

# IRISH STUDIES

## IN BRITAIN

SPRING/SUMMER 1987

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### A Vote for Women's Studies



Joanne O'Brien/Format

**INSIDE: The Irish in Wales & Hull ● Teaching Irish History**

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# IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN

No.11 Spring-Summer 1987 ISSN 0260-8154

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## EDITORIAL

The last year has seen some heartening developments in the field of Irish studies. The highly impressive flowering of the British Association for Irish studies and the developments in both ILEA and the North London Polytechnic are all to be welcomed and ISIB wishes them well.

There is little doubt that there has been an awakening of interest amongst the educational establishments in Irish studies. This is partly due to long term pressure from Irish groups in Britain and short term pressure due to the present love affair between Dublin and London. Irish studies has, in short, become a trendy subject. However we must postpone going overboard in our praise for those educational bodies who are doing things. As yet there is much talk of aspirations to introduce courses but little real talk of putting resources behind them. Gestures are very easy and they will not be enough to satisfy our demand that Irish studies is properly resourced and introduced at all levels of the curriculum.

Those that are arguing for change have a major responsibility themselves. It is no point shouting for the Irish community to get its proper share of the educational cake in general terms. We must come up with detailed and feasible proposals. Just as it is politically easy for educational bodies to talk loosely of the need for an Irish dimension, likewise it is all too easy to condemn such bodies without giving them concrete proposals to act on. In this context it was very significant that the two groups who have criticised ILEA most for not taking action over the years, namely the federation of Irish societies and the IBRG, did not even bother to send representatives to the first meeting of the ILEA working party on Irish studies. It is much easier, it appears, to be critical than to be constructive.

ISIB is now entering its sixth year of publication. This will be the first issue that has not been edited by either Ivan Gibbons or Hilda McCafferty. The fact that ISIB has survived as the only open forum for those promoting Irish studies is totally to their credit. My main hope as the new editor is that I can build on their achievement and further develop the magazine. For this to happen, your help is needed. I need articles of all types – fiction, non-fiction, reviews, news, really anything at all which relates to 'Irish studies'. I would particularly welcome more articles in Irish, and more news from outside London.

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# NEWS



Irish poet, Francis Harvey, reads to a group of Americans at Ar nOidhreacht Summer School, Donegal Town. June—July 1986.

## Hidden Ireland

'A most illuminating course!' was the comment by Professor Frank Hoffmann of Buffalo University, an expert in folklore. Dr Hoffman was one of a handful of academics who took the winding north-west passage to Donegal in search of the 'Hidden Ireland'. But the course attracted people from all walks of life, not solely dramatic, and from seven different countries.

'Explore the Hidden Ireland in Historic Donegal' was the theme of Donegal Town's annual summer school appropriately called 'Ar nOidhreacht' (Our Heritage). By all accounts, the organisers succeeded in making almost every item on their programme both a pleasure and a revelation for those came to visit Ireland's, arguably, most beautiful county.

On offer are three one week courses dealing with language, history, drama, literature, music, folklore and art. Details can be obtained from the:

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'Naomh Iúd'  
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Co Donegal  
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## Minority Rights Group

The MRG is currently planning a possible publication on the Irish in Britain. For nearly 20 years the MRG has been committed to countering discrimination and oppression by minority groups throughout the world. In the last few years

there has been a real attempt to introduce such questions into the classroom. They are now seeking responses to a questionnaire from teachers and members of the Irish community to help them to decide which areas are the most important for inclusion in a pack on the experiences of the Irish community in Britain. The questionnaire can be obtained from Danny Hearty, their education officer. The MRG has also recently produced a report on 'co-existence in some plural societies', which looks at divided societies in Europe such as Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland and tries to see what lessons can be learnt from them for Northern Ireland. It is well worth a read, and only costs £1.80 plus p & p. The MRG can be found at 29 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NT.

## Irish in Britain History Group

The group are trying to build up their library and archives collection. Their main concern is the collection at community level of Irish people's experience in Britain in the form of photographers, diaries, personal recollections etc. If you can help, contact Anne O'Grady at 76 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6NY or on 01-624-7438.

## Brent Irish Cultural and Community Centre

The history group are just one of the Irish educational ventures based at Salusbury Road complex of BICCA. It is to be hoped that the building will develop into one of the centres of the Irish in London. So far this year there have been a series of Irish classes put on, which have been very successful. In particular the Bun Scoil Lan Gaelach (Irish language school for children) on a Saturday morning has proved very popular.



### Federation of Irish Societies

The Federation has produced an important paper entitled 'The Irish Community: The missing component in the planning and provision of multi-cultural education'. It is a useful addition to the ever growing material in this area and can be obtained from the author Bernard McGrath, 97 Old Lane, Beeston, Leeds LS11 7AQ. Please include a large S.A.E.

### London Strategic Policy Unit

The LSPU, in conjunction with Format photographers have produced Hearts and Minds, a new photo-text exhibition on Irish cultural life in London. If you are interested in hiring this excellent collage of the Irish in London, ring Claire Keatinge on 01-633-1245.

### Irish in Scotland Research Group

The group is alive and active and holding regular meetings on the full range of the Irish experience in Scotland. They meet in the Community Centre, Daisy Street, Govanhill, Glasgow on the second Wednesday of each month.

### British Association of Irish Studies

The first conference of the BAIS was held on 10 to 12 April at Oxford Polytechnic on the theme of 'Country and city in Ireland'. The whole event was a huge success attended by over seventy academics from both Britain and Ireland. A full report on the conference will appear in the next issue.

### Irish Dimensions in British Education

On the subject of conferences Nesson Danaher's fourth annual conference on Irish Studies was held at Soar Valley on Saturday February 14 and was its usual high standard. A full report on it will appear in the next issue. Copies of the 1986 conference report, jointly sponsored by BAIS and the Leicester Irish Community Centre project, are available from Nesson at Soar Valley College, Irish Studies Workshop, Gleneagles Avenue, Leicester LE4 7GY. Please include two 13p stamps.

### ILEA Teaching Materials

Coming soon from ILEA's learning resources branch will be 'Britain and Ireland', a set of lavishly illustrated materials for lower secondary schools on the relationship between the two countries from the 16th century to the present. For information contact Lorna Cocking, ILEA Learning Materials Branch, Thackeray Road, London SW8. 01-622-9966 extension 257.

### Coventry Irish Studies Pack

The pack of teaching material was covered in ISIB No. 6. Just to remind readers that copies of it can be obtained from Tom Arkell, Department of Arts Education, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL. In the London area copies can be obtained from David Whiteley, Shirebrooke Primary School, Rosaline Road, London SW6 7QN

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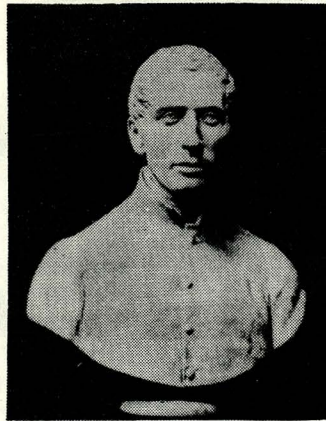
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# IRELAND'S OWN PROPAGANDA FIDE

J. Dunleavy



Fr. John Hand, 1807-1846, Founder of All Hallows's College

*'The priest was the only authority to whom the Irish labourer [in Victorian England] showed any deference... Torn up by their roots, the priest was the last point of orientation with their old way of life... the priest passed more frequently between England and Ireland, brought news of home and sometimes relations.'*

— E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, 179-80

Edward Thompson, like so many writers, assigns a key role to the clergy in his discussion of the development of the Irish community in Britain. Irish missionaries were instrumental in raising the means to build churches, schools, and convents, catering for spiritual and temporal needs. The exploits of Fr Doyle at Southwark, Fr Nugent at Liverpool, and Fr Hearn at Manchester, have been recorded: less well known are the exertions of other clergy, numbering several hundred, who came to this country to help in the formation and consolidation of what Cardinal Manning termed the Irish occupation of England.

Given the importance of the clergy in the Irish community it is surprising that remarkably few have attracted biographers, the parish clergy in most cases remaining shadowy figures, receiving scant treatment in parish histories. Authors of such works, often working to a deadline in order to meet some particular date, can be partly excused if only because records of the early missions are meagre in some places, non-existent in others. Evidence that the pioneer clergy are worthy of investigation can be gauged by referring to *The Irish in the Victorian City* (1985), edited by Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley. The perceptive contribution from Ralph Samuel 'The Roman Catholic Church and the Irish Poor,' demonstrates that the immigrant priest was not only a spiritual leader, but frequently played an active part in social and political movements as well.

The appearance of Fr Kevin Condon's *The Missionary College of All Hallows 1842-1891* (All Hallows College, Dublin, 1986) is to be welcomed, since we are provided here with details of over two thousand Irish missionaries who went through that institution during five momentous decades. A condition of entry to the college was that the student had to promise to serve Irish communities overseas, thus initiating a movement which is still in progress. At a gathering of All Hallows alumni held at Lichfield in 1881 it was stated that seventy priests from the college had seen service in the English missions, a far from insignificant

number at a period when most bishops were hard pressed for clergy.

A student researching the Irish missions in England, provided the missionaries in his district of investigation came from All Hallows, is now able to ascertain the place of origin, parentage, education, and date of ordination, of the clergy. Not all completed their studies at the college: some transferred to other institutions, joined the regular clergy, or decided the clerical life was not for them. Yet the sheer task of compiling biographical details of 2,013 people, many of whom went to places as far apart as New Zealand, Argentina, India, United States, Australia, as well as Britain, reflects great credit on the energy and dedication of Fr Condon, who has taught at the college for many years.

Fr Condon has produced much more than a biographical dictionary of the alumni, for the bulk of the book is concerned with the inception, formation, and progress of this college which owed a great deal to the foresight and determination of its founder, Fr John Hand. We are provided with a survey of Ireland on the eve of the great famine, the problems of the Church in the mid-nineteenth century, and the exodus consequent to the famine when pleas for priests arrived from the emigrants. One remarkable feature of the story is that the college was able to continue training priests despite a series of crises affecting the government of All Hallows which were only to be resolved with the arrival of the Vincentians in 1892. Some idea of the education imparted to the students is conveyed, and a reminder that they were attuned to the needs of their co-religionists outside the college is provided by reference to their awareness of contemporary events. Things could hardly be otherwise since one of the professors, Fr R.B. O'Brien founded the CYMS, one of the first organisations for the layman; while for a time a younger brother of Fr Patrick Lavelle, 'the patriot priest of Partry,' was a member of the student body.

The book is well-produced, the text being interspersed with a generous assortment of photographs, engravings, maps, and diagrams, and supplemented by copious footnotes which make rewarding reading. It represents an invaluable aid to anyone keen to undertake studies of the development of the Irish community in Britain, since the arrival of the missionary and the opening of a chapel were the first visible signs of the Irish presence in many towns and cities. Fr Condon has dealt ably with the first fifty years of this great college: it is to be hoped that it will not be too long before we see a second volume devoted to the Vincentian era.



# A CALL FOR IRISH WOMEN'S STUDIES

Ann Rossiter



Joanne O'Brien/Forum Photographs

Photo from the Second Irish Women's Conference in 1985

I think it would be true to say that apart from the national question, many if not most, of the flashpoints in contemporary Irish society have had women at the epicentre. In the 26 Counties we have seen the passage of the Constitutional Amendment which established the civil rights of the foetus in 1983; in 1984/5 the infamous Kerry Babies case of which it was said, 'not only Joanne Hayes, but all Irishwomen, are in the dock'; the Divorce Referendum of 1986, and this year, SPUC's (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn) successful prosecution of the Well Woman Centre and Openline Counselling in Dublin for referring women to British abortion clinics.

These events undoubtedly deserve our attention, not least because they reverberate in the Irish community here. For instance, there is a long established tradition of women leaving the inhospitable climate of Ireland to settle in Britain because they are pregnant and unmarried. Accounts of the Irish in Britain rarely refer to them at all, and if they do, the allusion is usually statistical and inanimate. Statistical too are the estimated 10,000 Irish women coming here each year for abortions. In Ireland itself newspapers, radio and TV give a very high profile to such matters, and sociology, politics and contemporary history courses at college level are beginning to cover them. Interestingly, there seems to be very little coverage or analysis in the Irish community press or in the relevant Irish studies courses in Britain.

The British media is not so hesitant, seizing on the more sensational aspects such as the referenda on abortion and divorce. There have even been two British plays based on the Kerry Babies case, one having just completed a successful run in the West End of London.

British coverage of these issues often leads to unease, if not anger, amongst Irish people. Frequently the material is

presented out of context, producing a picture of an Ireland hidebound in traditional values, at odds with the twentieth-century needs of its people, especially women. There is little attempt to suggest the complex interweaving of nationalism and religion that has created in Ireland, North and South, a society distinctly different from Britain. Also, there is a failure to recognise the slow, but real change on social issues taking place. It seems to me essential that in order to combat this stereotyping, a wide discussion and airing of subjects, such as the position of women in Ireland today, is an urgent task for the Irish community in Britain and for the Irish Studies movement.

In calling for more discussion, more analysis, certain problems have to be recognised. There was a clear note of weariness in the comment of an *Irish Studies in Britain* reader (Issue No. 9, p. 10) when she suggested that there should be more celebration of the joys of being Irish rather than a concentration on our sorrows. It is indeed true that recent developments in church-state relations on the question of women and reproductive rights have divided the Southern Irish population as deeply as at the time of the Civil War. The last ten years has seen the challenging of the Catholic hierarchy's powerful hold on education, family law, female fertility and reproduction. That challenge initially came from women, especially the feminist movement, on the right to legal contraception. An accommodation between church and state was achieved through Mr Haughey's Family Planning Act of 1979 – the now famous 'Irish solution to an Irish problem' – for there was after all a distinct anomaly, recognised by the hierarchy, in 15,000 or more women using the contraceptive pill for reasons other than regulation of the menstrual cycle. No accommodation was possible, however, on the 1983 referendum on abortion, nor the 1985 Family Planning (Amendment) Bill which



legalised the sale of contraceptives to all those over eighteen, whether married or unmarried, nor on the 1985 referendum, despite the restricted provisions for divorce being proposed. On all these issues the government of the day, the Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition, came into direct conflict with the church, and many voters were left unsure of whether to alter the traditional balance of forces in Irish life or to maintain the status quo.

This seemingly intractable situation is bound to lead to disquiet and reticence in some sections of the Irish community in Britain, similar to that experienced over the national question in the 1970s and early 1980s. It is perhaps ironic that while Irish community institutions, organisations and media have been slow to discuss women's issues, Irish women's groups and activities thrive and proliferate throughout Britain. We have seen the birth of the London Irish Women's Centre, the third annual Irish Women's Conference has been held and there are projects on a wide variety of subjects: Irish women's health, sports, art, writing, community radio, video, film. There is a successful Girls' Project and, importantly, a project to record and publish the history of Irish women immigrants (see Grainne Mhaol, ISIB, No. 8). There is a Women and Ireland Network, with groups in most of the major cities in England and Wales, which draws support for women in the nationalist areas of Northern Ireland from amongst both

Irish and British women, and, there is a nation-wide campaign against stripsearching. Increasingly important too is the role of the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group, a voluntary welfare service offering accommodation to women from Ireland seeking an abortion.

Central to many of these groupings is the task of exploring and projecting a positive and realistic image of Irish women immigrants in their many ways of life and pre-occupations. Central too, is the lively debate on the nature of Irish society, North and South, the struggles of women, and the implications for us in Britain in our assault on anti-Irish racism. In this respect there is a troubled, but ongoing engagement with the British Women's Movement on its own failure to overcome the standard ideological blocks on Ireland generally, and on Irish women in particular.

In its important and urgent task of establishing the history and identity of the Irish in Britain women cannot be ignored.

Ann Rossiter

Ann Rossiter is researching a Ph.D thesis on Women, Religion and the National Question in Ireland at City University, London, and is co-editor (with Marian Larragy) of a forthcoming book on Ireland and the British Women's Movement.

## AMADÁIN NA GAEILGE

Uair amháin bhí mise comhair a bheith i mo chadhadh aonair, ag labhairt, ag léamh agus ag déanamh staidéir sa Ghaeilge. Bhí dúil ar leith agam i gcónaí ann. Níor thuig mé an dúil sin, go mórán agus mé ag obair i Londain ó aois a sé déag i measc Sasanach agus an iliomad ciníocha eile. Amaideach, an ea?

Cad é an mealladh a bhí ann? Náisiúnachas an ea? – b'fhéidir, ach is féidir a bheith idirnáisiúnta inniu ag cloí leis an seanfhocal ag teagasc faoi 'an fhad is atá tú sa Róimh' i gcomórtas leis an cheann eile; – 'briseann an dúchas amach tré shúile an chait'. Simplíocht an ea? – níl an Ghaeilge simplí ar chor a bith is maith léi an plé ealaíonta – an cor cainte. Ní gamal an Gael.

Tá cás mór le déanamh amach ar son moráltacht na Gaeilge – glantachas smaointe, luachanna aigne, luachanna pearsanta, más duine diaganta thú. Tá an chúis seo níos tabhachtaí ná feictear sa chéad amharc. Ní mór dhá dhearcadh earráideacha a sheachaint sa chás seo – sin iad caolaigeantacht agus breith shotalach.

Mar a feicim féin tá bónas mór eile ag an Ghaeilge – sin é greann agus áilleacht. Tagann sé sin as an dúchas cheart. Tá sé ionraic agus fíor don Éireannach. Is minic a camtar na

tréithe sin in áibhéil nó i ngairbhe gurab amhlaidh a tugtar lipéad 'tiubh ainhiosach' orainne. Is mór an trua go dtarlaíonn seo go minic siocair go mbíonn roinnt Éireannach ró-phlásanta lústrach ag tabhairt bréagomóis do bhodaigh mhóiréiseacha, agus loiceann siad ar a n-oidhreacht uasal.

Tá muintearas, féile, nadúrthacht ag baint leis an dearcadh cheart. Sé mo thuairim gur buach láidir an t-arm an greann, b'fhéidir níos láidre ná piléir amannaí. Caithfidh an fhírinne teacht amach agus dínit chóir a thabairt don ghnáthdhuine. Meileann muileann Dé go mall ach meileann sé go mín. Bíonn a bhua féin ag gach duine agus is iomaí slí gur féidir an craiceann a bhaint de ghabhar. A chairde Gael bígí fíor daoibh féin agus tiocfaidh feabhas dá réir in am.

Tá an greann sin le fáil sa Ghaeilge, anrmeon isua le blianta taithí a tugann meas don duine, agus nach ndaorann é do bhroid an ábharachais nó an óir a bheireann an chearc órga. Ar shiúl leis an 'mhardhéachas' ghránna! Foghlaimigí Gaeilge anois, ná cuirigí ar an mhéar fhada í!

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# THE IRISH IN WALES

Jon Parry

Readers of this magazine will be familiar with a host of studies on the Irish in Britain, London, Birmingham, Glasgow, York, Luton. What of Wales? The relationship between the so-called celtic nations, particularly in the modern period of capitalism, has received little attention. How did the Welsh and Irish view each other within terms of the British state of which they were both important parts? Theoretically, there should have been a deal of sympathy between the two 'nations'. Both provided a workforce subservient to English employers and Scottish managers, their societies and culture were being dislocated by economic forces, the people were possessed of ancient traditions, language and literature. Surely this was enough.

But it was not. Yes both nations were important parts in the rise of the British economy, but they played (or so it seemed to the Welsh) different roles. The Irish provided a workforce. In their thousands they poured into the new industrial towns of England. They were a huge lumpenproletariat and were despised. What of the Welsh? We know comparatively little of Welsh emmigration to England, though of course they went to London and Liverpool and also to the iron towns of the north where they were shipped *en bloc* by ambitious Welsh iron masters and were, apparently, wholly respectable. One reason for our lack of knowledge is that most Welsh people simply stayed at home.

To put it simplistically, in the industrial revolution most Welsh people moved north-south and west-east within their own country. They were the overwhelming majority in the industrial boom towns of the south and they resented intruders, especially those unskilled savages from a heathen land, the Irish. Irish people had been sailing to Wales for centuries. At the time of the Vikings there had been a lucrative slave trade between Dublin and Wales; in medieval years hosts of Welshmen had marched with Norman armies in Ireland; the Irish peasantry had roamed the Welsh countryside seeking harvest work. By the mid-eighteenth century there was a colony working in the lead mines near Aberystwyth. Gradually, from Holyhead they moved along the north Wales coastal strip – making for the new towns in the north west of England. Wales by comparison held no interest, the industrial areas had not yet been opened up. Wales was disparaged by English travellers and Anglican incumbents almost as much as Ireland. For the Irish north Wales was (and perhaps is) countryside through which to pass. Some, however, did fall on the way. The railway along the north Wales coast owed its construction to Irish labour as did that between Bangor and Caernarfon. At the latter work was halted in 1851 when the Welsh and English workers combined to drive out unwanted Irish workers. Others moved on to the chemical works at Flint and Bagillt to pioneer the large Irish and Catholic community which would grow up in the north east. A very, very few entered the quarrying districts of what is now Gwynedd, but quarrying was the Welsh industry *par excellence* which even Anglesey people found difficult to penetrate.

If you wanted a new life in Wales you went south. And this the Irish did. To the tin and copper works around Swansea; to the growing port of Cardiff and to the iron towns of the valleys; to Merthyr, Dowlais, Nantyglo and Tredegar. By the 1840s almost everyone of the new settlements in south Wales had an Irish element in its population. As is only to be expected these towns were rough and

ready places with little or no provision for social amenities, medical care, educational needs or religious observance. Irish and Welsh alike were thrown into a hitherto unknown urban environment Merthyr Tydful, for example, became, almost at a stroke Wales' largest town with a population of 80,000 and the greatest centre of iron production in the world. Such forceful change brought stresses, strains and tensions into the lives of people who had known only rural life. The Welsh brought with them their religion of non-conformity, the religious enthusiasm of earlier years was to grow with prosperity. Their ministers had taught them that they were God's chosen people next to those of Zion. In the new iron works, and later in the coal mines, they developed high skills and became masters of puddling and mining craft. They were indispensable to the British imperial age and knew it. They were proud to be part of the Empire. In their quests for respectability and acceptance they built chapels, schools, terraced houses and prejudices.

From such quarters the Irish could expect little. They brought with them no industrial skills except the need to work and survive. To the Welsh they were incomprehensible, speaking little English and no Welsh. Furthermore, they brought with them Catholicism. In the eyes of the Welsh 'Pabyddiaeth' – Papism was a force of evil, and while they raised chapels by the score in the new towns no attempt was made to cater for the spiritual needs of the Irish. With no financial backing to build their own churches the Irish had to worship wherever they could, in the upstairs rooms of taverns, in a slaughter house. During the late 1860s when the Franciscan order sent missionaries into the iron districts of Pontypool and Blackwood they wrote a colourful, sad account of priests falling off ladders while climbing into stables and lofts for services.

Religious bigotry when it coalesced with economic depression and national insecurity made life even more difficult. Minorities are always targets. In November 1848 the Irish in Cardiff were attacked after a murder in the town. In Swansea and Dowlais there were disturbances during the Fenian scare: 'Tramp, tramp, tramp the boys are marching, whose that knocking at the door. Tis the Fenians with their flags but we'll tear them all to rags and they'll never come to Dowlais any more.'

At Tredegar in 1882 there were riots for five days as the skilled Welsh workers, fearful of their jobs during a period of depression in the iron industry sought to drive the Irish completely out of the town.

This behaviour was in stark contrast to the pious sentiments of many of Wales' political and religious leaders who, adhering loyally to Gladstonian Liberalism, were pointing to the problems and successes of Ireland itself as an example to Wales. For like the Irish the Welsh were seeking Disestablishment of the Anglican Church, Land Reform and Home Rule, O'Connell and Parnell were also heroes to the Welsh. The Welsh working class however were more hard-headed. The Irish were alright as long as they stayed in Ireland, and even then there was room for doubt. Increasingly respectable and institutionalised, the Welsh were shocked by Fenian outrages and extreme nationalism. The great industrial struggles of 1913 in Dublin were viewed as part of the British labour struggle. By now south Wales was a modern cosmopolitan society fully integrated into British state, Home Rule was of little consequence. The Welsh language press had nothing good to say about the Rising of 1916. Lloyd George was on the



way to becoming the great war leader and the Irish were simply confirming age-old Welsh prejudices. But at least now there was no outbreak of anti-Irish hostility.

Some Welshmen of course did support the 'insurgents'. Miners like Arthur Horner and Tom Gale went out to fight – Gale followed Larkin to America. Both Connolly and Larkin had in earlier years addressed meetings of quarrymen in north Wales while in the south the new generation of miners looked upon the struggle in Ireland as symptomatic of the class struggle in Wales and Britain as a whole.

With the founding of the Free State and later the Republic, Irish affairs were expunged from Welsh minds. Ireland had opted out while it was the ambition of most Welsh people to opt in. Emigration to parts of Wales continued. As depression hit both countries both people sought work in new factories and on government schemes. In the late 1930s there were disturbances in the Pem-

brokeshire towns when Irishmen were employed on work programmes rather than local Welsh. In turn some Welsh sought work in Dublin. But the links between the two nations were now tenuous. Farmers from north and west Wales might attend dairy shows, young Welsh academics might research in Irish universities, for the vast majority of Welsh the biennial rugby trip remained the only point of reference. In Wales the Aberavon Greenstars remain one of the very few centres of traditional Irish loyalty. As the two nations come together on the stands of Landsdowne Road or Cardiff Arms Park they represent societies hide-bound by consumerism, sexism, ageism and economic deprivation and mass unemployment. Perhaps after all these years there are greater 'bonds of kinship' between Ireland and Wales.

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# THE IRISH IN HULL

Jim Young



Mr. A. McManus

At the census of 1841 the Irish in Hull numbered 1044, or 2.5 per cent of the total population. Most of them had been drawn to the town by the newly introduced cotton industry, so that, from its beginning, the "Irish" community in Hull included a fair proportion of English-born who were not recognised as Irish by the census enumerators.

By 1851 the number of Irish-born had risen to 3,000 in a population of nearly 100,000. At every census after 1851, the number and proportion of Irish-born fell, until in 1881 they formed just 1.6 per cent of Hull's population. In 1889, however, it was estimated by one informed observer that there were about 10,000 "Irish" in Hull, forming approximately 5 per cent of the population.

In spite of their small numbers, and the lack of further substantial immigration, the Irish in Hull maintained a separate identity into the twentieth century, when, in the 1920s, they were finally absorbed by the host community.

Two reinforcing agents seem to have operated to ensure the retention of a distinct identity, the first environmental, the second political. The environmental factor lay in the Irish quarters. As long as they remained in existence many of their inhabitants were either reluctant or unable to move out and assimilate. The second factor was political. Until their demand for Home Rule was satisfied, they retained their separate political organisations and placed the national question before domestic issues. This single-minded political stance did generate tensions within the community in the 1890s, when Gladstone's government threw its full weight behind the local shipowner and Liberal M.P., Charles Henry Wilson, in his successful fight to destroy the dockers' union organisation in Hull. Many Irishmen were dockers, and some leading nationalists in Hull were also dock union representatives.

One remarkable feature of the history of the Irish in Hull is the absence of anti-Irish or anti-Catholic riots which took place elsewhere in Northern England in the 1850s and 1860s. Anti-Catholic sentiments were certainly expressed by the middle-class in Hull, dismayed by the rapid expansion of "Romanism", but working-class resentment is not recorded. The size of the Irish community must have had some influence on native attitudes, but it is likely that the presence in Hull of

several middle-class Irishmen, some of them Catholics, in prominent positions, may have played a part in shaping native working-class attitudes to the immigrants.

Perhaps the most important of these middle-class incomers was Edward F. Collins, the editor from 1837 to 1866, of the "Hull Advertiser". A Catholic and a radical, Collins initiated many campaigns on behalf of the poor of Hull, exposing bad working conditions and bad housing. He was also instrumental in the introduction of several reforms of local poor relief, and in bringing to an end, locally, the policy of repatriating Irish paupers.

A Second Irish reformer was Owen Daly, a physician and surgeon. Daly came to Hull in 1847, and immediately launched a campaign for the provision of public baths and public wash-houses in working class districts. He also publicised the poor and overcrowded conditions and inadequate sanitation in working-class districts.

Irishmen such as Collins and Daly, in using their influence on behalf of the working-class, must surely have had a modifying effect on English workers' perceptions of the Irish.

A third Irishman of note was Andrew McManus, first chief constable of Hull. McManus was not selected for the post by the local authority but was sent by the London Metropolitan force. When the Hull force was at full strength two of its four inspectors, Coulehan and Mulligan, were Irishmen and Catholics. Naturally, after this beginning, it was impossible to exclude Irishmen or Catholics from the force, and throughout the nineteenth century Irishmen were well represented in the police force. It is arguable that the composition of the Hull force would have acted as a deterrent to anti-Irish or anti-Catholic violence, particularly when it is remembered that one aspect of such violence was the failure of the police to intervene on behalf of the victims.

E.F. Collins left Hull in 1866 and McManus died the following year, but the Irish were well established in Hull, though still among the poorest section of the community. 1867 was the year in which the second Reform Act offered the Irish in Britain a limited role in the political process. In the following year, 1868 there was a general election. In Hull 346 voters were identifiable as Irish, 3 per cent of the



total electorate. There was a significant difference in the voting patterns of the Irish and the non-Irish. While the non-Irish vote was divided fairly between the Liberals and Conservatives the Irish vote was overwhelmingly for both Liberals (88 per cent Liberal, 8 per cent Conservative). These figures suggest that the Irish vote was already being organised, though whether by nationalists or the Catholic clergy is not clear.

No Irish political organisation in Hull attracted the attention of the press until 1873 when the Hull branch of the Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain held a rally. It was later claimed that a nationalist organisation had been in existence in Hull from 1869 onwards, and that a branch of the Repeal Association had flourished even earlier.

Newspaper references to the Home Rule branch were rare, and usually made in the context of a general election or external events, such as the arrest of Parnell. It was not until the general election of 1885 that the political activities of the Irish became the subject of regular press reports. In that year Hull Central ward was won by the Conservatives with a majority of 166 votes. The Irish desertion of the Liberals contributed to this result, but their return to the Liberal fold the following year did not effect a Liberal victory. However, from 1886 the nationalists remained loyal to the Liberals.

The importance of the Home Rule issue in British politics and the central role of the Irish party when it held the balance of power in parliament, appear to have bestowed on the Irish in Hull an importance that their numbers did not merit. It has been argued that the struggle for Irish independence helped to raise the self-esteem of

the emigrant Irish, and helped to counter the demoralising effects of their low socio-economic status. In Hull, and probably elsewhere in Britain, Irish dedication to the national cause seems also to have raised them in the estimation of at least the politicised sections of the host population. The central role of politics in the lives of the emigrant Irish may also have prepared them for participation in organisations outside their own community. Middle-class nationalists in Hull (small businessmen, publicans, etc.) were later to engage in municipal politics with mixed results. Working-class nationalists were among the leadership of trade unions such as dockers and the bricklayers' labourers.

The political diversification of the Irish continued into the twentieth century. Attendance at the weekly meetings of the National League (later the United Irish league) fell to a dozen faithful members, but the Irish still gave their support at elections, and turned out in strength for demonstrations and rallies. In 1886 a Catholic church was opened outside one of the old Irish neighbourhoods, testifying to the gradual diffusion of the Irish population, but a nucleus remained in the old areas of settlement. The West End remained the focal point for Irish social life.

After World War I the three Irish neighbourhoods were demolished one by one, the West End being the last to go. Before that, however, the prop which had supported the Irish identity was taken away. The foundation of the Irish Free State and the end of Irish representation in the English parliament deprived the Irish in Britain of their role in Irish politics. The Hull Irish were destined soon to disappear.

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# TEACHING MODERN IRISH HISTORY IN NINE – EASY! – STAGES

Austen Morgan

Last summer I had a call from Alun Howkins, of History Workshop reputation, asking me to teach his course on modern Irish history at Sussex university the following term when he would be on sabbatical. I quickly accepted, and, since I – to say nothing of the students! – enjoyed the work, I'd like to share my experiences, for what they are worth, with other teachers of Irish studies in Britain.

My initial reaction to the invitation was twofold. Firstly, I was perplexed as to how I might cover the period from 1780 to the present in nine one-hour tutorials. Secondly, I was worried that intellectual work, admittedly inspired by my socialist politics, would be interrupted by the inverted racism – second-generation Irish cultural nationalism – which has flourished on the British left in recent years. The latter was a momentary loss of personal faith, and it was not long before reason prevailed on the course. As for the concentration of two hundred years, it only took a colleague to mention that French or German history is taught to undergraduates in a similar way, for me to realize that Irish intellectuals have difficulty being objective about their country.

Knowing nothing of the students, I sent out a summer reading list of British- and American-published introductory histories, but, having an idea about general reading inclinations, I suggested they either try a popular novel or the two most accessible books on Ireland, both in Penguin – David Thomson's *Woodbrook* and Dervla Murphy's *A Place Apart*.

For a course text book, I recommend Lyons or Beckett, though some students came to rely upon Robert Kee, the television presenter who tends to be looked down upon by professional historians. Later, I tried not to discourage one or two from reading Berresford Ellis, since there is enough intellectual book-burning about, but the absence of a good socialist introduction to Irish history is a continuing cause for regret. Irish historiography is not that qualitatively different from British historical literature, though there tend to be more edited collections of articles, and it was difficult to avoid presenting students with a fourteen page reading list. (There were to be the usual problems with the availability of books, due, I suspect, to the university library buying randomly over the years.)

Financial restrictions also made it difficult to use videos. Here, a shortened version of Kee's television history of Ireland, produced by Jeremy Isaacs for the BBC in the early 1980s, would have been a very useful resource, far superior to Thames's rival series, 'The Troubles', which is fundamentally confused if not dishonest.

Since there were only a dozen or so second year and visiting students on the course, being taught in four classes of three, the following observations must be tentative. I think, however, that they may be of interest to readers of *Irish Studies in Britain*.

Students came to the course with varying preconceptions, and backgrounds – there being a number of mature students. The Americans tended to be from the east coast, and to know of the great famine through Irish-American culture. Most, however, were English, and the predominant sentiment, I suppose, was a liberal concern for Ireland. There was a minority of political activists, and, regardless of whether the labour party was seen as the way forward or not, 'troops out' was the basis of their approach. This, in a less questioning way, was also the position of feminists,

though their internationalism, by reaching out to women in both communities in the North, to say nothing of the Republic, tended to subvert the simplistic nationalism of IRA fellow travellers in Britain.

With some or all of this in mind, I had to plan a modern Irish history course in nine – easy! – stages. The first and last were relatively straight forward – 'Grattan's parliament' and 'contemporary Ireland'. The second and third topics were largely structural – 'nineteenth-century rural Ireland' and 'Ulster industrialization'. These provided a foundation for the fourth class on 'the democratization of Irish politics'. The fifth and sixth sessions were devoted to state formation, 'the home rule era until 1912' and the highly complex period 'from then until 1923'. The two remaining pieces were 'the nation-state until 1958' and 'Northern Ireland up to 1968'. I tried to top and tail the course with some remarks on 'Irish historiography' and 'popular and intellectual history', though they rose more naturally in the discussion of specific topics.

In conception, I was accepting that (broadcasting) media images of the 'troubles' in the North were to the fore, but I sought to provide a narrative of two centuries in Ireland (roughly, the period of western 'modernization'), by providing the basic building blocks of the Irish social formation. The classes tended to become mini-lectures, but I used cross-questioning – and the blackboard! – to get over key ideas, individuals, and dates. There was no spoon-feeding and, for example, on the period 1912 to 1923, I tended to stress the great war as opposed to the rising; this is how it should be, but, unfortunately, the historical literature, having been produced in a bourgeois and nationalist political culture, rarely rises above Patrick Pearse. The left-wing students may have found my underestimation of Connolly and the labour movement bizarre, and possibly a reaction to having worked in that area, but, to be bluntly honest, the Irish working class has not made history even in the limited sense of its British brothers (and sisters).

Students found the course initially difficult, but, even though there was something of a dissonance between the text books and my own presentation, they became increasingly familiar with the Irish past and present. The very best were able to compare elements in Ireland with other societies, which is entirely different from analogizing the country with Austro-Hungary or Vietnam or wherever.

They were meant to write four essays in eight or so weeks, and, while few achieved this objective, O'Connell, Parnell, and 1916 were favourite titles. The most popular, surprisingly, was on the industrialization of Ulster, while feminists largely found their own way to the growing body of literature by and about Irish women.

A closing seminar in the tenth week turned into a mutual admiration society, when all the students together discussed the course – after I had written their tutorial reports! The overall interest in Ireland had not been dulled, and that, for a teacher, should be satisfaction enough.

Politics had not been excluded during the term, but I became worried – only for a moment – when some students started to recant on their erstwhile simplistic support for 'troops out'. I had not sought to depoliticize the course, and, while this demand is dangerous in the context in which it is invariably advanced, it would be better if they used their newly acquired historical knowledge to make a useful political contribution to the Irish question in coming years.



# HISTORY WORKSHOP 20, LEEDS, 21–23 NOVEMBER 1986

## Irish Strand: Report



Speakers at the Leeds History Workshop, Irish Strand. Left to Right: James McAuley, Bob Purdie and Sean Hutton, Chair.

History Workshop is a loose and somewhat informal alliance of socialist and feminist historians. It is a broad church and manifests itself nationally and locally, with differing emphases and working at different levels of complexity, through local and/or specialised workshops, through the major annual history workshop (originally located at Ruskin College, Oxford, but now an itinerant institution), through the *History Workshop Journal* and the London History Workshop Centre, for example. The general tendency of History Workshop is radical and oppositional. Within History Workshop the discipline of history is generally regarded as a critical process of retrieval, reconstitution and demystification, rather than the value-free process it is so often represented as at the institutional level.

This was the first substantial Irish input into a major history workshop since HW 18, held at Leicester in 1984. In HW 19, which also took place at Leeds, the Irish input was represented by Dónall Mac Amhlaigh's excellent paper on the attitudes and experiences of post-WW II Irish immigrants, presented in the Workshop strand on Immigration and Race. The presentation of the paper in this context was important in itself, since it signified a recognition that the Irish experience in Britain should not be considered unique or exclusive.

The annual history workshop is organised by an *ad hoc* collective and it was decided at the outset that the two history workshops held at Leeds should follow the multi-strand format. There were eventually 14 strands in HW 20. These included 'Women's History', 'Black Experience', 'Afro-Caribbean and Asian History', 'Anarchism', 'Television and History: Record or Reconstruction', 'Policing and People', 'Capitalism, Socialism and the Use of Tech-

nology' and 'History in School and Community'. The umbrella title for the Irish strand was 'The Irish in England/The British State in Ireland'. This title seemed to reflect an essential feature of the relationship between the two countries: the presence of the Irish *as individuals* on the labour market in England, as contrasted with the impact of *the British state* on evolving Irish politics. The overall title was not intended to be unduly restrictive as to subject matter. In preparing the programme I had the advice of Bernard Canavan, organiser of the highly successful London 'Irish in Britain' Workshop in 1981.

Irish issues were also raised in other strands of HW 20. Margaret Ward spoke on 'Feminism in Northern Ireland – The past decade', in the Women's History strand, and Liz Curtis spoke on 'Television Coverage of Northern Ireland: The Battle for Hearts and Minds', in the strand on Television and History.

A majority of the contributions to the 'State' aspect of the strand can be located in the context of existing contributions to Irish historiography, in the form of James Connolly's pioneering critique of populist nationalist historiography in *Labour in Irish History* (1910) and the neo-Marxist critique of nationalist and anti-imperialist writings on Northern Ireland produced by Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Patterson. Pádraig ó Snodaigh, for example, showed the way in which the 'patriot' Volunteers, set up towards the end of the eighteenth century to defend Irish liberties, were also, in many instances, sectarian agents of social control. D.R. O'Connor Lysaght analysed the particular conjunction of conservative forces which resulted in the constitution of the Irish Free State.

An important contribution was made by John Saville, whose subject was the British state in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth-century. Having remarked on the



astonishing conservatism of modern Irish historiography, he went on to examine the peculiarities of the Irish police structure and of the jury system as it operated in Ireland, at a time when assimilation between British and Irish practices was supposed to be taking place under the Union of 1800–1. He instanced the fact that, unlike in England, the extremely efficient para-military police force was highly centralised and officered by 'gentlemen'. He indicated a unique feature of the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland: since quite large sections of the British landed class had Irish interests, so, in the case of Ireland, the colonial lobby exercised considerable power right at the centre of the executive and legislative process.

A group of papers on Northern Ireland formed a key part of the Irish strand. Robin Ramsay and Steve Dorril, editors of *Lobster*, dealt with British undercover operations in Northern Ireland. Liam Kennedy indicated demographic changes in Northern Ireland which suggested a consolidation of the Protestant population in the eastern portion of Northern Ireland. Discussion centred, however, on a number of papers dealing with the sectarian politics and the reformability, or otherwise, of the Northern state. James W. McAuley, discussing the politics of the Protestant working-class, sought to place sectarianism in a neutral setting:

The working class in most societies is internally differentiated. In advanced capitalist society dual labour-market theories and segmented labour-market theories emerge to account for these differences.

McAuley felt that middle-class hegemony was in rapid decline within the Protestant bloc. He instanced the DUP and UDA as examples of the way in which he felt the Protestant working-class had begun to win cultural space for itself in Northern Ireland, splitting Unionism on class lines. Bob Purdie contributed a sympathetic critique of the work of Bew, Gibbon and Patterson. He demonstrated how their work ran counter to simplistic analyses of Unionism, which saw it as an artificial entity held together by manipulation and deception and dependent on the intervention of the British state. Donald Graham's approach was trenchantly empirical: taking the areas of employment and housing he showed how sectarian discrimination continued to be reproduced under Direct Rule. He argued that popular Unionism was unequivocally sectarian in its nature. A wide range of views, ranging from anti-imperialist to revisionist/reformist, were expressed in the very lively discussion which accompanied these papers.

Jonathan Moore used a study of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster (fl. 1965–69) as the basis for a magnificently lucid survey of Labour Party attitudes to Ireland. The CUD, he argued, failed to understand the political and material basis of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. At constituency level there was little interest in Irish issues, and the party leadership regarded the re-emergence of the Irish question at Westminster with alarm. It was violence in Northern Ireland forced both major British parties to cease turning a blind eye to the sectarian politics of that state in 1969.

The 'Irish in England' section of the strand consisted of a smaller number of papers. Patrick O'Sullivan and Bernard Canavan considered literary texts bearing on this subject. O'Sullivan outlined the process by which Patrick McGill, the ex-navvy, became a successful writer with the assistance of Canon Dalton of Windsor, the publisher Herbert Jenkins and McGill's future wife, the wealthy American Margaret Gibbons. Bernard Canavan examined eight working-class autobiographies which dealt with the exper-

ience of the Irish in Britain from the 1870s to the 1960s. All of these were written by men and they described a generally rootless and highly mobile existence. He commented on the individualistic outlook of the majority and their lack of sentimentality concerning the society which they had left behind in Ireland. Jim Young outlined the history of the Irish in Hull in the second half of the nineteenth century. He commented on the absence of anti-Irish feeling here and on the ease with which the Irish integrated into the community. An Irish presence in the police force and the local standing of two midcentury reformers who were also Irish might have assisted this process. He outlined the involvement of the Hull Irish in nationalist politics from the 1870s down to the 1920s.

The attendance at the workshop numbered some 750 overall. Some seventy of these expressed an interest in the Irish strand, and the Irish sessions were generally well attended and papers were well received. The range of topics discussed in the Irish strand was partly limited by time and partly by the availability of speakers. An important lack was that of papers concerned with women's experience, especially since a large part of the attendance at sessions was made up of women. Margaret Ward's paper in another strand did something to compensate for this, but the lack is acknowledged. One of the most pleasant aspects of the Irish strand was the way in which it brought together historians of varying outlooks and in which it served as a focus for some who had previously felt themselves to be working in isolation.

It is intended to publish a number of papers from the Irish strand later this year in an issue of *Irish History Workshop/Saotharlann Staire Éireann*.

Seán Hutton

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# THE IRISH DIMENSION IN THE ILEA

Hilda McCafferty

London has always had a sizeable Irish community although it has only been since the arrival of significant numbers of other ethnic minorities that there has been a recognition of the needs or contributions of that community with regards to education.

The thrust of multi-cultural and later anti-racist education has been mainly with regards to the black community. Although the significance of other groups has been recognised from the beginning, there has been limited progress in dealing with the needs of these other groups to date.

The Inner London Education Authority has been in the forefront of these educational developments and it is now leading the way in trying to take on board an Irish dimension in its education policy.

The ILEA is unique in this country. It is the only directly elected single purpose education authority. This fact has meant that education has entered the political arena in inner London in a much more visible way than elsewhere. It also means that the education policies of the Authority are seen as much more susceptible to pressure from community groups than in other authorities.

The Irish community could therefore theoretically put direct pressure on ILEA members and demand that the Authority follows specific policies which meet their needs and aspirations.

Up until now this has not happened for a number of reasons:

Firstly – the Irish community is not a monolithic body, it has presented different views and aspirations to the ILEA in the past.

Secondly – many of the views put forward have been in the form of vague resolutions rather than specific proposals with educational aims and objectives. Often the people and groups which shouted the loudest were not familiar enough with the education system to argue for a proper implementation of their case.

Where approaches have met with success (and there have been quite a number of these) they have invariably involved small scale local developments and have been made by educationalists or people concerned with education. These have been able to identify the needs and specify how they should be met within local institutions e.g. a school, adult education institute; or community education project.

We are at the moment unearthing a large number of these local initiatives throughout the ILEA system.

What has been lacking in the past at the ILEA and what we are hoping to remedy in the near future, is central direction on Irish developments where initiatives have been welcomed locally they have gone ahead but where they have met with local resistance there has been no central back-up to save them.

The ILEA has set up an Irish Working Party which I chair. The mere fact of doing this is publically signalling to the local education providers that they should look favourable on approaches from the Irish community with ideas for educational initiatives rather than dismissing them out of hand.

The main work of the committee as I see it, is to gather information about what is already happening in Inner

London, and identify the areas where little or nothing is happening. We will also have to assess the need for back up resources for the kinds of developments we want to encourage and spread right across the authority. At the same time we realise that we have to work within a climate of financial restrictions where new developments are limited. There is thus no possibility of grand dramatic gestures but I do believe that it is possible to lay a foundation and provide a favourable climate in which to build in the future.

It is encouraging to see parents and teachers starting to make specific demands of the education service for Irish people. These are the people on the ground who will both influence the local education provision and also have to implement the policies.

There is of course another political dimension which must be considered when Irish studies or issues are mentioned in education. This is the political orientation of the groups who are putting forward the new proposals. Not their politics in relation to local political groupings in London but in relation to their stance on what is euphemistically called 'the National Question'.

This causes a lot of anxiety among those who like to think of themselves as non-political educationalists and members of the public who – to put it bluntly – are appalled by what the IRA has done – especially in Britain and are worried that Irish Studies is political propaganda on behalf of the IRA.

This is something which we are going to have to come to terms with. Although I firmly believe that education and politics cannot be separated, it should be possible to produce educational materials and courses which while not seeking to promote one political line or another can show up basic injustices. An example of this type of exercise is the material on South Africa and apartheid which is being used in schools today.

This line of approach is the only one which is likely to be acceptable within any state educational system. Any Irish group which tries to push their own partisan political line through the education system is doomed to failure.

There are those in the Irish community who take another line. They actively oppose any mention of Irish politics and would prefer to stick to dancing, music and other cultural activities which they feel more comfortable with.

These alone I believe would not meet the needs not only to the Irish section of the community here but also of the rest of the community. One basic need is a greater knowledge throughout the whole community of Irish affairs. There are many news reports which are only half digested and which produce a generally negative attitude towards the Irish. These feed anti-Irish prejudice which is one of the props of racism. We must address this problem and see it in the context of the wider problem of racism and prejudice which exists throughout society.

The Irish dimension in education must work towards a greater understanding of the Irish and Irish affairs and their interactions with Britain and British affairs. This approach is valid with all the major ethnic minority cultures in this country and if followed should take its place as part of an overall multi-ethnic and anti-racist element in education.



# ONE STEP FORWARD FOR IRISH STUDIES

Alan Clinton

After some years of advocacy and discussion, followed by many grand schemes and more than one false start, there is at long last one tiny outpost within the higher education system in Britain devoted to Irish Studies. It is to be found in the Polytechnic of North London, which is located in one of the heaviest areas of Irish migration in the country, spreading over the London boroughs of Islington, Camden and Hackney. The Centre arises from many years of discussion at the Polytechnic about how to make its work relevant to the local community. The issue was taken up in particular by Gearoid O'Meachair who is well known in a number of local Irish organisations. It was steered through the Polytechnic machinery by Dianne Willcocks, Director for Research and Consultancy, and by Michael Collins, who is Student Affairs Officer within the Polytechnic administration. These individuals, together with the two workers, are responsible for the day to day work of the Centre and then report to a Management Committee made up of representatives of the local Irish community as well as of the various parts of the far-flung Polytechnic.

The need for such a Centre dealing with Irish Studies at the higher education level has long been recognised. Only by such means can the essential basis be provided for the teachers of Irish Studies in the schools, for those who wish to increase knowledge and understanding of Ireland itself and of the needs and achievements of the community in Britain. A higher education institution can also help to provide the library and other resources which are essential to a community that wishes to know about itself.

The Polytechnic of North London has thus at last given Irish Studies a place within the higher education system, but it is still only a toehold. For one thing, administrative and secretarial support is very limited. For another, the workers are only part-time, and there is no assurance of long-term funding. Since October 1986, when Alan Clinton began as Research Fellow, and Mary Hickman as Researcher, the Centre has had a busy programme. It has run a successful and well-supported adult education course in collaboration with the Islington Adult Education Institute. The profile of Irish Studies has been considerably raised in London and in the educational world more generally. An Irish in Britain Research Group has been set up which is now meeting regularly at the Polytechnic (details of further meetings are given below).

The Centre has also been actively involved in the first steps in setting up a degree course which will be part of PNL's evening degree scheme particularly designed for people who have not found it easy to gain access to higher education. Further discussions have also been initiated with a view to in-service training for teachers and others, and it is hoped to begin a publications programme shortly with the particular purpose of increasing knowledge and understanding of the Irish community in Britain, as well as to run special lectures about issues of general concern.

There are many other aspects of the work of the Centre which at this stage remain at the level of aspiration rather than achievement. A good deal is hoped for from the Irish Affairs Working Group at the Inner London Education Authority chaired by Hilda McCafferty which begins to meet in March 1987 and will consider some of the relevant resource and educational issues. ILEA, to which the Centre is ultimately responsible, has a fine record on equal opportunities in recent years, and has begun more recently

to make encouraging noises about directing some of this to the Irish community. The Centre has submitted a statement to the Working Party about how this should be developed in general terms, but the Management Committee as well as the workers at the Centre are strongly of the view that the Centre needs at the very least two full time workers and proper administrative support. Only then will it be possible to service the degree course, and to carry out other essential activities.

Such a level of resources will also provide the necessary basis for the sort of research that must be done into the Irish community in Britain. It will also be needed to build up a Resource Centre of books and other materials which are essential for serious teaching and research in the field. This would of course be needed not only for the work at the Polytechnic but also for the community as a whole. The Centre has already had a fairly continuous stream of enquiries which assume that it already possesses the books and other materials necessary for the study of most aspects of Irish Studies. Alas, this is not yet the case. A delivery of books about Ireland from the Department of External Affairs is expected soon, and a small stock of literature on curriculum development in Irish Studies and on migration is being built. However, it will be a little time yet before the Centre can provide enough for serious study even in these fields.

There are many other functions that an Irish Studies Centre ought to be able to perform. Take for example the Irish language. There are no facilities in Britain to train language teachers and there are few if any teachers outside Ireland who could take the study of the language beyond Advanced or First Year at Degree Level. The Irish Studies Centre ought to be able eventually to fill these and other gaps in the field.

Such are the aspirations, as well as the early achievements of this new venture. However, the most important thing about the PNL Irish Studies Centre is that it exists. All credit must be given to those who initiated it. The Centre is as yet a tender growth, weak and insufficiently nourished. But the seed has been planted and the first shoots are beginning to appear. It must be the earnest hope of all who wish to see the development of Irish Studies in Britain that from these beginnings it will be able to grow and to flourish.

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5.00 pm on Monday 15th June 1987

Ann Rossiter and Marian Larragy: Irish Women and the Women's Movement in Britain.

5.00 pm on Monday 13th July 1987

Mary Hickman on Education and the Identity of Second Generation Irish

**All of these meetings are held in the Board Room of the Holloway Road Building of the Polytechnic of North London.**

For further details please contact:

**Dr Alan Clinton Research Fellow at the Irish Studies Centre, Polytechnic of North London, (Room 21), Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, 01-607-2789.**

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# WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR IRISH STUDIES

Ruth Dudley Edwards

Anyone reading this journal, be he or she an academic, a teacher or just an interested member of the public, should be a member of the British Association for Irish Studies (BAIS) – the only independent, apolitical and non-sectarian organisation wholly devoted to expanding and raising the professional status of Irish studies in Britain and Northern Ireland at all levels.

The BAIS came into existence to help meet the demand for Irish studies which is growing fast at all levels of education in Britain and in extra-mural cultural bodies and societies. Its growth is sustained by a number of factors: a continuing interest in their home culture on the part of the Irish communities in Britain; an increasing realisation in a number of academic disciplines of the importance of Irish studies; the popularity of Irish music among the young; and, of course, the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland.

Since the association was formally launched at its first Annual General Meeting in London in July 1986, among many other achievements it:

- (a) has signed up 160 members;
- (b) has launched a major membership drive in Britain and Ireland;
- (c) has obtained IR£10,000 from the Irish government and \$2,000 from The Ireland Fund;
- (d) has set up three sub-committees dealing with compulsory (convenor: Nessel Danaher), adult and further (convenor: Jonathan Moore) and higher education (convenor: Marianne Elliott), thereby encompassing all levels in Britain. The first two of these are preparing programmes of action;
- (e) has through its higher education sub-committee carried out a survey of Irish studies provision in the universities and held a one-day seminar in December to discuss its findings: 25 universities were represented and a report was unanimously agreed, identifying eight institutions as key centres for the development of Irish studies. The report, calling for more funding from the DES for our area of study (and specifically for those eight institutions), has been endorsed by the University Grants Committee Chairman in a letter to the Secretary of State for Education. The sub-committee has launched a similar survey of polytechnics and colleges of education;
- (f) (represented by Marianne Elliott and Jim O'Hara) has put at a meeting with a minister and officials at the DES the case for substantial financial support for Irish studies in the university and public sector;
- (g) has prepared two written submissions to the DES requesting funding for Irish studies and for the BAIS;
- (h) has published the first issue of its newsletter;
- (i) has held a conference at Oxford;
- (j) has set up a close working relationship with the American Committee for Irish studies;
- (k) has taken under its umbrella and partially subsidised the Soar Valley Workshop;
- (l) is providing lecturers for extra-mural groups;
- (m) is devising London and regional lecture programmes;
- (n) is planning a series of day-schools for teachers;
- (o) is embarking on a major fund-raising effort;
- (p) is about to publish a second updated version of its Survey of Irish studies in Britain.

## WHY JOIN US?

Our membership has the expertise to help develop Irish studies and translate plans into action. Our own sub-committees are already doing a great deal of thinking and work on all this: we have a growing data base of relevant information. We are available for consultation, for advice, and many of our members are prepared to give up their time to worthwhile projects. Through our first-rate contacts in education, our professional integrity (recognised in Ireland by nationalist and unionist opinion alike) and our high reputation with the British and Irish governments and all major political parties in the two islands, we offer the only hope for a coordinated, intelligent and successful development of Irish studies. For the greater good of us all, the BAIS needs financial, practical and moral support from all those with a *bone fide* interest in Irish studies.

Members receive free the BAIS newsletter, *Irish Studies in Britain* and the *American Irish Literary Supplement*. The annual subscription to the association is £12 for individuals (£7.50 unwaged) and £25 for institutions. You will find an application form enclosed in this issue.

Executive Committee: Ruth Dudley Edwards (Chairwoman); Jim O'Hara, St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill (Vice-Chairman); Dr David Cairns, North Staffordshire Polytechnic (Secretary); Dr Shaun Richards, ditto (Treasurer); Dr Anne Laurence, Open University (Conference Secretary); Eamonn Hughes, University of Leicester (Editor, *Newsletter*); Tom Arkell, University of Warwick; Dr George Boyce, University College, Swansea; Nessel Danaher, Soar Valley College; Dr Marianne Elliott, University of Liverpool; Professor Emrys Evans, University College, Aberystwyth; Dr Mary FitzGerald, Crew & Alsager College; Ivan Gibbons, Hammersmith & North London Institute of Adult Education; Professor Seamus MacMathuna, University of Ulster; Jonathan Moore, Siohban O'Neill, Professor Richard Rose, University of Strathclyde; Dr George Watson, University of Aberdeen.

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## LETTERS

## REPLY TO KEVIN COLLIS

Dear Editor

I am grateful to Kevin Collis for drawing attention to an error in my figure for non-Catholics in Ireland. I should have written 27% (Statistical Abstract for Ireland 1980 Tables 35 & XVI). My point was that many of the generalisations about the Irish which starts from the assumption that they are Catholic must give a false picture. That point is still borne out by the statistic above.

I cannot agree with him that all speculation about what groups have gone to make up a nation is racist. I am therefore grateful that he overcame his any inhibition on this count to provide an extended examination of the matter for there is much that I would agree him about.

He is surely right when he points out that the peoples of these islands are made up of a series of different minorities, Celts, Anglo-Saxons and others, who have imposed their cultures on a mesolithic population whose origins are shrouded in prehistory. But I do not accept that the Normans and their followers represented only a 1% change in Irish population. A glance at the distribution of the 700 or so Norman earthworks spread over nearly two-thirds of the country, to say nothing of the large number of Norman villages, make it clear that the balance of population was very different. Nor do the periods for which we have figures bear out his contention that the contributions of later settlements were 'similarly small'. Authorities on the different plantations provide the following figures: M. MacCarthy-Morrogh, the Munster Plantation (by 1640): 24,000; M. MacCurtain (after Simms), Plantation of Ulster (by 1640): 40,000; W.F.T. Butler, Cromwellian Plantation: 8,000; and L.M. Cullen, Williamite immigration (between 1689 and 1700) – 50,000. Petty put the Irish population in 1652 at 850,000 of whom 160,000 were Protestants, reflecting perhaps the large number of immigrants in Irish towns. Modern writers (P.J. Corish in the New History of Ireland) believe the true figure to be nearer 1.1 million. It is not clear whether the higher revised figure would also include a proportional rise in the Protestant figure. Whatever the case, a figure of between 10% and 20% influx of people for that century alone might be nearer the mark.

Nowhere in my piece did I say that the 'Irish are not really Celts', but it is clear that the cumulative effect of all these newcomers (as well as Mr Collis' points about pre-Celtic Irish population) means that we are *not only* Celts. Those who insist that there is a clear distinction between the Celts and those 16th and 17th century immigrants are more likely to describe them in Mr Collis' own words as 'parasitic, strangulating elements', rather than contributors to a common culture.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Canavan

## IRISH RESEARCH

Dear Editor,

I am a graduate student attached to the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine based at Oxford University, doing research for a D.Phil. My research topic is immigrant

women's health in the East End of London at the turn of the century, 1870–1930s. In particular I am concerned with Jewish and Irish women's health, and am focusing on their experiences of childbirth, midwifery practices, infant and maternal morbidity and mortality.

There is already an extensive body of published work on the history of childbirth and maternity and child welfare. However my field is new in that it explores the experience of immigrant women and their impact on host communities.

I would like to undertake oral interviews as part of my research and would welcome anyone who have memories from the period I am concerned with, or remember experiences their parents went through at the time? I am most concerned to hear about Irish women's experiences of childbirth in England and the differences in traditions between Ireland and E. London. I would also be interested in hearing from health visitors who worked in the area and remember childbirth and midwifery in those days. Any information would also be appreciated on infant and maternal morbidity and mortality. Given that time is precious in doing such oral research I would be grateful to have names of people who would be willing to be interviewed as soon as possible.

I would also welcome any suggestions of other sources which would be of relevance to my research.

Yours sincerely

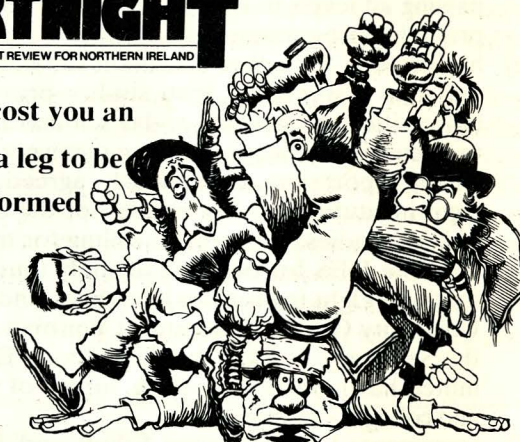
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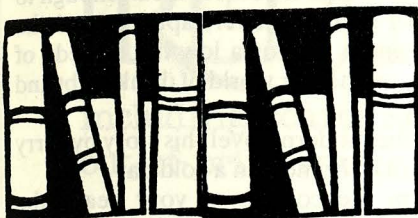
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## BOOKS

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS



**W.J. McCormack: 'The Battle of the Books: Two Decades of Irish Cultural Criticism'. Mullingar: The Lilliput Press, 1986. ISBN 0-946640-13-0, £3.95**

**Hubert Butler: 'Escape from the Anthill'. Mullingar: The Lilliput Press, 1986. ISBN 0-946640-16-5, £5.95**

These very different books have in common the sense that the study of Ireland should not preclude an openness to the rest of the world. For McCormack a major failing of cultural and intellectual activity in Ireland in recent years has been 'that the debate on Irish affairs is conducted in a remarkably inward fashion.' The need to look beyond Ireland to understand Ireland better has been a longstanding precept of McCormack's critical writing. The case of Hubert Butler is somewhat different in that he appears to have lived his life by this precept. Butler's writings are often based on his wide-ranging travels but this never weakened his fierce attachment to his own townland; as he says himself, no matter what the apparent subject of his essays (and there are many subjects) the focus is always Ireland.

That such a stance is possible is worth bearing in mind in relation to McCormack's book which is both narrower and more specialist in focus than Butler's. The work which McCormack considers, by Conor Cruise O'Brien, Edna Longley, Terence Brown and Field Day among others, is recent Irish cultural, particularly literary, criticism. However, in his discussion of this small field his reading in European and American cultural theory is evident. This is Butler's method carried out by reading rather than by travel and it has two consequences. Firstly, it makes the book a daunting one for the non-specialist reader who has not heard the names Adorno, Benjamin, or Jameson. Secondly, it will irritate many of McCormack's specialist readers who may have heard of these names but who want no truck with them or their works. The second consequence McCormack no doubt expects since he has aimed at it, as his title taken from Swift's polemic shows. McCormack obviously wants to irritate and provoke his specialist audience because of the seriousness with which he regards his subject. But how serious is it? What is the importance of Irish cultural criticism?

For McCormack (and, I should add, myself) the answer is simple. The battle of the books in Ireland is the same as other battle but carried on by different means: culture is a site of political conflict as are other areas of life. The separation of politics and poetry is a false one and those critics who would separate these areas are still making political statements. It is the nature of these statements that is McCormack's main concern.

The acknowledged point of departure for McCormack's book is the Field Day pamphlet series initiated some four

years ago and undoubtedly the most important development on contemporary Irish cultural criticism. The question 'Important for whom?' brings me back to the difficulty of McCormack's book for the non-specialist and the issue of whether such work is simply for a specialist audience. McCormack evades this issue, perhaps because he is uncertain as to how to handle it. To begin with he suggests that the whole debate about politics and culture is carried on in a remarkably accessible way. Later, however, he raises the issue of who reads not just books like his own but the poetry of Seamus Heaney, considered the most popular poet in Ireland. There is no easy answer to this question and certainly a book as short as McCormack's cannot even begin to form one. In order to have answers to such questions it is necessary also to have a strong and fertile Irish criticism to match the strength of the literature and culture.

McCormack's book is to be welcomed, alongside the work of Field Day, it shows the conscious development of just such an Irish cultural criticism after a long period in which it seemed that Irish culture and literature were in danger of becoming the property of English and American critics and a few Irish critics who imitated their methods without considering how appropriate those methods were.

I should stress the word 'conscious' in that last sentence because I do not wish to deny the history of Irish cultural criticism but rather to point out that it has been underrated for too long. Hubert Butler's collection of essays is a good example of why it should not continue to be underrated.

The collection of essays is diverse in subject-matter but is united by Butler's own voice. It is a voice which speaks with the accent of the Anglo-Irish but, while he is capable of expressing regret at numerous aspects of the history of his forebears, he is no apologist for them, as his essay 'Anglo-Irish Twilight' shows.

It is almost impossible in a short review to give a proper flavour of Butler's collection. The essays range from a 1945 consideration of what might have happened in Ireland in the wake of a Nazi invasion ('The Invader Wore Slippers') to a 1979 memorial address for Elizabeth Bowen. Her gifts as a writer were, in Butler's words, a 'probing mind... scrupulous observation and... truthful vision', and these same words can be applied to Butler himself. To give some sense of how he employs these gifts I shall single out my favourite essay.

'The Eggman and the Fairies' is an account of the trial subsequent upon the burning to death of a woman by her husband in the late nineteenth century because he thought that she was possessed by the fairies. Butler makes clear that he believes in rational explanations; stories of fairy sightings in the district were probably caused by a passing eggman. He also makes clear that the consequences of this eruption of belief in a myth were horrifying. However, despite being able to see through the myth and to judge its consequences he is also able to cherish all the details of the story and to recognise that the myth had its place and value in people's lives. It is possible to extrapolate from this an argument about the need for both historical accuracy and a regard for misperceptions based on inaccuracy because those misperceptions are themselves a part of history. That, however, is not Butler's way. He supplies the details and a local context and leaves the rest to the reader. His book is valuable because of its concern with and care for the details and for Butler's sense that local history is always more important than national history.

This finally is what both books share: a sense of the value of Ireland, its people and their culture.



**'The Bridge/An Droichead: The Bilingual Journal from Ireland', Winter/Geimhreadh 1986, \$4. (Distribution: Áis, 31 Fenian St., Dublin 2, Ireland.)**

'Anois teacht an earraigh...', as Raftery said somewhat optimistically, but correctly for his time, as 1 February approached, and here we have the Winter edition of *An Droichead*, which appears three times a year and is edited from Dublin by the poet Gabriel Rosenstock.

The concept of the journal is an interesting one: facing versions of the English and Irish texts of articles, so that, for example, the learner of Irish – or even the native speaker – can look across the page and find out that 'graf déine gníomhaíochta' means 'a graph of intensity of activity' (as in 'I try also to have a graph of intensity of activity in works' – John Buckley, composer). Cassettes of the Irish language content of the magazine are also available in the three major dialects of Irish. Both these features make *An Droichead* especially attractive to learners of the language or to those who wish to 'brush up' the Irish they already possess.

*An Droichead* is well produced: a good cover and layout and copious and generally well-chosen illustrations. The exception to the latter in this issue being John Verling's cluttered illustration to the lines of *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* adapted as follows by Frank O'Connor: 'I found her myself on the public road,/On the naked earth with a bare backside/And a Garus turf-cutter astride!' It is not just the strategic positioning of the creel of turf in the picture which suggests that the turf-cutter only exists from the waist upwards.

There is variety in this substantial issue: a well-crafted essay by Conleth Ellis on the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig in the Irish Republic; a delightful piece of Éamonn de Buitléir about his son's rearing of a fox cub; a brief, but discriminating, review by the poet Aine Ní Ghlinn of a book of poems in English by novice Irish women writers; and a plethora of profiles. There's a profile of Lady Valerie Goulding, co-founder of the Central Remedial Clinic in Dublin, of the composer John Buckley, of Steve McDonagh, who publishes from Dingle under the Brandon imprint, and of the playwright Tom Murphy. Among the other items in this issue are a short photo-essay on the Irish Jewish Museum, and two very informative articles: one, by Seán Ó Tiacháin on the National Museum of Ireland's recently reopened Music Room and the other, 'Ceramics in the Gaeltacht', by David Rose.

A critical essay by the literary editor of *An Droichead*, Gréagóir O Duíll, considers 'Ulster Poetry in Irish, 1960–1985'. The interest of the article lies in the author's description of the social and intellectual milieu which forms a background to the production of poetry in Irish in Ulster, rather than in his somewhat unsatisfactory handling of questions of identity and alienation in modern poetry.

Nell Stewart Liberty's undemanding, light, gossipy style is something new when translated into Irish. 'Léitheoir-eacht gan dua gan dualgas' – there you have it. Ceannaigh é!

**DUFFY IS DEAD by J.M. O'Neill (published by Heinemann).**

Duffy, like Godot, never appears. He has died just off-stage but lives on in the cunning minds and thumping hearts of his quondam friends. Under the jaded eye of Calnan,

governor of The Trade Winds, Dalston, arrangements are made for his funeral.

But in death there is little dignity with friends like Mackessy and Neelan, two cute labourers mean enough to rob a corpse. And with an undertaker, aptly named the Clincher Casey, the scene is set for a low life comedy of London-Irish manners, in a nether world of drink, debt and ever darkening mystery.

In the wilderness of the modern novel this story by Jerry O'Neill comes like a shot of brandy on a cold day.

The characters warm the cockles of your heart, the naked language is a joy and the searing mind of Calnan gives us a vision of the mean city streets we have not had before. Certainly not like this – 'Cypriot-Greeks and Turks, Pakistanis, Indians, Blacks of Africa and West Indies had seized the crumbling Victorian shops and made ugly hawking-posts of them. The Durex Shop was the only Cockney, and he was of Polack blood, born in Wapping; a cantankerous little pear-shaped wasp who at polling times sported "Vote Conservative" like an up-market aphrodisiac.'

There is the click of recognition there but how economically and humorously it is done!

Life for Calnan jump-starts from brandy to brandy, nightmare to daylight indignity (wrongful arrest in a cemetery), marauding customers to final eviction from his pub.

But quietly he enjoys seeing the frail lie behind the false face, hearing words shaped and twisted into the ropes with which the speakers hang themselves, the sense of relief that despite all he is not yet where Duffy is – in the hands of the Clincher and his mortal coffin and eternal nails.

What is especially satisfying about *Duffy is Dead* is not so much the idiosyncratic characters and their bleakly riveting landscape, but the style with which it is executed.

This is prose at its finest. Meticulous, spare, choice, cranky; a greedy energy to get each detail bang on!

It reminds one of a mixture of Graham Greene and Harold Pinter. Except of course it is by now quintessential O'Neill. A marvellous follow-up to his plays and his last novel *Open Cut*, it throws the gauntlet down to all writers on either side of St. George's Channel. It is incidentally especially interesting the way Ireland 'back home' is handled. Obliquely, half hidden in the mind's eye, a half-forgotten past rarely remembered and then with ambiguous fondness. London obliterates sentimentality. Gives life to Art. Is a harsh comedy swinging madly between the barefaced lie and barer truth. When Calnan reads aloud the doggerel composed by Duffy's friends and which will be pinned to his wreath, they praise him to his face but not behind his back.

'It should have been read in a whisper,' Neelan said. 'That fat man grunts like an animal. He made a bollocks of it.'

'I thought that,' Brennan said. 'But he couldn't destroy the words. They'll last for ever.'

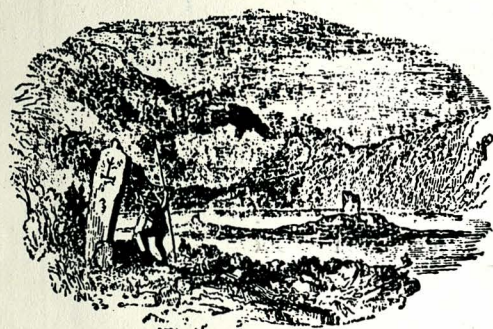
Literature is a cemetery littered with dead scrolls and false dawns. One is confident though that O'Neill is here to stay and the words in *Duffy* will be with us for a long time to come.

Shane Connaughton's latest play *I Do Like To Be* appeared at the Tricycle Theatre in London.



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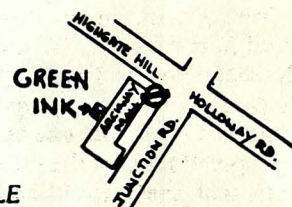
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**THE  
LINENHALL  
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