilst the 1965 decree *Dignitatis Humanae* stressed the rights of the individual. The Irish hierarchy, led by the authoritarian Archbishop of Dublin, Charles McQuaid, were steadfastly against such liberalising notions though the rank and file clergy were largely (and appreciatively) enthusiastic.