The Disappointed Bridge

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The Disappointed Bridge:
Ireland and the Post-Colonial World

By

Richard Pine

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

The Disappointed Bridge: Ireland and the Post-Colonial World,
by Richard Pine

This book first published 2014

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

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-5893-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5893-9

For my friends

Brian Friel

and

Anthony Roche

le grá

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has enjoyed a long gestation. The germ was hatched in a series of extra-mural lectures at University College, Dublin, in the late 1980s, on the subject of Ireland's connections – or lack of them – with other parts of the post-colonial world. Then in 1989, with David Lloyd (at that time a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley) I organised a multi-disciplinary Irish studies seminar at Berkeley, with the participation of Dorothy Cross, Maurna Crozier, Luke Gibbons, Michael D. Higgins, Michael Laffan and Anthony Roche. David Lloyd and Robert Tracy contributed from the staff of Berkeley.

The book proceeded from that point *via* a number of guest lectureships in the 1990s and 2000s, and ancillary publications, interrupted – positively – by my setting up of the Durrell School of Corfu in 2001, up to the point where I finally relinquished directorship of the School in 2008. During that period, my interest in post-colonial literature was stimulated by seminars held at the School on topics such as "Empire and Aftermath" and "The Emergence of Modern Greece".

These undertakings were the genesis of the present book, the motivation for which is discussed in my Preface.

I acknowledge, with profound thanks, the opportunity, while I was Director of the Durrell School of Corfu, of discussing post-colonial issues with (among others) Harish Trivedi, Ashis Nandy, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Reed Way Dasenbrock and Nick Papandreou, and, in their visits to Dublin, with the late Susan Sontag and the late Chinua Achebe. In Corfu I have also enjoyed stimulating discussions with Theodoros Buchelos, Pavla Smetanova-Damaskinos, William Mallinson and Anthony Stevens. In Dublin, Ronan Kelly, biographer of Thomas Moore, provided valuable insights which are acknowledged in Chapter 4. I am most grateful to my friend John Fanning for making available a copy of his Ph.D. thesis on Seán Ó Riada, Thomas Kinsella and T.K. Whitaker, which provides a fertile congruence of Irish imagination and pragmatic political vision in the 1950s. J.M.Q. (Mark) Davies very kindly made available to me the typescript of his translation of Constantine Theotokis's *Slaves in their Chains*, without which it would have been impossible to include a consideration of it before publication.

Above all, Emilie Pine has been a valuable and perceptive reader, who made many suggestions for improvements to what, at times, seemed an inchoate text.

Others to whom I am indebted for comments and advice include Prof. Diana Brydon, of the University of Manitoba, who edited the Routledge five-volume series *Postcolonialism* (2000), Albert Memmi and Tzvetan Todorov, with whom I have profited from helpful correspondence.

Living in Greece for the past decade, I have been introduced to the writings of – in particular – many Greek novelists, some who are dead and some who are living. To enter into a new world, even through the medium of translation, has been a privilege, a means of understanding a new society – new in the sense that it is new to me, as an outsider, but also new to itself as, in my opinion, it still moves towards an understanding of what it means to be Greek, when the sense of an immense past encounters the modern. Modern Greek literature is in many ways an experiment in living, and the especial privilege I have enjoyed is the discovery, courtesy of Denise Harvey's publishing initiative on the island of Euboea, of Alexandros Papadiamandis (1851-1911), short-story-writer and novelist, whose work, on the cusp of history, marks the opening of a new vista for this experiment. The fact that his writings, like those of more recent writers such as Yiorgos Yatromanolakis, Vangelis Hatziyannidis and Sotiris Dimitriou, are both vigourous and tentative, is an indication of the nature of the challenge.

Some parts of this book have appeared in other guises: a version of Chapter 1 ("So Familiar and So Foreign") was given as a guest lecture at the University of Central Florida and at a convention of the Florida Colleges English Association; my thanks to Anna Lillios for her assistance and welcome. A precursor to Chapter 2 ("Turning the Hour-Glass") was a lecture at the Catholic University of America in Washington; my thanks to Robert Mahony for his invitation. An early version of Chapter 4 ("A Guest of Cultural Politics") appeared in the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Literature*, and is reprinted here by courtesy of its guest editors, Donald Morse and Csilla Bertha; it (and Chapter 11) also formed the basis of lectures I gave on RTÉ Lyric fm radio in early 2000, in my series "Music, Place and People". The section of Chapter 7 ("Island to Island") relating to Alexandros Papadiamandis first appeared in the *Anglo-Hellenic Review*. Chapter 6 ("Salman Rushdie and Modern Ireland") was given initially to the Irish Writers' Union. Chapter 12 ("What Does 'Sorry' Mean?") marked the seventieth birthday of Brian Friel at University College Dublin, and has been extensively revised. Chapter 13 ("Perhaps

I'm Twins") marked Friel's eightieth birthday celebrations at the Patrick McGill Summer School at Glenties, County Donegal, and I am indebted to its Chairman, Joe Mulholland, for permission to publish an extensively revised version here. The revisions to these latter chapters are indicated in their respective introductions.

In addition, I also wish to thank my publishers, Cambridge Scholars Publishing (with whom I had already worked in editing two volumes, *Creativity, Madness and Civilisation* and *The Literatures of War*), and in particular Amanda Millar, for their encouragement and forbearance during a period of serious ill-health. I have too many doctors to thank for saving my life, but in particular I wish to thank Dr Haris Tsoukalas, of the General Hospital in Corfu and Dr. John Ryan of St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin, even though it is almost certain that they will not read this.

The cover illustration is derived from a poster design by Prof. Bert Smith, of the School of Communications Design at the University of Baltimore, for the 1992 conference of the International Lawrence Durrell Society held at Avignon. The diminutive figure on the disappointed bridge is Lawrence Durrell, but in this instance it might represent James Joyce (from whom my title derives), or indeed Everyman. I am indebted to Prof. Smith, the copyright holder, for permission to reproduce the image.

This book is dedicated to two of my closest friends. In 1989 I wrote (and privately printed) an essay entitled "Rough Edges: Commitment in Contemporary Irish Drama". Such was its value and fate that no copy, not even my own, can now be found. But I joined the names of Anthony (Tony) Roche and Brian Friel as dedicatees, because Tony had been instrumental in bringing the essay to fruition during my lecture tour of universities in Alabama which he organised, and Brian because he put at my disposal his family's cottage overlooking Gweedore Bay in County Donegal, where the essay was written. Since then, my friendship and indebtedness to both of them have broadened and deepened enormously: with Tony, during discussions of his own work on Synge, Friel and contemporary Irish drama generally, and with Brian for his continued interest in, and encouragement of, my study of his work. It is a privilege to join their names once more in this book.

Richard Pine
Villa Ipothesi
Perithia, Corfu
New Year 2013-2014.

PREFACE

> Tell me now, Stephen said – what is a pier.
> A pier, sir, Armstrong said. A thing out in the waves. A kind of bridge. Kingstown pier, sir [...]
> Kingstown pier, Stephen said. Yes, a disappointed bridge.
> —James Joyce, *Ulysses.*[1]

Origins of this study

As a child, I received the impression that "natives" were non-white, non-British, living mainly in India or Africa – except of course for "Red Indians" who "bit the dust" in the westerns. "Native" was the term used by British writers to refer to the indigenous populations of the colonies, who, it was reckoned in 1881, amounted to over 250 million people living on eight million square miles, an area "more than twice as large as Europe, larger than North America, almost half as large as Asia, and not very far short of one-sixth of the land surface of the earth".[2] In the 1960s, Gabriel García Márquez could still write of Buckingham Palace's "limitless backyard which extends to the bounds of Africa".[3]

It was some time before I realised, by learning Latin, that the word "native" merely referred to people born in a certain place, and that I, born in England, was an English "native", even though I was British and white. As will appear evident throughout this study, the *mission civilatrice* – the civilising of native populations, their acculturation to British *mores* – is the principal justification for the process of colonisation. I was, it seems, already "civilised".

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[1] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 29.

[2] *Census of England and Wales*, 1881, quoted in Stephanie Williams, *Running the Show: Governors of the British Empire*, p. 21. This study is concerned primarily with former British colonies, but, in addition to the Latin American (Spanish) condition, discussed in Chapter Nine, we should also bear in mind French (francophone) colonies and those of Portugal (lusophone): Amilcar Cabral reminds us that Portuguese colonial laws classified the eleven million Africans of Angola, Guiné and Mozambique as 99.7% "uncivilized" and 0.3% "assimilated": A. Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 22.

[3] Quoted in Gerald Martin, *Gabriel García Márquez: a life*, p. 165.

Having lived for forty years in post-colonial Ireland, I found myself, as an Englishman, among "natives" who, under British rule since the sixteenth century, were classified in the same generic category as the other colonised peoples of the expanding empire. I began to appreciate the struggle in Irish history, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of a people exiled or deracinated from many of their most basic icons of identity: land, religion and language, which were the targets of the "Penal Laws" imposed by Britain from 1704 onwards.

After the first stage of independence, from 1922 to 1948, the people of the Republic sought ways of recovering these icons in order to establish a viable state: to take, according to the last words of Robert Emmet in 1803, their place among the nations (in his speech from the dock in 1803 Robert Emmet, one of the leaders of the rebellion of that year, said that his epitaph should not be written "until my country takes her place among the nations of the earth"),[4] while other Catholic Irish people in Northern Ireland (which, after the partition in 1922,[5] remained part of the United Kingdom) were, in Liam de Paor's words, "Blacks who happen to have white skins".[6] Much more recently I have encountered the notion that, under the British protectorate of the Ionian islands (1815-64), the Greek population were referred to as "the Irish of the Mediterranean".[7]

De Paor's description was, on his own admission, for rhetorical purposes, an "oversimplification and too facile an analogy".[8] The ambivalence of Irish nationalist leaders regarding such analogies will be explored in Chapter One, but here we should note that the idea of "the Irishman as a white nigger"[9] has been a pervasive analogy in drawing attention to the aspiration of Ireland, as in other "non-white" resistances to colonial rule,

[4] A motion frequently tabled in student debating societies continues to be: "That Emmet's epitaph can now be written", the discussion turning on whether or not Ireland has indeed "taken its place" among the world's viable nations.
[5] As part of the settlement between Ireland and Great Britain.
[6] L. de Paor, *Divided Ulster*, p. xiii.
[7] Travelling through Ireland in 1860, Charles Kingsley saw the "natives" as "human chimpanzees" (a foretaste of the *Punch* cartoons of the simian Irish in the 1860s [see L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: the Irishman in Victorian Caricature*]) while Thomas Carlyle opined "black-lead them and put them over with the niggers" as a solution to the "Irish problem": L. Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, pp. 149-50.
[8] L. de Paor, *Divided Ulster*, p. xiii.
[9] Quoted in S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: colonial legacies in Irish history and culture*, p. 45.

to escape the subjugation to which many parts of the British empire were prone.[10]

This book arises from an extended period of consideration of the Irish situation, but also from a deep-seated anxiety since childhood that "natives" had stories to tell – or (and there is a considerable difference) narratives to construct – from their own perspective, rather than through the imperial lenses which had conditioned much of my reading and television viewing: that there might be a "bridge" allowing connections between the disappointments and aspirations experienced under colonialism.

Leitmotiv of the study

There is a further dimension to my interest in the behaviour of post-colonial peoples: I am the child of a historian who, at his death, left an unpublished "History of British Colonisation" which celebrated the achievements of empire. It is possible that, had he lived, he would have regarded this book as a betrayal of my own heritage. I have discounted that kind of celebration in favour of an exploration (both sympathetic and empathetic) of the opening gambit of Brian Friel's 1969 play, *The Mundy Scheme* (with the subtitle "*or, May we Write Your Epitaph Now, Mr Emmet?*), which permeates the following study:

> Ladies and Gentlemen: What happens when a small nation that has been manipulated and abused by a huge colonial power for hundreds of years wrests its freedom by blood and anguish? What happens to an emerging country after it has emerged? Does the transition from dependence to independence induce a fatigue, a mediocrity, an ennui? Or does the clean spirit of idealism that fired the people to freedom augment itself, grow bolder, more revolutionary, more generous?
>
> The answer to many of these questions can be found in Ireland, a little island in the Atlantic Ocean, 350 miles long, 150 miles broad, and with a population of about four million people. For seven hundred years this little island was occupied and oppressed by the English, who treated the natives as serfs and who even tried to supplant the Catholic religion, which was beloved by the natives, by the Protestant faith, which – which wasn't really suited to the moist and temperate climate. Many times the people rose up against their overlords but each time they were beaten down and reduced to even greater serfdom. Eventually, however, in the year 1916, led by a

[10] Edward Said mentions an instance in 1860 in which a French lawyer identifies the Jamaican *nègres* with *les Irlandais*: "Afterword" to C. Carroll and P. King (eds.), *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory*, p. 178.

> handful of idealists they rose again and this time they overthrew the English.
>
> After their rebellion, it was a strange experience for these hardy island people to find themselves their own masters; and they were so confused that for a time they squabbled among themselves. But they soon realized that they had better put their little green isle in order if they hoped to create the nation that the idealists of 1916 would have been proud of.[11]

This opening speech, directed at the audience, precedes most of the literature on the post-colonial condition, yet it provides a textbook example of both theoretical and empirical work which has since established post-colonial studies as one of the most compelling areas of enquiry in a post-imperial world. *What happens to an emerging country after it has emerged?* becomes the *Leitmotiv* for my own study, in particular, how it learns to understand, and inhabit, its freedom.

Friel is here giving overt and explicit expression to his own observation, in his essay "The Theatre of Hope and Despair", that "every time a curtain rises, a dramatist begins 'Ladies and Gentlemen…' Of course his concern is to communicate with every individual in that audience, but he can do that only through the collective mind."[12] As we shall see throughout this study, to gather the "collective mind" and to secure its assent to the writer's narrative – whether "real" or "truthful" or mendacious – so that a collective identity can be established, is a central strategy in the cultural impetus of colonial resistance.

For this and other reasons, Friel is to be found everywhere in this study. His epigrammatic question "what happens…?" appear subliminally in every chapter; his play of 1964, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, provides the headline for Chapter Three; Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen are devoted entirely to his work, and his play *Translations* complements André Brink's novel *An Instant in the Wind* in Chapter Eight. The reader will encounter Friel as a presence in quotations from his plays and diaries, expressing his concerns as a post-colonial writer. This is ancillary to what I have written about him elsewhere,[13] and it informs every discussion of what is in effect a new reading, and a re-reading, of the entire subject of Ireland after independence.

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[11] B. Friel, *The Mundy Scheme* in *Crystal and Fox and The Mundy Scheme*, pp. 157-8.
[12] B. Friel, *Essays, Diaries, Interviews 1964-1999*, pp. 18-19.
[13] See R. Pine, *Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama* (1990) and *The Diviner: the art of Brian Friel* (1999).

Moreover, the writers and composers who appear in specific chapters also lend their weight to other parts of the study. Thus, for example, Mario Vargas Llosa's contribution to the post-colonial debate is not confined to the chapter on the Latin American situation, and Chinua Achebe is a continual, admonitory presence, not least (as I explain in the Introduction) because of the difficulty of addressing black African writing as a monolithic subject (due in part to the phenomenon of *négritude*). Joyce is another haunting presence, not only because his own "epiphany" as the intruder into, and challenger of, the "canon" of English literature is so provocative and compelling, but also because his personal "*non serviam*" was a unique form of resistance to the concept of authority, whether colonialist or not.[14]

Among sociologists, Albert Memmi has supplied much of the underpinning of the colonial problem, especially in his compelling view of the symbiosis of coloniser and colonised.

Friel is central to the post-colonial status of Ireland. He was born in Northern Ireland which, it can be argued, is still a colonial state. And he has spent most of his life examining the phenomenon of independence in the other part of the country – the republic in which he has been often honoured, and in which he has served as a senator. Friel has frequently insisted that his work is primarily concerned with (in this case *Translations*, 1980) "the exploration of the dark and private places of individual souls",[15] yet by making that exploration he sets up a mirror that looks into the "dark and private places" of Ireland itself. His question is central to the way modern Ireland has attempted to establish itself as a polity, a society in relation to itself, to its former master (the neighbouring island) and to the rest of the world. *Has* Ireland emerged, and, if so, how does its emergence compare with that of other countries?

One of the keynotes of modern Irish theatre – that is, since the establishment of the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899 and its successor, the National (Abbey) Theatre in 1904 – has been the visceral way in which playwrights have held "a mirror up to nature" and enabled audiences to examine Irish society itself, in what Bill Ashcroft refers to as "the balance between secrets and revelation".[16] Fintan O'Toole, a journalist as well as a cultural historian, has argued that theatre is "a space in which the

[14] As Gerry Smyth observes (*Decolonization and Criticism*, p. 41), "hyperbole, dissonance, discursive confusion and colonial fantasy raise the spectre of James Joyce, whose vision of Irishness haunts so many subsequent interventions".
[15] B. Friel, "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary" (1979), *Essays*, p. 77.
[16] B. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, p. 115. See Christopher Murray, *Twentieth-Century Irish Drama: mirror up to nation*.

country's big, dark passions can be played out in public […] a space in which both the romantic dreams and dirty realities of nationalism could be tested; in which postrevolutionary disillusionment could be turned into bitter humour".[17] In the course of this study we will see not only Friel's, but also Denis Johnston's and Yeats's, dramas performing those roles, sometimes clinically, at other times parenthetically or subliminally.

Bridges

Ireland is still exploring its sense of freedom, and its post-colonial responsibilities; its literature evokes parallels with the literatures of other, similarly emerging, societies throughout the world.

It is, perhaps, surprising that Ireland's experience of anti-colonial struggle, the achievement of independence, and the subsequent *agón* of freedom, has not created that "bridge" to connect it with the similar experiences of other societies. My title is not exclusively derived from Joyce. Heidegger said "always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and from, so that they may get to other banks […] The bridge *gathers* as a passage that crosses."[18] Nor should we ignore Ezra Pound's view of metaphor as "the bridge whereby to cross from the minor truth of the seen to the major truth of the unseen".[19] This gives rise to the entire question of translation and metaphor, their possibilities and their limitations. Nor should we overlook Ian Paisley's remark in 1964, when Northern Ireland premier Terence O'Neill welcomed a visit to Belfast by the Taoiseach [prime minister] of the republic (in a gesture which many unionists regarded as an act of betrayal), that bridges "are like traitors – they go over to the other side".[20]

Paisley's quip should not be regarded merely as a joke: he may, while joking, have expressed a basic insecurity and lack of status of the translator who "betrays" both sides in attempting the metaphor of translation – a point to which we will often recur. The liminality of the writer – faithful to himself and at the same time anxious to be faithful to the "collective mind" – is acutely vexed. A writer bearing witness is always at the border between self and other, self and society, authority and freedom, crossing it continually without ever reaching the other side – the

[17] F. O'Toole, "Despair at 'Dorian', feast on 'Famine'", *Irish Times*, 13 October 2012.
[18] M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* quoted in H.K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 5; emphasis in original.
[19] E. Pound, *Poems and Prose*, vol. III, pp. 349-50.
[20] Quoted by John O'Beirne Ranelagh, *A Short History of Ireland*, p. 267.

disappointed pathway. To be always at the border, the frontier, makes of the poet, the novelist, the playwright, the politician, a border within himself, an undecided being seeking self-knowledge and a satisfying narrative which *is* the life itself. A bridge is a metaphor: this vital element in communication will occupy us often in specific instances and always in the subconscious of semiotics.

Every bridge begins and ends in a pier-head, an abutment: it abuts, it touches, is contiguous with, its starting-point, and its point of arrival. The originary abutment, that which holds it to – and yet separates it from – the land, is the place from which the arch of the bridge will spring over space and time towards its destination, an abutment of arrival. The bridge thus springs from a borderland which is neither land nor air, from which it becomes the carrier of border-words. The bridge is both departure and arrival, origin and destination ("in my end is my beginning").

Ireland in post-colonial literature

Many commentators on post-colonial themes refer obliquely to Ireland but do not create the fertile bridge between Ireland and the rest of the post-colonial world: Derek Walcott employs Joyce at the head of his Nobel lecture ("History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake"); Chinua Achebe uses words by Yeats as the title of a novel (*Things Fall Apart*); Harold Bloom employs the same motif at the opening of *The Western Canon*; Edward Said almost completely ignores the Irish situation in *Culture and Imperialism.*

When we consider that Arnold Toynbee's eleven-volume *Study of History* contains a mere five references to Ireland, the significance (or insignificance) of Ireland on the world stage becomes clear. As Stephen Howe has noted, while "Irish cultural and literary history has become a major site for the elaboration of ideas about colonialism and postcoloniality", it has also earned "relatively superficial insertions […] into wider arguments about imperialism and decolonisation" by theorists such as Said, Frederic Jameson and Terry Eagleton.[21]

The widely used two-volume *Encyclopaedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English* (1994) fails to consider Ireland as a post-colonial subject; the five-volume collection *Postcolonialism* (2000), anthologises only a handful of references to Ireland;[22] *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (2004) includes

[21] S. Howe, *Ireland and Empire*, p. 107.

[22] It includes Luke Gibbons, "Unapproved Roads: Ireland and Post-Colonial Identity" from his *Transformations in Irish Culture* (1996) and Liam Kennedy,

only one, brief, section on Ireland,[23] while what many regard as a defining text, *The Empire Writes Back* (second edition 2002), mentions Ireland (almost in parenthesis) only once. In their Introduction, the authors identify "the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific countries and Sri Lanka" plus the USA, as "post-colonial literatures"[24] – but not Ireland. The two-volume *Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (2012), which claims, erroneously, to be "the first major collaborative overview of the field", reprints one essay on Ireland.[25]

This invisibility of Ireland on the world map is due not merely to critical reluctance to connect its post-colonial experience with the wider post-imperial world. One of the central features of colonialism is the suppression of "native" identity, which becomes silent and invisible, so that its place becomes a non-place.

The major exception to this absence of Ireland as a "bridge" to other post-colonial subjects is *Irish Postcolonial Writing: History, Theory, Practice* edited by Glenn Hooper and Colin Graham (2002), which includes five chapters comparing Irish literature with the literatures of – principally – Africa and the West Indies.

Irish writers and critics have largely refused to see themselves as post-colonial authors, even though the main thrust of cultural nationalism before and after independence has been the establishment of difference, of Irishness as a self-determining distinction from Englishness or Britishness. One principal reason for this refusal has been that the years following independence were years of debate about the nature of freedom – and the ways in which it was to be exercised and, perhaps, celebrated. Liam O'Flaherty's scepticism of the power of the Catholic Church (as discussed in Chapter Seven), the promulgation of a "philosophy" of Irish-Ireland, and the issues relating to censorship, all contributed to a silence in many quarters. The "refusal" was also due to preoccupations both before and after independence: the transfer of power under the legislation known collectively as the "Land Acts" (1870-1909) which gradually made it possible for tenants to acquire their land from the landowners, provided an

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"Modern Ireland: Post-Colonial Society or Post-Colonial Pretensions?" from *Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland*.

[23] "What Ish My Nation?", an extract by David Cairns and Shaun Richards from their *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*.

[24] B. Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 2. The authors also omit to credit Salman Rushdie with having originated the title of their book.

[25] Joe Cleary, "Postcolonial Writing in Ireland".

impetus for the restoration to the people of a precious asset of which they had been deprived for so long, and which had been a principal focus of political and social unrest. The civil war following independence had posed questions about national identity and self-determination in which many could not see, or refused to see, any role for literature.

Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland* (1995) and *The Irish Writer and the World* (2005) are the principal critical works to give any substantial consideration to post-colonial theory or practice from an Irish perspective but no attempt is made to establish thematic or experiential connections between Irish writing and the literatures of other post-colonial societies. Perhaps Kiberd's reluctance to make direct comparisons of Irish texts with those of other post-colonial societies is due to the predominance in his thinking of theoretical texts and what seems to be his consequent reliance on voices such as that of Frantz Fanon.

Ireland was in fact the first part of the empire to "write back": in literary, social, cultural and political terms, it constructed a series of "texts" which opposed the idea of empire and destabilised the British political and cultural process. Walcott, Achebe, Said and Bloom might all have profitably reflected on how the situation of Ireland – England's first colony and the first to break the imperial mould – offers textbook examples of the master-servant relationship within the colonial experience and in the post-colonial epoch. Bloom might have addressed the fact that Irish literature (and Joyce in particular) has been a destabilising influence within the "canon". The literatures of modern Africa, Latin America and India resonate with Irish echoes.

Analogies

The following three analogies underline the fact that the coincidences are too great to be ignored, not because they demonstrate parallels between resistance thinking in different parts of the empire, but because they indicate similarities between the strategies employed by colonial administrations in order to achieve two objectives: the *mission civilatrice* and the suppression of insurrection. The first analogy is that in 1831 Britain instituted the system of "national school" education in Ireland which effectively saw the extinction of the indigenous "hedge school" (as portrayed in Friel's *Translations*) and the consequent loss of the Irish language, which was (and still is) regarded as a keystone of Irish identity. Four years later, the well-known Macaulay "Minute on Indian Education" dismissed contemptuously the thesaurus of "native" culture in favour of the introduction of English literature and language:

> We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue […] We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.[26]

In Ireland, the alleged validity of the "civilising mission" was inculcated in similar fashion. As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh puts it, the union of Ireland and Britain in 1800 entailed a "language shift" in Irish culture which was not merely a matter of language itself: "in effect, becoming literate in English was seen as an essential enabling stage on the path to progress and civility".[27]

The second analogy is that in 1919 a peaceful demonstration at Amritsar in India resulted in a "massacre" in which an untold number of demonstrators (upwards of 700) were killed by British troops. In 1920, following the assassination by republicans of fourteen British intelligence officers in Dublin, British troops fired on a football crowd, killing fourteen – a date known in the Irish folk memory as "Bloody Sunday".[28] Following the killings, the Irish newspaper *Freeman's Journal* carried a headline: "Amritzar [*sic*] Repeated in Dublin".

The third analogy concerns the quality of manhood. In an essay (1841) on Warren Hastings, Macaulay suggested that Hastings, the governor of Bengal in 1772 and Governor-General of India the following year, viewed "the Bengalee [as] feeble even to effeminacy […] sedentary […] delicate […] languid […] His mind bears a singular analogy to his body".[29] Macaulay attributed the condition to humidity, which was scarcely available to the Irish, who nevertheless were described half a century later, by Ernest Renan, as "an essentially feminine race", and by Matthew Arnold as "peculiarly disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy".[30] This supposed effeminacy would disqualify the Indians and the Irish from any disposition towards self-determination, but predispose them to

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[26] Thomas Macaulay, "Minute on Indian Education", in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), *Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 428-30.

[27] G. Ó Tuathaigh, "Language, ideology and national identity" in J. Cleary and C. Connolly (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture*, p. 45.

[28] To be followed by another "Bloody Sunday" in 1972 when a civil rights march in Derry led to the shooting dead by British troops of thirteen civilians.

[29] *Memoirs of the Life of Warren Hastings, first Governor-General of Bengal* (1841), p. 9.

[30] These observations are quoted in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, "'Woman' in the Discourse of Celticism" in Bramsbäck and Croghan (eds.), *Anglo-Irish Literature: aspects of language and culture* vol. II, pp. 31-44.

subalternity imposed by a stronger will.[31]

These coincidences suggest that, as an alternative to understanding the *mission civilatrice*, acts of coercion bear out Albert Memmi's judgement that "colonization is the history of a succession of unbearable constraints".[32]

Reading Ireland

The present study attempts to project Irish texts, including music, in parallel with texts from India, Latin America, South Africa, Greece, Finland and Hungary, so as to address those wider arguments. Chapter One examines post-colonial theory (with a reluctance which I shall explain) so that we can read those texts not with theoretical eyes but with an appreciation of the way Ireland has been considered in theoretical terms, so as to be better able to answer Friel's question: *what happens to an emerging country after it has emerged?*.

Essentially *The Disappointed Bridge* steers a course between "Writing Ireland" and "Inventing Ireland": it is by *reading* Ireland, and by reading it in the light of texts from other post-colonial societies, that we can achieve some kind of understanding of what is undertaken by attempting to build a bridge of meaning.

Reading in the interstices – novels which are hardly remembered, such as D.P. Moran (*Tom O'Kelly*, 1905), Padraic Ó Conaire (*Deoraíocht*/*Exile* 1910, trans. 1994), Eimar O'Duffy (*The Wasted Island*, 1919), Brinsley MacNamara (*The Clanking of Chains*, 1920), Darrell Figgis (*The House of Success*, 1921; *The Return of the Hero*, 1923), or Francis MacManus (*Statue for a Square*, 1945) – helps us to understand that so-called "minor literature" can illuminate areas of anxiety which are not always evident in works from the "Western canon".

I have consciously excluded from this study a discussion of writers such as Jennifer Johnston, John Broderick, or Desmond Hogan. Johnston, in particular, typifies the writer who becomes locked into the past, or a fictional construct of the past, and is unable therefore in her narrative to liberate either the author or the reader from the dominance of myth, while Hogan, on the evidence of *The Ikon Maker* and *A Curious Street*, seems to be locked into a matriarchal society in which it is more important to examine the affective cult of the mother and the past than to escape from it. I am interested in letters from freedom, not letters from prison.

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[31] See also Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: the "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the late nineteenth century*.

[32] A. Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, p. 49.

Similarly I have also excluded those very few writers who have approached the themes of bourgeois society – Ronan Sheehan's novel *The Tennis Players*, Hugh Leonard's play *The Patrick Pearse Motel* or Bernard Farrell's play *All the Way Back* – because they underline the general fact that Irish writing is not yet ready to tackle the issues of a society which has moved far faster economically (despite the rise and collapse of the "Celtic Tiger") than it has socially or culturally. Nor, with very few exceptions such as Heno Magee's play *Hatchet* (1972) and, more recently, Anu Productions' site-specific presentations focussing on prostitution (*World's End Lane*, 2011) and drugs (*The Boys of Foley Street*, 2012) directed by Louise Lowe, has it shown itself ready for the themes of urban deprivation, inner city violence and depredation.

When Doris Somner refers to "classic novels of their respective countries [Argentina, Cuba, Colmbia, Chile, Brazil, Peru and the Dominican Republic]"[33] one looks in vain for an Irish equivalent. At one time one might have made a claim for *Ulysses*, but its relevance is receding, despite Joyce's powerful appeal to Irish minds not only in *Ulysses* but also in the *Portrait* and *Dubliners*. What did Joyce mean when he wrote "I go […] to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race"?[34] Was it his ambition to write "the great Irish novel"?

My study concentrates on the following themes: in the colonial situation, history and time are in conflict: history is resolutely male, imperious, power-driven and reductive; time is female, expansive and pliant. The empire travels in a continuous straight line towards its destiny, the colonised travels in a discontinuous cycle of despair. The past represents the heavy hand of masculine history, the future the fluid feminine possibilities of hope. In the post-colonial period the relationship between the two is fundamentally changed. The first questions to be asked in a newly independent country are "Who are we? Where are we? When are we?" As Ranajit Guha argued in 1988, "We must have a history!"[35] The search for a narrative to which society can be faithful is, in Salman Rushdie's words, "a national longing for form"[36] which invariably employs allegory as its chief strategy, by means of which things can be examined by appearing to be "other", alternative versions of the ultimately acceptable truth. In terms of analysis of such narratives, we should bear in

[33] D. Somner, "Irresistible Romance: the foundational fictions of Latin America" in H.K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, p. 76.
[34] J. Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pp. 275-6.
[35] See Partha Chatterjee, "The Nation and Its Pasts", *The Nation and its Fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories*, p. 76.
[36] S. Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, p. 300.

mind Harold Lasswell's classic definition of communication: "Who says what, by what means, to whom and with what effect?"[37]

All people tell their stories, as individuals and as societies; a dominant, outward-going nation will tell stories from a position of strength and confidence, and its public and private narratives will establish images and traditions of orthodoxy, success and rootedness; a colonised, subdued nation, inhibited by its subjection, will tell stories of failure and embarrassment, and will create images of hope and despair which are future-oriented; thus nations tell these stories differently before and after freedom.

When freedom comes, men and women explore each other in a new light, as citizens and as lovers, but above all they explore freedom itself. Attitudes to land, society and sexuality take on new perspectives and are subject to new descriptions. Narratives alter both subtly and violently.

Many emergent countries continue to live in the shadow of their history. But with autonomy comes an unfolding of a range of attendant freedoms and responsibilities which engage the imagination in acts of cultural, sexual and spatial emancipation.

The interstitial space between colonisation and full autonomy is a very dangerous place, as relationships are redefined and new forces, previously impossible or inconceivable, become visible, articulate and active.

All the lines must be redrawn, all the characters redefined. When a colonial society which has been a subsidiary part of a dominant empire is reborn as a free, autonomous *res publica*, its images begin to change both internally and externally. Internally, it begins to re-assess its view of itself, to call into play the forces and themes which brought it to freedom; externally, it begins to assert its new identity, to talk for the first time in the present tense, where it had previously lived on the experience of past failure and the hope of future attainment.

Previously, "difference" was what identified it as the weaker of two powers; now, "difference" describes its inherent strengths, its distinguishing mark among the nations of the world.

The place of writing moves from periphery to centre: writers also come to grief even while they are expressing joy. The force of freedom is sometimes greater than the writer's capacity to embrace it – the surprise and shock of the new.

The perennial story of master and servant, man and woman, black and white, east and west, north and south, the relationship of thought and deed

[37] H. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society" in L. Bryson (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*, 1948.

is at the heart of this storytelling because it is based on the twin themes of irony and misunderstanding. The story-teller confers identity on his listeners/readers by means of a story which enters the collective imagination and thence the collective memory. But thereby, the story-teller also confers identity on himself, validates his place in the world. One cannot be a story-teller, or listen to a story, *unless one knows who one is.* This is the dilemma of the post-colonial writer: finding himself, finding a voice, so that a story may be told, a vision articulated. So often irony – which depends on a shared referential context – defies the writer because that context does not exist, and the result is misunderstanding and accusations of betrayal.

The moments immediately following freedom are the most dangerous.

The Irish writing in which I am interested describes a post-independence culture attempting to find its way in the aftermath of freedom, searching for an adequate language and a new canon of literature and for a sense of autonomy after emancipation from the master-servant relationship. All the hallmarks of post-colonial studies – linguistic, subaltern, gender, communications – are to be found in the literature (novels, plays, poetry, essays) which accompanied the political process in the twentieth century. The experiences of civil war, sectarian strife, censorship, gender struggles, civil rights campaigns and divisive social issues have nourished, and been nourished by, a literature that reflects the same concerns as those in, for example, Nigeria, Kenya, India, eastern Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America.

In this process of storytelling, Irish writers (and their society) are unhoused, decentred, out-of-doors, homeless minds. In describing their condition their stories are imaginary rather than concrete. As a critic recently asked, "Can individuals in colonized countries alter their fates and live imaginatively?"[38] Rushdie says "There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space".[39] If the writer posits a "real" country and, at the same time, a "fictional" country, the mis-fit between the two becomes the place where he is vulnerable: he sought irony, and he is met with misunderstanding, which in Rushdie's case, in both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, brought him to near-death experiences.

"Real" or "unreal", "literal" or "fantastic", meet in politics in the conditions of everyday life, and are therefore as natural subjects for literature as love or hate. Whether it be Liam O'Flaherty's recording of the

[38] Max Liu in a review of Asko Sahlberg, *The Brothers*, *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 April 2012.
[39] S. Rushdie, *Shame*, pp. 23-4.

natural and supernatural in his native island of Inishmore (cognate with Alexandros Papadiamandis's stories from *his* native island of Skíathos), or Denis Johnston's surrealist commentary on the fledgling Irish Free State, the compulsion to seek truth and yet to re-present it, to re-make it, is the burden of anxiety carried by the writer.

In the between-space or *limen*, the writer is also unhoused from language, and typifies the post-modern problem with language and writing which centres on the issue of authority. Rushdie refers to literature as "the arena of discourse", "the place where the struggle of languages can be acted out"[40]: the reformulation of language, which is essentially political in its repercussions, is a vital ingredient in the emergence of modern Irish writing, as it is of Greek. The Greek word for "novel", *mythistorima*, graphically indicates that the narrative derives from both myth and history, the former as a form of storytelling, or an explanation of the phenomena, the latter as the recording of events as a way of creating a relationship between fact and fiction.

There are two core elements which are either explicit or implicit in the post-colonial experience, and which appear in one form or another in all the texts examined in this study. They are the most intellectually and emotionally exciting aspects of our study. The first is the concept of *home* and the *heimlich*/*unheimlich* distinction (see below, pp. 71-73) which permeates the idea of place and displacement. The second is the confrontation, comparison and consanguinity of "self" and "other" on which rests the relationship of coloniser and colonised, both during the colonial period and in its aftermath. For Irish writers, predominantly employing a form of English in which to present their perspective, and for Irish politicians and historians, conscious of the continuing relations of Ireland with its neighbour and former master, the self/other dichotomy and dilemma are paramount, not least when they are seen in the same prism as the *heimlich*/*unheimlich* affect of history. The history of colonisation is binary: the expansion of influence in order to increase the wealth accruing to empire; and a *mission civilatrice* with the purpose of educating the colonised, chiefly in the *mores*, habits and ways of thinking of empire. The history of decolonisation is equally dual: the resistance to empire and thereby the achievement of freedom; and the subsequent problem of that freedom, not least in relation to the continuing symbiosis of coloniser and colonised. History is memory. But to discuss, as does David Lloyd, "Ireland After History", is to suppose that history and memory have been transcended, whereas they continue to exercise their affective powers

[40] S. Rushdie, "Is Nothing Sacred?" in *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 427.

unmercifully. We shall meet the idea of *authenticity* particularly in the discussions of W.B. Yeats, Thomas Moore and Seán Ó Riada and the Latin American writers. The quest for the *authentic* attempts to defy history while retaining memory, a memory *before* the history which has robbed it of its self-respect and validity.

The case of Joyce Cary (author of *Mister Johnson*), both as a descendant of colonisers in Ireland, and as a colonial administrator who wrote *The Case for African Freedom*, is an enlightening, if frightening, study of the way these two core elements can meet (Chapter Eight).

A question of theory

While acknowledging the very extensive literature on the subject of "post-colonial theory" (Leela Gandhi, Edward Said, Frederic Jameson, Homi K. Bhabha et al., and, among Irish scholars, David Lloyd, Clare Carroll, Claire Connolly, Patricia King and Colin Graham/Richard Kirkland) and deriving some assistance from it, I have always been wary of adopting theoretical, rather than pragmatic or epistemological, viewpoints, not least because theory seems inseparable from political beliefs. To have analysed and discussed the arguments in such works either singly or collectively, would require an entire volume in itself. I have therefore examined these studies in Chapter One, in so far as they are relevant to the main themes of *The Disappointed Bridge*. The headlines in these works do not, necessarily, connect directly with those themes, but they illuminate certain aspects of them, and, in turn, my own contribution to the post-colonial discussion will illuminate areas of Irish experience which are not necessarily to the fore in those studies, concentrating as most of them do on the relevance of international theory to Irish situations and topics rather than relating those topics to similar themes in the literatures of other post-colonial societies.

A "Marxist" or "conservative" interpretation of colonialism in general, or of a specific aspect, may be useful in grounding the reader in a mode of thought, but as a reader myself it holds little attraction, since I prefer to derive my view of the post-colonial situation from the literary expression of writers who have no such hinterland of political thought. To read Joyce through the lenses of Derrida is to privilege Derrida over Joyce – a strategy which to me is perverse.

I applaud Bhabha's statement that "there is a damaging and self-defeating assumption that theory is necessarily the elite language of the

socially and culturally privileged".[41] I would go further, and argue conversely that to extrapolate theoretical concepts from statements based on the lived experience of colonised writers cannot provide us with anything more than a fragile and disputable framework on which generalised arguments about the nature of post-colonial society(ies) might be based. Moreover, a theory which provides a demonstrable theorem is always in danger of being disproved by a unique instance to which it does not apply. Ireland frequently provides such instances. Nevertheless, this extensive literature cannot be ignored, and Chapter One explores it in establishing the genres of both thought and behaviour which inhere in colonised people.

When Simon Gikandi argues that "a postcolonial discourse is unthinkable without poststructuralist theory", [42] I cannot agree with him, principally because he (together with so many other theorists) seems to equate "discourse" with "theory". This is emphatically not the case. Nor can I accept his statement that postcolonial discourse is "enabled by poststructuralist theory".[43] "Discourse" is the communication between differing parties on the meaning of what is being said from their differing perspectives. "Theory" is merely a way of extrapolating from discourse what the extrapolator wants to establish as some kind of universal rule. Just as there is no ubiquitous model of a post-colonial society (see below, pp. 2-5, 19-21), so there can be no theory or set of theories universally applicable to what are, essentially, unique situations. But Gikandi does also acknowledge that "although postcolonial theory has provided us with some powerful critiques of the nation and nationalism, its engagement with the decolonized nation and its literature has been minimal".[44] Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi did not need theory, because they lived the condition which they describe. This is akin – even though it is far more brutal and frightening – to the telling of stories of "everyday life".

A word about the hyphen

It is necessary to substantiate my choice of "post-colonial" rather than "postcolonial". The latter seems to be more favoured by USA-based

[41] H.K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 19.
[42] S. Gikandi, "Poststructuralism and postcolonial discourse" in N. Lazarus (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, p. 98.
[43] Ibid., pp. 100-101.
[44] Ibid., p.118.

scholars[45] on the basis that it permits the inclusion of more than simply the facts of a nation emerging from colonisation into independence.

But both major compilations of post-colonial texts – the *Encyclopaedia of Post-Colonial Literatures in English* and *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* – retain the hyphen. It can be understood as both historically determined – concentrating on the period following decolonisation – or as a concept describing the period under colonisation and the awakening of the coloniseds' ambition for independence. As Leela Gandhi (who favours the deletion of the hyphen) points out, "some critics invoke the hyphenated form […] as a decisive temporal marker of the decolonising process, others fiercely query the implied chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath". She argues that "the unbroken term 'postcolonialsim' is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences".[46]

Ashcroft asserts that "the hyphen is a statement about the particularity, the historically and culturally grounded nature of the experience it represents",[47] but it should not be taken as indicating merely a historical period which proceeds from "pre-colonial" *via* "colonial" to "post-colonial". It must also be understood as embracing the concepts on which the study of colonisation, resistance and transformation are based. But, to quote Ashcroft again,

> the post-colonial, as it is used to describe and analyse the cultural production of colonized peoples, is *precisely* the production that occurs *through* colonialism, because no decolonizing process, no matter how oppositional, can remain free from that cataclysmic experience […] Post-colonial discourse is the discourse of the colonized, which begins with colonization and doesn't stop when the colonizers go home […] The post-colonial is not a chronological period but a range of material conditions and a rhizmic pattern of discursive struggles.[48]

The somewhat limited field of post-colonial studies which emerged in the 1970s – limited because at that time the extent of the subject was not yet realised – has expanded to such an extent that by the early 2000s it contained many sub-genres, of which literature is the principal focus. Post-colonial studies are no longer a monolithic subject. As our understanding of the complexity of the post-colonial experience and its ramifications both pre- and post-independence expands, topics such as nationalism,

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[45] See N. Lazarus, "Introducing postcolonial studies" in N. Lazarus (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, p. 2.
[46] L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 3.
[47] B. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, p. 10.
[48] Ibid., p. 12; emphasis in original.

feminism, ecology, anthropology, cultural studies, media studies, gay and lesbian studies, subaltern studies, and, as a consequence of decolonisation, a new form of dominance characterised by globalisation, each of which (except for the latter) has been described as "subjugated knowledges",[49] have established themselves, but it is my contention that it is literature which lies at the core of the "discourse". In all these areas of study we encounter what Lazarus calls "a profound decentring",[50] the attempt to establish new centres of meaning which are more acceptable and accessible to the people living within what are, to them, new boundaries and contexts.

[49] Michel Foucault quoted by L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 43.
[50] N. Lazarus, "Introducing postcolonial studies" in N. Lazarus (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*, p. 13.