Border Crossings

Border Crossings:
Narration, Nation and Imagination in Scots and Irish Literature and Culture

Edited by

Colin Younger

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

For Mam and Dad
Joan and Norman Younger
Now singing with choirs of angels

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INTRODUCTION

COLIN YOUNGER

> There can be no absolutes: no absolute good or evil; no absolute way of living. No absolute truth. All truths are mediated and tempered by the fact of living. Being alive tempers all things. (Ben Okri: 1997: 54)

In their 2013 collection: *Celtic Connections: Irish Scottish Relations and the Politics of Culture*, Willy Maley and Alison O'Malley Younger cite Marilyn Reizbaum to ask the question: "Why Scotland and Ireland?" What makes these two cultures marginal, and if they can be defined thus, is it legitimate to make a case for Celtic connectedness without running the risk of essentialism? They answer their self-posed question using Reizbaum's pioneering essay (Maley and O'Malley-Younger, 2013: 10) as an exemplar and basis for theoretical discussion thus:

> I feel I can talk about Scotland and Ireland together in this context, without homogenizing them and thereby further marginalizing them (all Celts are alike), because they have comparable 'colonial' histories with respect to England (unlike Wales) and because their status as minority cultures, which has more or less continued in psychic and/or political ways, has had a similar impact not only on the dissemination of their respective literatures but on the nature and means of the writing (Maley and O'Malley-Younger, 2013: 12).

Reizbaum's unequivocal assertion that the connectedness of Ireland and Scotland is due to their "comparable 'colonial' histories with respect to England" (though this, in itself needs unpicking) is equally germane to the current collection which brings together essays from Ireland, Scotland, and Ireland *and* Scotland under the variegated umbrella of their colonial histories, and the responses of the Irish and Scots to the same. What differentiates this collection however is its focus on borderlands: these liminal areas which according to the anthropologist Victor Turner:

> ...are open to the play of thought, feeling, and will; in them are generated new models, often fantastic, some of which may have sufficient power and

plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the centers of a society's ongoing life" (Turner, 1969: vii).

Following Turner, the essays in this collection examine identities betwixt and between their categorical, ideological or national definitions, and focus on the contingent, constructed, contradictory, contestatory and changing natures of borderland identities as spaces of representation which become crucibles for multiple agendas and ideologies.

It is a truism that concepts of nation (and its corollary, nationalism) presuppose and rely on categorical certainties, absolutes, binarisms and boundaries in order to bolster the nation state. The defence of these borders and a belief in their absoluteness has resulted in warfare and violent dispute. As Kapuscinksi observes:

> How many victims, how much blood and suffering, are connected with this business of borders? There is no end to the cemeteries of those who have been killed in the world over the defence of borders. Equally boundless are the cemeteries of the audacious who attempted to expand their borders. It is safe to assume that half of those who have ever walked upon our planet and lost their lives in the field of glory gave up the ghost in battles begun over a question of borders (Kapuscinski, 1995: 20).

As is the case with Ireland and Scotland such violence resulted from repeated risings against British domination. Violence thus became part of colonial contact and the breaching and broaching of borders which had been set up to perpetuate and reinforce difference. These uprisings and revolutions were as much about cultural identity as they were about geographical terrain. Borders in this sense, then can be seen as an us/them binarism which is exclusive of others and inclusive of national selves, as Gloria Anzaldúa has rightly pointed out:

> Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional reside of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants (Anzaldúa, 1987: 25).

Anzaldúa's theories on interstitiality mirror and parallel those of Turner's notions of the liminal as "betwixt and between all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification" (Turner, 1967:97). What is important for Turner is not the beginning nor the end, but the process of

transition itself, which is transformative; a qualitative change of state which is analogous for him to the transformation of water to steam, or the final ecdysis from caterpillar to butterfly. For Turner, then the liminal is a process, a becoming, and the "liminal persona" (those within the transitional phase) considered "structurally invisible"... "they are at once no longer classified and not yet classified" (Turner, 1967: 96). The liminal persona is therefore "neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification" (Turner, 1974: 232).

Homi Bhabha, also strategically deploys the notion of cultural liminality and interstitial space as sites of contestation of "narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative" (Bhabha, 1994: 148). In other words, there is contestation between the status of the colonised as "historical objects of a nationalist pedagogy" and their ability to perform themselves as "subjects of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary (national) presence" (Bhabha, 1994: 145). Bhabha's argument here clearly goes beyond the polarised polemic of master/slave identities or simple inversions of colonial relations. His focus rather is on the borders or thresholds between the binarisms endemic to the narratives of colonialism. These are the interstices where identities are performed and contested; where no transcendent authority holds sway. Instead, as he suggests:

> Liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white [...] the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. The interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (Bhabha, 1994: 1).

In sum, he suggests we should move beyond facile binarisms and onto the fault lines; onto border situations and thresholds as the sites where identities are performed and contested.

Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth make a similar point in their 2002 collection, *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, wherein they suggest that "any identification of boundaries is in itself an act of construction, a special practice that recognises its mutability" (Norquay and Smyth, 2002: 2). This paradox as they describe it results in a need for:

> ...a way of understanding movement and migration, of what it means to be
> in between, but also of recognising how important the sense of belonging
> to a place has been (Norquay and Smyth, 2002: 2).

The current collection responds to this need by addressing the instability of such terms as boundaries, borderlands and frontiers as concepts, either in accord with, or a challenge to what Norquay and Smith describe as "centralising power structures" (Norquay and Smyth, 2002: 2). Underlying many of the ideas herein is an implicit recognition of what Anzaldúa describes as a 'mestiza' consciousness; that is, an interstitial or liminal consciousness, always in flux, syncretic and antithetical to fixity.

Implicitly or explicitly, the contributors to this volume, in one way or another acknowledge that the term 'borderland' is imprecise, ambiguous and inhabited, and due to its liminal status, a crucible for multiple and competing identities. As the essays in this collection show, these borders don't have to be geographical, but can extend to any cultural, psychic or social terrain which exists beyond or between accepted categories, power structures, nations or states (the theory can, of course be extended to any category outwith of which people choose, or are assigned to reside). In fact, as Anzaldúa argues:

> ...the borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures
> edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory,
> where the lower, middle and upper classes touch (Anzaldúa, 1987:
> Preface).

What unifies this collection is an approach to the phenomena of borders as liminal spaces, that is to say, following Turner: "Realm[s] of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise"; an arena where "we are not dealing with structural contradictions ... but with the essentially unstructured (which is at once de structured and prestructured)" and that it is a time often associated with "the unbounded, the infinite, the limitless" (Turner, 1967: 97-8).

Paradoxically, for a collection which concerns itself with the permeability of borders and the space 'in between', this collection is structured around three sub-sections: Borderlines, Borderlands and Border Crossings. As these titles indicate these barriers are porous and many of the essays, in true liminal style could be as applicable to either, both or all of these categories. When this has been the case the editor has positioned them on the grounds of which section is most appropriate by virtue of chronology, theoretical stance or theme. Part 1 (Borderlines) for example, is broadly historiographical in approach and examines barriers built and

broken, resulting from the colonial context of England with Ireland and/or Scotland. The primary focus herein is the crossing of thresholds, either in terms of national, or international borders, and the way in which the passage across these borderlines exerts a strong influence both on the immigrant communities (or individuals) in terms of culture, mythology, politics, history and language.

Borderlines

In our first essay in this section, Mike Adamson focuses on the pre-historic fusion of Celtic cultures into Ireland and Scotland and the commonalities and syntheses between these two nations. Adamson's emphasis is on the permeable border between history and legend in Celtic societies, and how these common myths are made manifest in monsters, hags and warrior women on both sides of the Irish Sea suggesting a social and cultural kinship between Irish and Scottish 'Celts' as symbolised by the Giants' Causeway.

While fusion characterises Adamson's essay, our second essay by Peter Rushton begins with fission and the forced emigration of the seditious Irish and Scots during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due, in part to the flash points of Kinsale in Ireland and the risings of 1715 and '45 in Scotland. Using Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities, Rushton concentrates on the exilic condition and the liminal aspects of this by emphasising the textualisation of collective experiences and a common past as joint foci for national identities.

Emigration and immigration similarly provide the thematic focus for Nick Serra's essay wherein he discusses his own cultural ethnic self-identification as a hybrid and creolized mix of Welsh, Irish, Scottish, Italian and Native American. Citing W.B Yeats, Serra examines the cultural identifiers and markers, and barriers and borderlands between immigrant identities in the host community of Des Moines, Iowa, *circa* 1922. He continues by offering a sustained close reading, contextualized with historical data, of a letter sent in 1917 from his maternal great-great grandfather, Thomas Burke to a son in training at Camp Dodge, Iowa, prior to his deployment overseas as part of the American Expeditionary Forces of World War I. Written in the aftermath of the Easter Rising the letter offers a patriotic *flavour du jour* in its discussion of the "relentless" and "savage" "England, the oppressor of all the weaker nations of the earth". The letter, like the journal or diary is, as Barbara Myerhoff argues:

> ...a liminal genre, without conventions, limits or boundaries used to travel into liminality where the unknown parts of the self and the environment are glimpsed (Myerhoff: 103).

Thomas Burke's letter does exactly that. As Homi K.Bhabha has argued:

> ...it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history—subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking (Bhabha: 2004: 246).

In this unofficial and personal history 'from below' Thomas Burke wields the power of the storyteller to traverse the boundaries between conjecture, opinion and fact. This, in turn becomes a map for his readers, and he a guide for those who encounter the borders themselves. In such ways, argues Serra, are borderlands internalized and diasporic ethnic identities forged.

In another found document which gives us a glimpse beyond the borders of official histories, Michael George examines BL MS Harley 913, c1335, the oldest extant collection of Anglo-Irish literature and thought to have been written in the Kildare/New Ross/Waterford area of Ireland. He reveals in the literature evidence of the extreme weather patterns in Ireland at the time which affected what were already marginal harvests and poor agricultural yields. Combined with the added pressures of English colonisation, and demands for supplies to fuel England's campaigns, George suggests that the Irish people became marginalised and reduced to living on the edge of hunger and famine including the great famine of 1315-17 which, George suggests was the worst famine that Europe has ever experienced, lasting seven years in some regions, affecting over 400,000 square miles and up to thirty million people.

Viewing the manuscript from this historical context, George examines the military strife in Medieval Ireland using two poems 'The Walling of New Ross' and 'Piers of Bermingham'. He then focuses on the scarcity of food resulting from the prevailing conditions and evidences this by exploring 'The Land of Cokaygne' and supports his findings by analysis of 'Missa potatorum', (or The 'Drinkers' Mass') and other poems included in the manuscript.

George argues that if, as most scholars agree, BL MS Harley 913 was a well-used Franciscan preaching manual, then the Franciscans, aware of the concerns of the people to whom they were preaching, used the works to provide imaginative comfort during hard times.

Borderlands

In a 2002 essay entitled 'Gender and Nation: debatable lands and passable boundaries', Aileen Christianson draws a parallel between the "ambivalent margins" characterized by Homi Bhabha and the "Scottish metaphor of the Debatable Land" (Norquay and Smyth, 2002: 67). Citing Maggie Humm she suggests that:

> The border is not only a question of place which assumes some one dimensional literary plane without hierarchy or class but of difference, since in looking at literary borders we find asymmetry, absence and marginalisation …the border is a trope of difference and potential conflict, between races, between cultures and between sexual preferences (Norquay and Smyth, 2002 : 67).

While acknowledging that the border as a state is indeterminate, contingent and contrapuntal, Humm's prognosis, (and Christianson's also) perhaps unsurprisingly relates to gender and the internal hierarchies within borders where the question of national authenticity is raised. She continues to articulate the representational boundaries through which women must pass in order to be acknowledged as representative of the Scottish nation. The same boundary exists between the Highlander and the Border Reiver, the latter being elided from discourses of nation (and nationalism) by his liminal attributes. As Turner points out:

> The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (threshold people) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (Turner, 1967: 95).

As figured by Colin Younger the Reivers of the Anglo-Scots borders collectively embody this state of in-betweenness. They are neither English nor Scots, neither slave nor master, and their national status vacillates depending where they choose to be on any given day. In his essay on the authenticity of the Border Ballads, Younger interrogates debates over the putative authenticity of the Border Ballads corpus, and suggests that the perceived barbarity and lawlessness of the Borderers resulted precisely from their existing on a buffer zone between two warring countries. He concludes that the ballads which emerged from this buffer zone came also from collective experiences and a common past and are therefore exemplars of the underlying connectedness which Turner defines as

communitas. To this end he concludes that the debate over authenticity is an expression, not of the provenance of the ballads, but of the Romantic zeitgeist in which it is expressed.

Patrick Maume's essay also locates itself on the Anglo-Scottish borders as viewed through the eyes of an Anglo-Irish aristocrat, and Ulster Unionist, Lord Ernest Hamilton (1858—939) in his novels *The Outlaws of the Marsh* (1897), and *The Mawken* [i.e. Maiden] *of the Flow.* Maume also draws our attention to Hamilton's book *The Soul of Ulster* (1917) which argues that Ulster Protestants were essentially Scottish Borderers who preserved their ancestral qualities by refusing to intermarry with the natives.

Maume's chapter offers the first overview of Hamilton's writings, and discusses how Scottish and Irish aspects of his identity relate to his membership of the United Kingdom aristocracy and his reaction against his Victorian upbringing.

He argues that Hamilton stands at the transition between the Victorian view of history drawing on Sir Walter Scott's depiction of the history of the Scots Borders to present the development of civilisation as an inevitably progressive and on the whole benevolent process underpinned by a British Protestant Providence, and a fin de siècle questioning of whether history was not more chaotic, less progressive, and certainly less Christian than had been assumed.

Maume questions whether Hamilton's career and writings demonstrate the defence of civilisation from barbarism he claims or could itself be a great deal more barbaric than his parents' High Victorian generation were prepared to admit.

If the first two essays in this section discuss what Turner describes as liminal personae, the third by Tania Scott takes us into a palimpsest of border crossing identities and themes in her discussions of Fiona MacLeod and Lord Dunsany. As Maley and O'Malley-Younger colourfully suggest that:

> In the history of twice-told tales, doppelgangers, double-dealers and divided selves attributed to the Scots, Fiona MacLeod/William Sharp stand as a monument to Caledonian antisyzygy. An ambiguous twofold beacon of fusion and confusion filtered through a double-life, a persona and a pseudonym, William Sharp instigated the second identity of the Gaelic-speaking Highlander Fiona MacLeod as part of his passionate Celticism, and proceeded through his mystical renderings and multiple letters to exert a profound influence on writers such as AE and Yeats (Maley and O'Malley-Younger, 2013: 30).

To simplify, Caledonian antisyzygy relates to the essential duality attributed to Scottish identity in 1919 by C. Gregory Smith. This combination of opposites is, according to Smith "the polar twins of the Scottish muse", which has, he continues:

> Loved reality, sometimes to maudlin affection for the commonplace, [but] she has loved not less the airier pleasures to be found in the confusion of the senses, in the fun of things thrown topsy-turvy, in the horns of elf-land and the voices of the mountain (Smith, 1919: 19).

As the former quote from Maley and O'Malley-Younger summarises the border-crossing duality of MacLeod, so does the latter by Smith capture the practice of Lord Dunsany.

In Scott's essay we are taken to the fringe of Celtic Revivalism and introduced to formulations of the Celt purported and made famous by Matthew Arnold and W.B Yeats. In her discussion of MacLeod's works and Dunsany's *King Argimēnēs and the Unknown Warrior* Scott interrogates narratives of nationalism and comes to the conclusion that both writers are marginalised from the canon of Revivalist literature despite their desires to engage with the Celtic Revival. For MacLeod, she suggests this internal conflict actually splits the author in two, her creation taking literally Matthew Arnold's phrasing of the Celt/Teutonic dichotomy in gender terms:

> ...no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy" (Arnold, 1867: 108).

Gender, according to Scott, also figures prominently in Dunsany's engagement with Celticism where the heroic masculine ideal is the subject of parody. This parody extends to Irish nationalism itself, and indeed the story of the Revivals in Scotland and Ireland cannot be separated from the narrative of nationalism; it is partly this conjunction of ideologies that has exiled both MacLeod and Dunsany to the literary margins, where they remain.

Much of the criticism on Martin McDonagh to date has focussed on either, the playwright's 'Irishness' (and, therefore his right to write on things Irish), or on the level of violence and profanity depicted in his plays. This has not affected the popularity of his works which Patrick Lonergan puts down to:

> ...their delinquent humour, their rootedness in (but distance from) the Irish dramatic tradition, their wilfully transgressive attitude—and, in particular, their disorientating blend of the past with the present (Lonergan, 2012: v).

In other words, their popularity lies in their refusal to be bound by barriers and borders. This theme of border crossing underpins Willy Maley's essay which attributes McDonagh with crossing borders of time and space, genre and themes, which Maley lists as:

> ...black pastoral, cartoon violence, fairytale, folklore, gargoyles, globalization, gothic, Grand Guignol, grotesque, hybridity, melodrama, mimicry, nativism, parochialism, parody, pastiche, postmodernism, provincialism, primitivism, pulp fiction, revivalism, 'satanic kailyard', 'Tiger Trash.

Dancing from Shakespeare to Synge and back again, Maley focuses on boundaries and bodies crossed and broken to answer the question of how far expatriate Irish writers, as part of the Irish diaspora, can claim to speak for the old country. He concludes that:

> In grasping the complexities of McDonagh's theatre, Bakhtin is as relevant as Behan. Above all, McDonagh is a dramatist who crosses borders and pushes boundaries. He belongs both to a tradition stretching back to Synge, and to a new generation of Irish writers as such of twilights disguised as false dawns as they are of riding stuffed tigers.

As Anzaldúa rightly asserts in relation to borderlands:

> ...the dominant culture has created its version of reality and my work counters that version with another version, the version of coming from this place of in-betweenness, *nepantla*, the Borderlands. There is another way of looking at reality. There are other ways of writing. There are other ways of thinking'. (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2000: 229).

As Maley's essay makes clear, McDonagh's anarchic and polytrophic practice displays these other, dialogic ways of thinking and highlights the fact that borders, with all their complex connotations, exist to be broken.

Border Crossings

Anzaldúa's endorsement of the 'nepantla' state of in-betweenness challenges the authority of rigid identities and monolithic ideologies. In their place she advocates cultural accommodation, acceptance, dialogue,

and cross-border pursuits. Such a boundary-crossing scenario allows for the development of what Turner defines as 'communitas': that is a productive social grouping based on mutual understanding and a sense of shared experience. As David Newman suggests:

> Borders also establish groups and where a person belongs. [B]orders determine the nature of group […] belonging, affiliation and membership, and the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized (Newman, 2007: 33).

The first essay in this section by John Strachan and Alison O'Malley-Younger examines this idea of belonging, affiliation and membership, and, indeed, it can be argued communitas in relation to the cadre of gay, young Tory wits who composed the satirical dialogues of *Noctes Ambrosianae*, published for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine between 1822 and 1835. Their focus is on "the roaring Irishman", William Maginn "a parodist and satirist who joined the ranks of Maga's radicals and cockney-bashers" in 1819. There are several borders crossed within Maginn's adventures in Scotland, The trip from Cork to Edinburgh, Ireland to Scotland marks Maginn's moving from one side of a border to another. He repeatedly crosses borders in his writings on Ireland; moving between mocking squibs to venomous invective, but for Maginn, as the essay indicates, perhaps the most important border he crossed was into the inner-circle; into the symposium of unruly but brilliant Bacchanalians who made up the staple imaginary guests of Ambrose's fictional hostelry for it was here that his career began in earnest, and it is in his career trajectory in *Blackwood's'* that we learn of the manner in which that brilliant, troubling and complex magazine shifted its tone and manner in its cross-border relationship with Ireland.

In the same year in which Maginn arrived in Edinburgh, two other Irishmen crossed the border from Ireland to Scotland to make their mark on the Scottish Capital. Their names were William Burke and William Hare; the subjects of Alison O'Malley-Younger's essay which examines their border crossing transformation from men, to murderers to monsters at the start of the nineteenth-century. Focusing on the monster, that most amorphous of border-crossing classifications, O'Malley-Younger examines the ways in which monsters are socially constructed, contested and contingent upon the period in which they appear. Taking us from the dissecting rooms of the Edinburgh anatomists, to the squalid slums of Auld Reekie, O'Malley-Younger draws on a variety of contemporary resources, including *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* to illuminate how a tale of two murderers (and essentially two cities) was sensationalised and

Gothicised, and the murderers themselves abjected and made monstrous as symptomatic representations of a web of contemporary fears surrounding race, class and the commoditisation and anatomisation of the body (both living and dead).

O'Malley-Younger argues that the urban milieu of Edinburgh's Old Town is one significant factor in the 'monsterisation' of Burke and Hare. The suggestion is that the West Port with its ambience of ever-present danger in its dark wynds allowed criminals such as Burke and Hare to operate without fear of reprisals. The city of Edinburgh can thus be seen as a setting for a story that could equally fit into the genre of Gothic, and also that of Crime Fiction.

The city features heavily in Martyn Colebrook's essay wherein he examines the representation of post-industrial masculinities and violence in the working class communities of Glasgow and Belfast, as expressed in the novels of William McIlvanney and Eoin McNamee. He discusses how the Gothic is unavoidably intertwined with crime fiction, a major linking characteristic being the theme of hidden secrets awaiting detection. Colebrook suggests that crime fiction shares with the Gothic novel, a concern with secret or hidden knowledge concurring with Fred Botting's statement that this hidden knowledge includes the narrative and thematic spectre of social disintegration. Further to this Colebrook suggests that it is within this knowledge that resides the eventual solution to the crime.

By comparing McIlvanney's Glasgow and McNamee's Belfast, Colebrook draws parallels between the Cities through their respective position as predominantly working class, post-industrial cities. Finally he looks at how the fictions of both cities through the media of the Troubles thriller and contemporary crime fiction allow the authors to mobilise these different generic vehicles in order to interrogate the status of the significant thematic and philosophical questions being asked within the respective communities portrayed.

Mark Corcoran identifies interrelated themes crossing the Irish sea by considering James Joyce's *Dubliners* and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*. Using Foucault's notions regarding the production of truth he introduces the term 'enforced truth' which he describes as a narrative at work in society which employs peer pressure to create an accepted societal belief. Corcoran argues that enforced truth is involved with both inebriation and political figures in narratives of fiction and illustrates his argument by reference to the chosen works.

He concludes that the "legacy of Joyce has become inescapable ...for the likes of Welsh; a Joyce handed down throughout the generations just like the Irishness handed down by the Scottish-Irish in *Trainspotting*".

Thomas Rudman examines the metaphor of border-crossings in 'post-Troubles' Northern Irish noir fiction. He examines the entrenchment of inter-community separation in an era of official cross-community power-sharing which he sees as a central ambiguity of the peace-process era of today. Rudman continues by exploring how Stuart Neville's recent noir-thriller, *The Twelve* (Neville, 2009), negotiates this contradictory state of affairs. Utilising Louis Althusser's theory of articulation and Walter Benjamin's notion of redemption, Rudman demonstrates how the novel can be seen to blur the borders of the normative two-traditions narrative through which Northern Irish politics has traditionally been viewed. He suggests that despite the changes of the past few decades which have been viewed as an opening for different forms of identity and social development, the impact of many years of conflict remains. Rudman points to the continued existence of peace-walls separating the loyalist and nationalist residential areas of Northern Ireland and contends that the physical and political boundaries of the conflict are still in evidence. He presents a reading of *The Twelve* which demonstrates how the metaphors of border-crossings traverse the noir-thriller form to produce a series of destabilising contradictions and ambiguities which in turn give rise to a number of ambivalent messages.

In an essay entitled 'Ireland, verses, Scotland: crossing the (English) language barrier', Willy Maley argues that:

> ...the language barrier is ...a double bind that ties the tongue, forks and forges it. Across the margins, language is always political, especially when it is poetic (Maley, 2002: 30).

A recognition of liminality and politics of language similarly inflects Eugene O'Brien's psychoanalytic reading of the poetry of Seamus Heaney. Following Lacan, Derrida and Heidegger, O'Brien illuminates the role of the unconscious as a way of challenging the classificatory systems of Enlightenment thought. The unconscious is defined as the locus of the repressed linguistic dispossession which occurs in both Ireland and Scotland—coterminous with the Plantation of Ulster and the linguistic colonisation of the people. Using Heaney and Hugh MacDiarmid as his examples, O'Brien promotes an awareness of how this linguistic colonisation translates into several, sometimes contradictory realities which suggest that truth is somehow fictional. In this language of intersection and dialectical interaction, argues O'Brien, Heaney's work is driven by an intellectual desire to probe the interstices of politics, ethics and aesthetics in an attempt to come to a more complete understanding of what it means to be fully human. He concludes that Heaney has come

through the postcolonial sense of language as oppressive and instead has created a corpus of work which is predicated on an ownership of language which now becomes expressive of its different constituents.

It is hoped that this collection will equally give rise to a number of ambivalent messages. The aim is to present a crossing of borders and to introduce readers to the same hybrid and interactive cross-border pursuits and politics as those who have departed from the static binarisms of the colonial contract. As Anzaldúa argues:

> ...from this racial, ideological, cultural and biological crosspollinization, an alien consciousness is presently in the making a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987: 77).

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PART I

BORDERLINES

Chapter One

Mist Across Celtic Waters

Mike Adamson

Introduction

It has been postulated that the oral heritage of the Gaelic-speaking peoples formed a corpus of guiding knowledge as powerful and influential as their complex law tracts. That history and legend became fused in a pre-literate society is no surprise, and the bardic tradition which permeated Celtic society, allied with Druidry and the clientage of the *vates* and *filidh* to the ruling elites, provides a well-documented mechanism for the retention and transmission of culture (Mac Cana, 1983: 12), as surely as do the feats of memory required of the druids themselves, according to Caesar (1974: 32).

The transition from oral to literate society was neither swift nor deliberate and it would seem that the Gaelic-speaking peoples had only moderate use for the symbols on which the Mediterranean peoples depended for communication. A few examples are known from Classical times, such as the Greek inscription on the sword found at the *oppidum* of Manching, on the lower Danube in Bavaria (Cunliffe, 1999: 227), or the Roman-era census of the Helvetii being taken in Greek. Such cases illustrate the fact that the collective peoples—whom we have for convenience termed 'Celts'—used written script opportunistically but saw little need to incorporate it into their society or character. Caesar (1974: 32) tells us the Gauls of the 1st century BC commonly used written Greek for their daily needs, though it must have been on some medium not archaeologically durable, as no troves of mundane documentation, akin to those of the Medieval Russian city of Novgorod (Brisbane and Reynolds, 2004: 47-58) or the village of Deir el Medina, above Egypt's Valley of the Kings (Wimmer, 1998: 355), so illuminating to modern scholars, have come down to us. Indeed, as Moffatt (2001: 72) illustrated, the limitations of the Latin and Greek mindsets resulted in a vocabulary inadequate to do