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CULTURE IN THE REPUBLIC

(PART 2)

EDITORIAL

EASY ASSUMPTIONS about Ireland's sense of itself and Irish exceptionalism have not stood up well to recent developments. If we believed that Ireland's experience of colonisation and emigration had given us a special and benign outlook on the world, the great difficulties that have been encountered in making space for a relatively small number of immigrants have disabused us of our illusions. These illusions were based on another myth: the idea that problems in dealing with the 'other' were somehow unknown to the oppressed and colonised.

Far from Irish society finding itself in solidarity with others who find themselves in predicaments that are familiar in the story that we tell ourselves about ourselves, there has instead been a willingness to turn our backs, block off loopholes, close doors, and wish that 'they' would just go away. If this generalisation seems unjust, there is much evidence to support it.

The large majority who voted to restrict citizenship rights in the referendum; the seemingly innocuous assertions that we cannot have an open door policy; Mary Harney's casual linkage of difficulties encountered by women returning to the workforce with competition from immigrants; the unshakable and mistaken belief that immigrants are taking jobs, housing, and opportunities from Irish people and receiving preferential treatment from government bodies; official policies that include dawn raids and mass round-ups, forced expulsions, and refusal of entry to our country—these are part of the story.

They are not the whole story. In our society, we exploit immigrant workers, deny them rights and protections that our laws provide for others, pay them poorly and often below the legal minimum wage, deduct disproportionate sums for accommodation that is tied to work contracts, and grant work permits to employers not workers, thereby creating conditions for exploitation; we allow a young immigrant woman to lose her job, to lose her home, and ultimately to lose her legs; we expel the parents of Irish children from our country and are indifferent to the

consequences for either children or parents; we segregate and discriminate against immigrants through government policies of dispersal and direct provision.

The truth is that throughout our society there has been an ungenerous and narrow-minded approach to the minimal amount of adjustment that is needed to accommodate our new neighbours, friends, and fellow-citizens. But, it is not the purpose of *The Republic* to curse the dark, and the articles in this issue argue that other responses are possible. While the authors are aware of the realities and challenges, they suggest that we can move forward towards an exciting and positive future.

P. J. Mathews argues that a republican vision can accommodate different cultures and that we should think in terms of cultural possibility rather than cultural conflict—he warns against the twin parochialisms of blanket embracing or rejection of tradition. Tariq Modood challenges republicans to go beyond policies of private freedom and public assimilation to recognition of the place of different groups within our collective culture and community. In a similar fashion, Julia Kristeva ‘dreams’ of a public space that upholds the general spirit but does not erase the reciprocal ‘foreignness’ of the different groups within society—one that neither neutralises difference nor ruptures the general spirit, but respects and unifies society’s different components. Larry White insists that for the republican ‘everything and everyone in Ireland is Irish’—while respectful of tradition, the republican vision does not recognise or privilege any essentialist cultural community.

In all of these approaches, there is recognition of the choice between open and closed definitions of ourselves and of others; and recognition that how we define ourselves and others will have real consequences for the type of society we create and the lives of the people who inhabit it. The clear option is for an open approach, confident of our own place in the world, neither ashamed of our traditions nor afraid of opening them up to new influences, welcoming of newcomers, not expecting them to become like us or us like them, but that we may all change a little in our meeting and interaction. It will be to the benefit of everyone in Ireland to create this future and eradicate the shameful practices that have occurred in recent years.

In Praise of ‘Hibernocentrism’: Republicanism, Globalisation and Irish Culture

P.J. MATHEWS

IN THE SPRING of 2004, RTÉ TV advertised a competition for an Irish family to take part in a new television history series and ‘to avail of an extraordinary opportunity to relive a chapter in Irish history’.¹ The chosen family, according to the advertisement, would travel to Australia to take part in *The Colony*—a living history series, co-produced with SBS Australia, which would ‘recreate the experience of the thousands of Irish and British free settlers and convicts who were transported to New South Wales in the early 1800s’. At the time of writing, this series has not yet been made, but the prospect that it will appear on our television screens soon might prompt some reflection on issues of national identity, globalisation and popular culture as we enter the twenty-first century. Without wishing to prejudge the programme, certain observations can be made.

The programme being proposed here is, clearly, another mutation of the global reality TV format—if not quite *Big Brother* then *Survivor* in nineteenth-century garb. The ‘reality’ genre has become the postmodern TV format *par excellence* with its relentless focus on the ‘now’ and its endless possibilities for role play and parody. *The Colony*, however, intends to cater to ‘historical and educational purposes’ as well as ‘entertainment value’. While some critics might view such a manoeuvre as another dumbing-down exercise, others might applaud the innovative harnessing of pop culture for educational purposes.

Perhaps more significantly, the programme appears to mark a developing interest on the part of the national broadcaster in a more globally recognisable Irish historical experience rather than one which is purely home-focused. This may have something to do with the taking hold of an enlarged and more complex notion of Irish historical trajectories over the last couple of decades, whereby an increasing interest in the formation and evolution of the Irish diaspora has challenged ‘Hibernocentric’ conceptions of Irish history. More attention than before

is being paid to the historical experiences of the Irish who emigrated and contributed to the making of the New World, as opposed to the Irish who stayed at home and attempted to make something of the old country. This is not, in itself, a bad thing. However, the fact remains that the current appeal of the Irish immigrant story may have a lot to do with the economics of global television production, whereby generic scenarios and narratives are easily transferable and marketable, while material of a more culturally specific nature is not. At the financial core of these projects, where co-production is the order of the day, trans-national appeal and cultural generalisation exert a relentless pressure.

These are issues that should concern anyone interested in the evolution of an Irish republican cultural critique. As Philip Pettit reminds us, 'republicanism stands in contrast to [libertarianism and communitarianism] in so far as it equates freedom with not having to live under the threat of arbitrary power, private or public'.² It would appear that the recent dominance of the market in the global production and circulation of Irish culture represents such an arbitrary power-threat, given the strength of global media monopolies and the powerlessness of a minuscule Irish population to influence them. Furthermore, classical republicanism has always promoted the idea of a shared public culture 'at the heart of society and as the basis of politics'.³ Historically, in the Irish context, culture (in the sense of shared creative output) has been central to the articulation of social ills and an important basis for political action, as well as an expression of collective celebration. Clearly, though, the relationship between cultural output and societal expression has now broken down. There is now a serious gap between the actual conditions of Irish life and the version of Irishness which is being held up to the Irish people and the outside world. Today's Ireland, despite the apparent economic success story, is undergoing a traumatic transition into a First World society. This brings with it an unprecedented level of social inequality, unbridled consumerism, the shrinking of government services, the lack of a coherent political vision beyond the tyranny of the marketplace, the transformation of Ireland's ethnic composition, and the panoply of discontents that accompanies First World development. These are realities which are reflected neither in Ireland's official version of itself nor in current critical thinking.

If 'revisionism' and postcolonialism defined the extremes of cultural debate in Ireland over the past three decades or so, it is clear that these critical models have become outdated with the dawning of the new century. Traces of the old ideological squabbles linger on, of course, and will continue to be heard for some time to come. But the fact remains that

the standard revisionist analysis does not have much potency in post-Good-Friday-Agreement Ireland, where Irish nationalism has been well and truly revised, republican guns are silent, and cultural identity is now vested in the people rather than the territory. In a similar way, the classic postcolonial analysis of Irish underachievement is under strain in an Ireland now securely positioned as one of the most successful economies in the developed world, which has fully embraced global capitalism and which enjoys high growth rates, low unemployment, a deregulated economy, a vigorous consumer culture, and a high global cultural profile. Clearly, new critical thinking is required to make sense of the frenetic pace of political and economic change here over the last decade.

Hand in hand with political and economic transformations has gone a remarkable change in Ireland's cultural fortunes. To say that the Celtic Tiger economy has been accompanied by an unprecedented level of cultural success is to state the obvious. Indeed, one could take the opening of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 1990 as a moment which marks the beginning of this period of incredible cultural accomplishment (beating by a number of months Ireland's World Cup miracle of 1990). This was followed closely by Oscar nominations and awards for Irish films such as *The Crying Game*; numerous Eurovision Song Contest wins; the *Riverdance* phenomenon; Seamus Heaney's Nobel Prize; Roddy Doyle's Booker Prize; the successes of a new generation of dramatists (Martin McDonagh, Marina Carr, Conor McPherson, and Marie Jones); the rebirth of Irish pop with Boyzone, Westlife and The Corrs; the burgeoning of a crop of new Irish comic talent epitomised by the success of *Father Ted*; the wider appeal of traditional Irish music, as demonstrated by the soundtrack to the film *Titanic*; and the unprecedented success of Irish popular fiction in the work of Patricia Scanlan, Marian Keyes, and Cathy Kelly, not to mention Frank McCourt. This is not, by any means, an exhaustive list of cultural success, but it serves to illustrate Ireland's striking makeover on the global stage in the 1990s from unfashionable Paddyland to land of cultural vibrancy.

Irish culture, popular and high, now has a greater visibility on a global scale than at any other time in history. We have, however, barely begun the task of documenting, never mind analysing, the remarkable change in Irish cultural fortunes over the last decade or so. The explanations that have been offered have tended to reflect the thinking of the older critical models. On the one hand, recent cultural success is attributed to the fact that Ireland, in cutting its links to the dead weight of the past and turning its back on regressive nationalist traditions, has become an open, liberal, European, cosmopolitan society, with a more internationalised cultural

output. On the other hand, our cultural success has been explained as a late postcolonial flowering of Irish talent. Having successfully decolonised and ‘worked through’ the trauma of the past, the Irish nation—according to this thinking—is now reaping a rich harvest of creative output. In both analyses one can detect an understandable feeling of pride in recent Irish cultural success. This success is seen as a signifier for the maturing and increasing sophistication of Irish culture. After decades of obscurity in which the reputation of modern Irish cultural achievement rested almost entirely on the international standing of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce, one can detect in cultural circles at large a general satisfaction at the level of recognition accorded to recent Irish cultural output.

What has not been fully articulated within recent cultural debate, however, is the fact that the ‘older evils’ of Irish nationalism/British imperialism (depending on your point of view) have been well and truly eclipsed as dominating forces in Irish culture and society by the increasing pressures of global capital and its homogenising cultural agenda. Within a decade, Ireland has been transformed from a relatively impoverished backwater on the periphery of Europe, whose indigenous culture was constantly threatened by the homogenising influences of mass global culture, into a prosperous First World economy whose culture is increasingly being recruited to the global capitalist enterprise. Throughout the first sixty years of independence, the Irish language, traditional music, and other distinctive traditional practices were considered fragile and worthy of protection from outside adulteration, while Irish cultural influence on the world at large was, to put it mildly, limited. Today, it is possible to drink Guinness, Jameson, Bailey’s, and Ballygowan in identikit Irish pubs all over the world; visit any international airport and you can pick up the latest Roddy Doyle novel; channel-surf the TV in any Holiday Inn and you will undoubtedly catch a glimpse of the most instantly recognisable global Irishman—*Star Trek’s* Chief O’Brien; go shopping in downtown Tokyo and you will hear Andrea Corr sing once more that she ‘never really loved you anyway’.

These examples may be somewhat trite, but they serve to illustrate an important point: when we think of globalisation and its threat to cultural distinctiveness around the world we tend to think of Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Hollywood, Oprah Winfrey, and Britney Spears, as they promote their own distinct brands of American consumer culture on the global market. Rarely do we think of Guinness, Irish pubs, *Riverdance*, Frank McCourt, and The Corrs in the same way—pedalling a cultural version of ‘Irish-lite’ on a global scale for considerable financial reward. The argument here is not that the rest of the world is becoming an Irish

cultural colony—clearly it is not—but rather that, to a significant degree, Irish cultural output has been internationally successful in proportion to its co-option into the mechanisms of mainstream global culture.

One of the well-recognised features of globalisation, of course, is the tearing of cultures from specific geographical locales. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for successful Irish plays to open in London and make guest appearances in Ireland after prolonged runs in New York. Likewise, one is likely to meet more internationally renowned Irish musicians at the Milwaukee Irish Fest than at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. This can often mean that global Irish culture is less likely to emerge from, reflect on, or relate to the shared experiences, problems, and dilemmas of the Irish 'homeland'. Increasingly, images of Ireland are once again being generated that bear little or no resemblance to the locale they purport to describe. Further evidence of this is the fact that attempts to tell recognisably complex Irish stories have not been greeted with the same level of acclaim and success, but, at times, have been met with open hostility. This was cogently illustrated by the lukewarm and partly adverse international reaction to Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*, notwithstanding that film's conservative treatment of the origins of the Irish state.

In the 1990s, a neo-revivalism defined the new Irish *zeitgeist*. After the cultural and economic stasis of the 1970s and 1980s, a renewed confidence in traditional Irish culture, epitomised by the *Riverdance* phenomenon, released an interesting creative surge. Many will remember the potency of that original *Riverdance* performance, expressing, as it did, a new moment of Irish possibility. It is worth recalling, though, that the performance was born out of a public service broadcasting initiative—RTÉ's celebration of national culture during the interlude at the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest. Over a decade later, after the 'privatisation' of *Riverdance* and its makeover as a Broadway show, it is still being championed as the pinnacle of Irish cultural achievement, without any hint of embarrassment that this ageing warhorse may reflect an obvious cultural stasis at the heart of contemporary Ireland rather than its vitality. Its blend of traditional dance and music, showbiz glitz, and entrepreneurial nous has come to embody the official version of contemporary Ireland. President McAleese's recent trade mission to China was, of course, accompanied by the obligatory *Riverdance* performance, proving once again that culture and marketing have become utterly confused in contemporary Ireland.

If a republican cultural critique is to challenge the commodification of Irish culture and reconnect cultural output with social expression, it must be careful not to fall back into a nostalgic apologia for a singular, shared

national culture. Republican thinking, after all, should be as sceptical of the dominance of state power as it is of private power in relation to cultural matters. The idea of a singularised Irish identity, however, has been well and truly deconstructed by now and replaced by more liberating and open-ended conceptions of national being. The pressure to conform to an aspirational Gaelic identity has long given way to a more *laissez-faire* approach in which 'Irishness' is widely conceived as an omnium-gatherum sum-total of how Irish people choose to configure themselves culturally. New challenges, however, have been posed by the recent wave of immigration which has changed Ireland's relatively homogenous ethnic character for ever. Rather than insisting on a high-minded idea of a national culture common to all in society, therefore, a new critical model might promote a more empowering notion of civic culture and mobilise a critique of the ubiquitous global Irishness.

Such an alternative conception of culture could proceed by privileging geography and place over a shared ethnic identity or common cultural bonds. This model would work on the assumption that the dynamics of one's cultural identity are contingent upon one's physical locale as much as one's ethnic, class, or gender identity. In other words, being Irish in Dublin is not the same as being Irish in Boston. Similarly, being Vietnamese in Ireland is not the same as being Vietnamese in Vietnam. In each case, the specifics of place play a key determining role in the evolution of one's cultural identity. A new critical paradigm of this sort might also work to reconfigure Irishness as the sum total of the cultural lives of all inhabitants, indigenous and immigrant. This 'Hibernocentric' notion of Irish cultures, which emphasises shared spatial dynamics rather than shared cultural bonds, could allow for the accommodation of cultural difference, which is the inevitable consequence of these globalised and postmodern times. It might also work as a welcome antidote to the mantra of globalisation that 'geography doesn't matter'. Crucially, it would also enable a meaningful reconnection between culture and Irish society, with the rediscovery of the idea that culture can be an effective means of social expression and critique, rather than purely a form of entertainment to be passively consumed.

Looking to the future, one might predict the emergence of a vigorous new local Irishness, which could follow the trajectory of the Irish Revival of the last century in lots of interesting ways. It is not difficult to imagine such a cultural movement being led by a new generation anaesthetised by Celtic Tiger consumerism, the cultural blandness of global Irishness, and the homogenising pressures of Anglo-American culture. This new local Irishness may also be fuelled by the creative input of recent immigrants.

New arrivals are often intensely interested in the dynamics of their new locale and eager to connect with indigenous cultural strands as a way of expressing their commitment to their new homeland. As Douglas Hyde testified, being from a particular ethnic background is not a prerequisite to learn and value the Irish language and its literature—not to mention Irish music and Gaelic games. If the cultural revival of the early twentieth century was driven by the energy of returning Irish emigrants such as W. B. Yeats and George Moore, it is conceivable that a cultural revival of the twenty-first century could be fuelled by inward migrants who might find resonances of their own personal stories in the Irish cultural experience. For example, the not insignificant body of Irish literature and culture that deals with the emigrant experience might take on an entirely new relevance in such an eventuality.

But, while opening up the possibility of immigrant engagements with 'traditional' Irish culture, a new republican cultural model should not bring with it the pressure to assimilate to some pre-existing ideal of 'indigenous' culture. After all, Irish historical experience has much to tell about the injustices of coercive cultural assimilation. The Irish republican tradition also has much experience to draw on in relation to the struggle for minority cultural rights, which might be usefully deployed in a multi-ethnic Ireland to safeguard the cultural distinctiveness of new immigrant communities. If, for example, a sizeable Filipino community here were to organise for their children to be educated in a Tagalog-speaking environment, such an initiative might find an interesting precursor in the Gaelscoil experience. A development like this might usefully be seen as enriching the linguistic mix in Ireland rather than as a threat to national distinctiveness. It might also provide an interesting example of how the specifics of place might inflect the evolution of an expatriate Filipino cultural identity. Once again, it is the emphasis on shared geography rather than shared cultural bonds that can accommodate cultural difference within a republican political vision.

There is no doubt that the cultural life and complexion of Ireland will change greatly in the coming decades. This will undoubtedly bring moments and points of tension. In a worst-case scenario, new cultural wars will break out which may recall the 'battle of two civilisations' between the Anglo-Irish and Irish Irelanders a century ago. In this context, new republican thinking will be required more than ever to articulate civic-minded notions of cultural possibility on the island of Ireland. It is important that at a time of rapid cultural change, the distinctive cultural practices that are peculiar to Ireland do not become sacred shibboleths to be defended from the perceived threat of immigrant

culture. The creolisation of Irish culture is a prospect full of exciting potential, to be welcomed as much as it is inevitable. It is equally important, however, that a desire to subvert and undermine traditional Irish cultural practices, out of an insecure need to display one's 'sophistication' and liberal credentials, does not take hold—as was the case during the period of high revisionism.

Much has been written about the crisis of authority at the heart of contemporary Ireland. At a time when the moral power of the Catholic Church has collapsed and the integrity of politicians has come under scrutiny by state tribunals, there exists no equivalent civic force of vigour to fill the vacuum. Looking to the legacy of Irish republicanism, its potential to provide an alternative sphere of influence in Irish life was severely limited by the Civil War defeat and, latterly, by the commitment to armed conflict in the northern struggle. As a result, twentieth-century Irish republicanism has been physically courageous but intellectually stunted. If there is to be an intellectual renewal from that quarter, there may be no greater challenge than to lead the debate on the changing landscape of Irish culture in the new century.

Notes

1 <http://www.rte.ie/tv/colony> (accessed December 15, 2004).

2 Philip Pettit, 'Culture in the Constitution of a Republic', *The Republic: A Journal of Contemporary and Historical Debate*, no. 3, (July 2003), p. 11.

3 Gerard Delanty, 'The Cultural Foundations of a Republican Polity: Culture as Communication', *The Republic: A Journal of Contemporary and Historical Debate*, no. 3, (July 2003), p. 27.

Multiculturalism, Secularism, and the State

TARIQ MODOOD

A longer version of this paper first appeared in Critical Review of International Social and Political Theory, 1(3), 1998 and was presented at the ENCS Conference 'Recasting European and Canadian History: National Consciousness, Migration, Multicultural Lives', Bremen, Germany, 2000.

Multiculturalism, secularism, and the state

RECENT MIGRATIONS have created new multicultural situations in western Europe and elsewhere. At the centre of this multiculturalism are religious groups. I want to address the question whether the new plurality of faiths requires a deepening of the institutional separation between private faith and public authority. I shall suggest that the political project of multiculturalism, with its reappraisal of the public-private distinction, particularly the relationship between ethnicity and citizenship, poses a challenge to the taken-for-granted secularism of many theorists of multiculturalism.

I shall argue that the strict division between the public and private spheres as argued by some multiculturalists does not stand up to scrutiny and, more particularly, it does not adequately take into account the interdependence that exists between the public and private spheres. Moreover, the assertion of a strict divide between the public and private spheres, far from underpinning multiculturalism, will work to prevent its emergence. I shall argue that, in the light of the interdependence between the public and private spheres, the call for the development of a 'politics of recognition' becomes more intelligible: it explains why minority groups, among others, are calling for the appropriate public recognition of their private communal identities. A brief consideration of how different kinds of states may or may not be able to facilitate this recognition forms the basis of the penultimate section of this paper. And, finally, I shall conclude by arguing that a moderately, rather than a radically, secular state is the best mechanism through which the claims for recognition put forward by contending religious groups can be satisfied.

Multiculturalism and the strict division between public and private spheres

There is a body of theoretical opinion that argues that the public-private distinction is essential to multiculturalism. Rex, for example, distinguishes between plural societies such as apartheid South Africa and the multicultural ideal. He contends that the fundamental distinction between them is that the latter restricts cultural diversity to a private sphere, so all enjoy equality of opportunity and uniform treatment in the public domain.¹ Immigrants and minorities do not have to respect the normative power of a dominant culture, but there must be a normative universality in relation to law, politics, economics, and welfare policy.

An important assumption contained in this way of seeing the public-private distinction is found in a discussion by Habermas. Although he maintains that a recipient society cannot require immigrants to assimilate—immigrants cannot be obliged to conform to the dominant way of life—he also contends that a democratic constitutional regime must seek to ‘preserve the identity of the political community, which nothing, including immigration, can be permitted to encroach upon, since that identity is founded on the constitutional principles anchored in the political culture and not on the basic ethical orientations of the cultural form of life predominant in that country’.² But, is this distinction between the political and cultural identities of a society valid? Politics and law depend to some degree on shared ethical assumptions and inevitably reflect the norms and values of the society they are part of. In this sense, no regime stands outside culture, ethnicity, or nationality, and changes in these will need to be reflected in the political arrangements of the regime. Moreover, the interdependence between the political and the cultural, the public and the private, is not confined to the level of ethical generalities. On a practical level, as Rex recognises, religious communities may look to the state to support their culture (e.g. through support for religious schools and other educational institutions), and the state may, reciprocally, look to religious communities to inculcate virtues such as truth-telling, respect for property, service to others, and so on, without which a civic morality would have nothing to build on.

Furthermore, if the public and private spheres mutually shape each other in these ways, then, however abstract and rational the principles of a public order may be, they will reflect the folk cultures out of which that particular public order has grown. If this is the case, then there can be no question of the public sphere being morally, ethnically or, indeed, religiously neutral. There is, therefore, a real possibility that the elaboration of a strict public-private distinction may simply act to buttress

the privileged position of the historically integrated folk cultures at the expense of the historically subordinated or newly migrated folk. In this context, a strict interpretation and application of the public-private distinction, far from underpinning multiculturalism, will work to prevent its emergence.

Public-private interdependence and the politics of recognition

If we recognise that the public sphere is not morally neutral, that the public order is not culturally, religiously, or ethnically blind, we can begin to understand why oppressed, marginalised, or immigrant groups may want that public order (in which they may for the first time have rights of participation) to recognise them and to be user-friendly to them. The logic of demanding that public institutions acknowledge their ways of doing things becomes readily intelligible, as does the whole phenomenon of minorities seeking increased visibility, contesting the boundaries of the public, and not simply asking to be left alone and tolerated civilly.

What is important to recognise here is that the content of what is claimed today in the name of equality is more than that which would have been claimed in the 1960s. Iris Young expresses well the new political climate when she describes the emergence of an ideal of equality based not just on allowing excluded groups to assimilate and live by the norms of the dominant groups, but also on the view that ‘a positive self-definition of group difference is in fact more liberatory’.³

The multicultural state

Having suggested that a strict division between the public and private spheres does not stand up to scrutiny, and having briefly set out in what sense the call for recognition of minority groups (including religious groups) can be seen to be reasonable given the interdependence between the public and private spheres, let us briefly examine the types of conception of the individual, the community, and the state that are consistent with these views. For that may illuminate what is at issue and the sources of disagreement—not least *amongst* advocates of multiculturalism. More particularly, I suggest that how we interpret and apply the public-private distinction will depend on the extent to which one believes individuals, (ethnic) groups, and the (nation) state form coherent unities, are the bearers of ethical claims, and can be integrated with each other. I offer below five ideal types, marking five possible ways in which one could respond to the contemporary challenge of diversity consequent upon immigration in Europe.⁴

The decentred self

Some theorists describe the present condition as postmodern. Among the many things meant by this term is the assertion that, due to factors such as migration and the globalisation of economics, consumption, and communications, societies can no longer be constituted by stable collective purposes and identities organised territorially by the nation state. In its most radical version, this view rejects not only the possibility of a politically constituted multiculturalism, but also the idea of a unified self *per se*:

If we feel we have a unified identity ... it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves ... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could identify with—at least temporarily.⁵

The radical multiple self has a penchant for identities, but prefers surfing on the waves of deconstruction to seeking reconstruction in multiplicity. It is post-self rather than a multi-self. Under this scheme, therefore, the call for recognition and the contention of the interdependence between the public and private spheres have little meaning. At most, multiculturalism can mean the development of ever more different (even bizarre) 'lifestyle enclaves', where the postmodern self can find or lose itself without (much) reference to the character of the public sphere.

The liberal state

In contrast, the liberal theorist expects the integrity of individuals (though not necessarily large-scale communities) to survive the social changes that are in motion. Individuals may temporarily become disoriented, bewildered by the multiplicity of identities and temporarily decentred, but the liberal theorist confidently believes they will soon recentre themselves. Lifestyles in their neighbourhoods may change as persons of exotic appearance, large families, and pungent-smelling foods move in. The old residents and the new have to adjust (perhaps gradually, certainly repeatedly) their sense of self, community, and country as these changes occur, but the liberal theorist contends that no major political project other than the elimination of discrimination is required to achieve this. The state exists to protect the rights of individuals, but the question of recognising new ethnic groups does not arise, for the state does not recognise any groups. Individuals relate to the state as individual citizens, not as members of the group. The state is group blind: it cannot see

colour, gender, ethnicity, religion, or even nationality. In the parlance of North American political theorists (it is certainly easier to see the USA than any European state as approximating to this liberal ideal), the just state is neutral between rival conceptions of the good. It does not promote one or more national cultures, religions, ways of life, and so on. These matters remain private to individuals in their voluntary associations with each other. The state does not promote, either, any syncretic vision of common living, of fellow-feeling, between the inhabitants of that territory other than the legal entitlements and duties that define civic membership.

Liberals argue that even if the effect of a liberal regime is to bolster dominant groups, its neutrality is not compromised because *in intention* it does not seek to prejudice any group.⁶ In the light of this, the question of the public recognition of private communal identities and so on does not arise: the liberal state can remain indifferent to such claims. Whatever the coherence of the distinction between neutrality in intention and neutrality in effect, it is naive to expect that those who are not satisfied by the outcomes that are generated will not question the legitimacy of procedures that not just occasionally, but systematically prevent the outcomes that their conception of the good directs them towards.

The republic

The ideal republic too, like the liberal state, does not recognise groups amongst the citizenry. It relates to each citizen as an individual. Yet, unlike the liberal state, it is amenable to one collective project; more precisely, it is itself a collective project, a project, that is to say, which is not reducible to the protection of the rights of individuals or the maximisation of the choices open to individuals. The republic seeks to enhance the lives of its members by making them a part of a way of living that individuals could not create for themselves; it seeks to make the individuals members of a civic community. This community may be based upon subscription to universal principles such as liberty, equality, and fraternity; upon the promotion of a national culture; or, as in the case of France, upon both. In a republic, the formation of public ethnicity, by immigration or in other ways, would be discouraged, and there would be strong expectation, even pressure, for individuals to assimilate to the national identity. In such a situation, it would be difficult to see how the call for public recognition by minority ethnic and religious groups can get off the ground.

The federation of communities

In contrast to the first three responses to multicultural diversity, this option is built upon the assumption that the individual is not the unit (or at least not the only unit) to which the state must relate. Rather, individuals belong to and are shaped by communities, which are the primary focus of their loyalty and the regulators of their social life. Far from being confined to the private sphere, communities are the primary agents of the public sphere. Public life, in fact, consists of organised communities relating to each other, and the state is therefore a federation of communities and exists to protect the rights of communities.

As with all of the ideal types listed here, one can think of a more radical or extreme version of the model and a more moderate version that balances the rights of communities with the rights of individuals, including the right to exit from communities. The millet system of the Ottoman empire, in which some powers of the state were delegated to Christian and Jewish communities, which had the power to administer personal law within their communities in accordance with their own legal system, is an example of this model of the multicultural state and has occasionally been invoked in Britain as an example to emulate. The millet system offered a significant autonomy to communities, but, of course, did not offer equality between communities or any conception of democratic citizenship. The problem with this system of political organisation, therefore, is not that it is unable to give suitable cognisance to the call for recognition by minority ethnic and religious groups, but rather that it is likely to remain an unattractive proposition to many in contemporary Europe unless a democratic variant can be devised. The system of pillarisation in the Netherlands or Belgium, a moderate version of this type of institutionalised communal diversity within a democratic framework, may be favoured by some.

The plural state

In my view, a more promising conception of the organisation of the multicultural state is provided by the notion of the plural state. In this model, there is a recognition that social life consists of individuals and groups, and both need to be provided for in the formal and informal distribution of powers, not just in law, but in representation in the offices of the state, public committees, consultative exercises and access to public forums. There may be some rights for all individuals, as in the liberal state, but mediating institutions, such as trade unions, churches, neighbourhoods, immigrant associations, and so on, may also be encouraged to be active public players and forums for political discussion,

and may even have a formal representative or administrative role to play in the state. The plural state, however, allows for, indeed probably requires, an ethical conception of citizenship, and not just an instrumental one as in the liberal and federation-of-communities conceptions. The understanding that individuals are partly constituted by the lives of families and communities fits well with the recognition that the moral individual is partly shaped by the social order constituted by citizenship and the publics that amplify and qualify, sustain, critique, and reform citizenship.

If the state should come to have this kind of importance in people's lives, it is most likely they would, as in a republic, invest emotionally and psychologically in the state and its projects. The most usual form of this emotional relationship is a sense of national identity. In an undiluted form, national identity, like most group identifications, can be dangerous and certainly incompatible with multiculturalism. On the other hand, assuming a plurality of identities and not a narrow nationalism, the plural state, unlike the liberal state, is able to offer an emotional identity with the whole to counterbalance the emotional loyalties to ethnic and religious communities; this should prevent the fragmentation of society into narrow, selfish communalisms. Yet, the presence of these strong community identities will be an effective check against monocultural statism.

For the plural state, the challenge of the new multiculturalism is the integration of transplanted cultures, heritages, and peoples into long-established, yet ongoing national cultures. It is about creating a cultural synthesis in both private and public spaces, including in education and welfare provision. Above all, proponents of the new multiculturalism are anxious to find new ways of extending and reforming existing forms of public culture and citizenship. This is not about decentering society or deconstructing the nation state, but rather it is concerned with integrating difference by remaking the nation state. In contrast to common political parlance, integration here is not synonymous with assimilation. Assimilation is something immigrant or minorities must do or have done to them, whereas integration is interactive, a two-way process: both parties are active ingredients and something new is created. For the plural state, then, multiculturalism means re-forming national identity and citizenship.

Secularism and multiculturalism

If, as I argue, the plural state provides a good model for a viable multicultural state, the question remains whether such a state must

inevitably exclude religious communities *qua* religious communities from participating in the political life of the state. More particularly, should the multicultural state be a radically secular state? Or, alternatively, can religious communities play a central role in the political life of a multicultural state?

In order to examine these questions, the first point to note is that we must not be too quick to exclude particular religious communities from participation in the political debates of a multicultural state. Secularity should not be embraced without careful consideration of the possibilities for reasonable dialogue between religious and non-religious groups. In particular, we must beware of an ignorance-cum-prejudice about Muslims that is apparent amongst even the best political philosophers.⁷

Historically, Islam has been given a certain official status and pre-eminence in states in which Muslims ruled (just as Christianity, or a particular Christian denomination, had pre-eminence where Christians ruled). In these states, Islam was the basis of state ceremonials and insignia, and public hostility against Islam was a punishable offence (sometimes a capital offence). Islam was the basis of jurisprudence, but not positive law. The state—legislation, decrees, law enforcement, taxation, military power, foreign policy, and so on—was regarded as the prerogative of the rulers, of political power, which was regarded as having its own imperatives, skills, and so on, and was rarely held by saints or spiritual leaders. Moreover, rulers had a duty to protect minorities.

Just as it is possible to distinguish between theocracy and mainstream Islam, so it is possible to distinguish between radical or ideological secularism, which argues for an absolute separation between state and religion, and the moderate forms, which exist throughout western Europe, except in France. In nearly all of western Europe there are points of symbolic, institutional, fiscal, and policy linkages between the state and aspects of Christianity. Secularism has increasingly grown in power and scope, but it is clear that a historically evolved and evolving compromise with religion is the defining feature of western European secularism, rather than the absolute separation of religion and politics. Secularism today enjoys a hegemony in western Europe, but it is a moderate rather than a radical, a pragmatic rather than an ideological secularism. Indeed, paradoxical as it may seem, mainstream Islam and mainstream secularism are philosophically closer to each other than either is to its radical versions.

Muslims, then, should not be excluded from participation in the multicultural state on the grounds that their views about politics are not secular enough. There is still a sufficient divide between private and public

spheres in the Islamic faith to facilitate dialogue with other (contending) religious and non-religious communities and beliefs.

Neutrality

It seems to be assumed that equality between religions requires the multicultural state to be neutral between them. This seems to be derived from Rawls' contention that the just state is neutral between 'rival conceptions of the good'. It is, however, an appeal to a conception of neutrality that theorists of difference disallow. A key argument of the theorists of difference is that the state is always for or against certain cultural configurations: impartiality and openness to reason, even when formally constituted through rules and procedures, reflect a dominant cultural ethos, enabling those who share that ethos to flourish while hindering those who are at odds with it.⁸

It has been argued that even where absolute neutrality is impossible one can still approximate to neutrality, and this is what disestablishment [of officially recognised religions] achieves.⁹ But, one could just as well maintain that though total multicultural or multi-faith inclusiveness is impossible, we should try and approximate to inclusiveness rather than neutrality. Hence, an alternative to disestablishment is to design institutions to ensure that those who are marginalised by the dominant ethos are given some special platform or access to influence, so that their voices are nevertheless heard. By way of illustration, note that while American secularism is suspicious of any state endorsement of religion, Indian secularism was designed to ensure state support for religions other than just that of the majority. It was not meant to deny the public character of religion, but to deny the identification of the state with any one religion. The latter is closer to moderate rather than absolute secularism. In the British context, this would mean pluralising the link between state and religion (which is happening to a degree), rather than severing it.

Autonomy of Politics

Secondly, implicit in the argument for the separation of the spheres of religion and politics is the idea that each has its own concerns and mode of reasoning, and achieves its goals when not interfered with by the other. The point I wish to make here is that this view of politics is not just the result of a compromise between different religions, or between theism and atheism, but is part of a style of politics in which there is an inhibition, a constraint on ideology. If politics is a limited activity, it means political argument and debate must focus on a limited range of issues and

questions, rather than on general conceptions of human nature, social life, or historical progress. Conversely, to the extent that politics *can* be influenced by such ideological arguments, e.g. by their setting the framework of public discourse or the climate of opinion in which politics takes place, it is not at all clear that religious ideologies are taboo. While it is a contingent matter as to what kind of ideologies are to be found at a particular time and place, it is likely ideologically-minded religious people will be most stimulated to develop faith-based critiques of contemporary secularism where secular ideologies are prevalent and especially where those ideologies are critical of the pretensions of religious people.

Of course, we cannot proscribe ideology, secular or religious. My point is simply that the ideological or ethical character of religion is not by itself a reason for supposing that religion should have no influence on politics. Rather, institutional links between religious conscience and affairs of state (as through the twenty-six bishops who by right sit in the House of Lords at Westminster) are often helpful in developing politically informed and politically constructive religious perspectives that are not naively optimistic about the nature of politics—not a small benefit given the inherent risks of utopianism in religion, as we see in, for example, Islamic radicalism today.

Democracy

One could argue that organised religion should not be allowed to support electoral candidates, but advocates of this restriction typically fail to explain why churches and other religious organisations are significantly different from businesses, trades unions, sports and film stars, and so on.¹⁰ It is also difficult to see how such restrictions are democratic: denying religious groups corporate representation while at the same time requiring them to abstain from electoral politics—all in the name of democracy and so that ‘the nonreligious will not feel alienated or be denied adequate respect’—seems to more seriously compromise democracy than the maintenance of the current weak forms of corporate representation.¹¹

The goal of democratic multiculturalism cannot and should not be cultural neutrality, but, rather, the inclusion of marginal and disadvantaged groups, including religious communities, in public life. Democratic political discourse perhaps has to proceed on the assumption that, ideally, contributions should be such that in principle they could be seen as relevant to the discourse by any member of the polity. This may mean that there is a gravitational pull in which religious considerations come to be translated into non-religious considerations or are generally persuasive when allied with non-religious considerations.

In arguing that corporate representation is one of the means of seeking inclusiveness, I am not arguing for the privileging of religion, but recognising that, in the context of a secular hegemony in the public cultures of contemporary western Europe, some special forms of representation may be both necessary and more conducive to social cohesion than other possible scenarios.

Conclusion

The strict divide between the public and private spheres suggested by some theorists of multiculturalism is overplayed. There is an interdependence between the public and private spheres that must be taken into account in any adequate characterisation of a multicultural state. In particular, I contend that there is a theoretical incompatibility between multiculturalism and radical secularism. In a society where some of the disadvantaged and marginalised minorities are religious minorities, a public policy of public multiculturalism will require the public recognition of religious minorities, and the theoretical incompatibility will become a practical issue. In such situations, moderate secularism offers the basis for institutional compromise. Such moderate secularism is already embodied in church-state relations in western Europe (France being an exception). Rather than seeing such church-state relations as an obstacle to multiculturalism and archaic, we should be scrutinising the compromises that they represent and how those compromises need to be remade to serve the new multicultural circumstances. Multiculturalism may, after all, not require such a break from the past, but may reasonably be pursued as an extension of ideas associated with the plural state.

APPENDIX

Citizenship and Difference

This piece elaborates on the debate about the public-private divide and how this impinges on ideas of citizenship. It is appended to Professor Modood's article because of the importance of this debate for modern societies in general and republicans in particular.

Citizenship

By citizenship I mean something much more than a legal status, such as holding a passport or having the right to vote. I mean membership of a polity where, besides rights and duties, membership is signified through participation in collective activities and public debates with fellow citizens. Moreover, this is not just about participation in politics in a narrow sense. It is engagement not just within the structures of the state, but in civil society too. Activities that are not for personal gain but express an interest in the condition of one's fellow citizens, such as reading a daily newspaper, joining a neighbourhood watch scheme, distributing Greenpeace literature, discussing with friends and work colleagues whether the law should be changed in relation to abortion, or debating in one's mosque what it means to be British, are all activities of a citizen and so are part of what I mean by citizenship. Discussion is central to citizenship: our identity as citizens is most fully felt when we debate, communicate, criticise, argue, consider objections, and learn from each other. This means that citizenship exists in our ideas and perceptions about each other, as well as in the behaviours that can be controlled, regulated, policed, and so on.

The key idea of citizenship is equality: citizens are members with equal rights and responsibilities, without reference to class, race, sex, religion, and so on. Yet this latter set of collective attributes matter profoundly to people, to their ideas of themselves and others, and to how we treat each other. We have become very alive to how our perceptions of groups of people can be demeaning, stereotypical, racist, sexist, and so on, all of which interferes with our perception of those people as our equals and leads to discriminatory actions. Laws are rightly enacted to deal with the worst cases of such actions, and opinion formers are tasked with the responsibility of not reinforcing attitudes that demean fellow citizens and therefore put citizenship at risk.

Difference

In the last couple of decades, we have also become aware that ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and so on matter to people profoundly as sources of positive identities. We have seen the emergence of a politics of 'difference'. Some people, especially those who have been previously marginalised (who have experienced second-class citizenship), are now proclaiming these group identities in the public spaces where citizenship exists. Are they thereby challenging or undermining citizenship, the overarching identity which exists to play down, and whose existence depends upon citizens playing down, identities that divide them?

Earlier anti-racist (anti-sexist, etc.) egalitarians, such as Martin Luther King Jr., did indeed emphasise commonality (we are all the same under our differently coloured skins) and expressly appealed to a common American citizenship in his civil rights movement. Yet, just as in the United States this colour-blind humanism came to be mixed with an emphasis on black pride, black autonomy, and black nationalism (as typified by Malcolm X), so, too, the same process occurred in Britain. Indeed, it is best to see this development of racial explicitness and positive blackness as part of a wider socio-political climate that is not confined to race and culture or to non-white minorities. Feminism, gay pride, Québécois nationalism, and the revival of a Scottish identity are some prominent examples of these new identity movements that have become an important feature in many countries, especially those in which class politics has declined in salience.

Thus, what is often claimed today in the name of racial equality, especially in the English-speaking world, goes beyond the claims that were made in the 1960s. The US philosopher Iris Young expresses well the new political climate when she describes the emergence of an ideal of equality based not just on allowing excluded groups to assimilate and live by the norms of dominant groups, but on the view that 'a positive self-definition of group difference is in fact more liberatory'.¹²

The public-private distinction

This significant shift takes us from an understanding of equality in terms of individualism and cultural assimilation to a politics of recognition, to equality as encompassing public ethnicity. This perception of equality means not having to hide or apologise for one's origins, family, or community and requires others to show respect for them. Public attitudes and arrangements must adapt so that this heritage is encouraged, not contemptuously expected to wither away. These two conceptions of equality may be stated as follows:

- the right to assimilate to the majority/dominant culture in the public sphere, with toleration of difference in the private sphere;
- the right to have one's difference (e.g. minority ethnicity) recognised and supported in both the public and the private spheres.

The two are not, however, alternative conceptions of equality in the sense that to hold one, the other must be rejected. Citizenship is compatible with, indeed requires, support for both conceptions. For, the assumption behind the first is that participation in the public or national culture is necessary for the effective exercise of citizenship, the only obstacles to which are the exclusionary processes preventing gradual assimilation. The second conception, too, assumes that groups excluded from the national culture have their citizenship diminished as a result and sees the remedy not in rejecting the right to assimilate, but in adding the right to widen and adapt the national culture (and the public and media symbols of national membership) to include the relevant minority ethnicities. What is required is a less monistic conception of citizenship (which is likely to reflect the norms and identity of the dominant group): one that is not intrinsically hostile to other identities but hospitable to 'hyphenated' identities such as Irish-American or British-Indian. It involves a recognition that there are different ways to be British or Irish, that none are purer or superior to the others; and that they must all be embraced, for citizenship requires us to be inclusive and to respect the ways in which co-citizens express their nationality.

There is then, in the name of equality, an explicit bringing into our citizenship of identities previously demoted as 'private'. So, it can be seen that the public-private distinction is crucial to the contemporary discussion of equal citizenship and, particularly, to the challenge to an earlier liberal position. It is in this political and intellectual climate, in which once 'private' matters have become the sources of equality struggles, that Muslim assertiveness has emerged as a domestic political phenomenon. In this respect, the advances achieved by anti-racism and feminism (with its slogan 'the personal is the political') have acted as benchmarks for following groups such as Muslims. While Muslims raise distinctive concerns, the logic of their demands often mirrors those of other equality-seeking groups: legislation against discrimination, data collection to facilitate equality monitoring, protection against hateful speech and incitement, and so on.

Is Religion an Exception?

While black and related ethno-racial identities were welcomed by, indeed

were intrinsic to, the rainbow coalition of identity politics, this coalition is deeply unhappy with Muslim consciousness. While for some this rejection is specific to Islam, for many the ostensible reason is simply that it is a religious identity and so should be confined to the private sphere. This position has a venerable place in classical liberalism, where it is part of the privatisation of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and so on in a consistent way. However, it is not compatible with the new view of equal citizenship outlined above, unless it can be shown that there is something uniquely private about religion. But, we would then have the mixed-up situation where the sex lives of individuals (traditionally, a core area of liberal privacy) are regarded as legitimate features of political identities and public discourse, but religion (a key source of communal identity in traditional societies) is confined to the private sphere. That some people, especially the intelligentsia, regard Muslim identity as the illegitimate child of British multiculturalism is undoubtedly true, but the case for the singular privatisation of religion has yet to be made

Belonging

The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, the report of the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain published in October 2000, is a high-water mark of thinking on these topics. It tried to answer the question: how is it possible to have a positive attitude to difference and yet have a sense of unity? Its answer was that a liberal notion of citizenship as an unemotional, cool membership is not sufficient; better is a sense of belonging to one's country or polity. The report insisted that this 'belonging' requires two important conditions:

- recognition of one's polity as a community of communities, as well as a community of individuals;
- challenging of all racisms and related structural inequalities.

Here, we have a much more adequate concept of social cohesion than that which has emerged as a panicky reaction to the current Muslim assertiveness and which runs the risk of making many Muslims feel that they do not belong to Britain.

Notes

¹ J. Rex, *Race and Ethnicity* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press 1986), ch. 7.

² J. Habermas, 'Struggles for recognition in the democratic constitutional state', in A. Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1994), p. 139.

³ I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990), p. 157.

⁴ These five ideal types and the terms I use to mark them are my own. Given the variety of ways terms like 'liberal' and 'the plural state' are used, my ideal types do not necessarily correspond with how some others may use these terms, including those who use the terms to designate their own perspective. For a similar typology of multicultural states and a similar conclusion, see Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain, *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (Profile Books: 2000).

⁵ S. Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in S. Hall and T. McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity Press 1992), p. 277.

⁶ T. Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991), p. 166.

⁷ T. Modood, 'Race in Britain and the Politics of Difference', in D. Archard (ed.), *Philosophy and Pluralism* (Cambridge: CUP 1996), pp. 178–179.

⁸ Young, op. cit.

⁹ A. Phillips, 'In Defence of Secularism', in T. Modood (ed.), *Church, State and Religious Minorities* (London: Policy Studies Institute 1997).

¹⁰ R. Audi, 'The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship', in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (Summer 1989).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹² Young, op. cit.

Interview

Why France, Why the Nation?

JULIA KRISTEVA

*This interview was conducted by Philippe Petit and is reprinted from *Revolt She Said*, published by Semiotext(e) in the US and distributed by MIT Press. The translation is by Biran Okeefe. It is reprinted here with the permission of Julia Kristeva and MIT Press.*

Integration Is Not Possible for Everyone—The Myth of National Unity—The French and the Americans—National Depression and Manic Reactions (Le Pen) —Politics, Religions, Psychoanalysis—Taking Refuge in France

PHILIPPE PETIT: 'Nowhere are you more of a foreigner than in France. The French haven't the tolerance of Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the accommodating insouciance of the South Americans, or the German or Slavic curiosity that rejects and assimilates in equal measure, and so the stranger confronts that daunting French sense of national pride ... And yet, nowhere are you better off as a foreigner than in France. Because you remain irrevocably different and unacceptable, you're an object of fascination. You're noticed and talked about, hated, admired, or both.' You wrote this in *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (translated as *Strangers to Ourselves*). Do you still feel a foreigner in France, thirty years after coming here?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Of course. It's a paradoxical situation, because abroad I am taken as one of the representatives of contemporary French culture, whereas in France I am and always will be a stranger. It's normal: it's a question of language, mentality and perhaps a certain personal marginality that writers have always claimed for themselves, like Mallarmé. After all, he wanted to write 'a total word, new, foreign to language'.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Why didn't we read or hear from you during the (still ongoing) affair of the illegal immigrants? Aren't foreigners' rights in part your domain, not to mention open, respectful rights for migrants?

JULIA KRISTEVA: I haven't signed petitions for a long time now. I believe

that a psychoanalyst can make certain aspects of her personal life appear in her written work, since we analyze with our entire personality. Moreover, 'new patients' suffer from a real lack of interest in their own psyches; the imaginary experience of the analyst can reawaken that interest and pave the way to the subsequent work of dismantling and interpretation. On the other hand, taking up a political position can inhibit the patient's freedom, curb and censor his or her own biography. When I talk about politics, like I'm doing now with you, I try to express myself carefully. It's impossible when you're a militant 'sounding off'. Beyond that, much as I am sensitive to the distress of the immigrants, equally I don't think it's desirable to give the deceptive impression that integration is possible for everyone who asks for it.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Right now, the movement for the immigrants without proper papers is virtually isolated, even if some centres making claims for them are still active. The Chevènement document gave those foreign Africans reason to believe they can obtain what they request by getting their names on the administrative lists. Around 160,000 of them are asking to be given citizenship. Personally, I think that they should be, since they have been working in France for years. What is your own opinion?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Each individual's case is examined carefully at the present, it seems, and I have no reason to doubt Jean-Pierre Chevènement's intention to give legal status to those who have been working for years now and meet the criteria agreed to by the majority of the French.

PHILIPPE PETIT: You write in *Temps sensible* (translated as *Time and Sense*) that Proust is one of the writers who has best explored the clannish nature of French society. You say he got to 'the heart of the social game'. What did you mean by that?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Proust was very sensitive to the 'clans' that make up French society. He suffered by them, while trying to be part of one. He was the first to diagnose it in a way that's both droll and agonising: the French, he said, transformed Hamlet's declaration 'to be or not to be' into 'to be in or not to be in'. Could social awareness compensate for what is, all in all, a metaphysical restriction? But all that socialising, military strategy and salon play-acting, just to get himself accepted, or just to exist, work and get his work acknowledged! Until the end of his life,

Proust sought to win over the various clans, to appropriate society's collective trance. Looked at this way, this fin-de-siècle dandy was the first writer who didn't shrink from the 'society of the spectacle'—the salons, editorial offices, publishing houses, soon television ... His attitude during the Dreyfus Affair was very significant. He defended Dreyfus right up until he realised that his supporters were forming an equally corruptible group by themselves, and furthermore flawed by an anticlericalism eager to close the cathedrals! Proust didn't trust any clan, whether it was a High Society, or literary, political or sexual ones. In *Sodom and Gomorrah* he writes, 'Let's leave to one side for the moment those who ... want to have us share their tastes, who are doing it ... with apostolic zeal, like others who preach Zionism, Saint-Simonism, vegetarianism and anarchy'. To go against the group and the gregarious instinct, you have to write in the mode of the fugue, compose cruel and ridiculous 'impressions' that shock and are most effective at dissolving clannish associations. They are the conditions of that particular experience, writing itself, as the search for 'pure embodied time' and of the 'book within'. Not above clans, nor without them, but through them, at their margins, in order to bear witness to them. 'Whether it was the Dreyfus affair or the war, each event provided writers with other excuses not to decipher this book, they wanted to secure the triumph of the law, restore the moral cohesion of the nation, hadn't the time to think about literature', (in *Time Regained*). This irony, aloof and complicit at the same time, endows Proust's texts with a pained clear-sightedness about the Society circles, salons and social classes, and it made him exceptionally attentive to the clannish instinct that entrances individuals.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Is Proust out of the ordinary in this?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Proust is unique, and few writers after him dared imitate him or comment on him. He is always impressive, when he isn't terrifying. Some still dismiss him, calling him 'little Marcel' and accusing him of having turned the novel into poetry, and killed it off as a result! Who are the great writers that came later who paid homage to him? Mauriac and Bataille, both attracted by Proust the mystic and the blasphemer; Blanchot, who detected the 'emptiness' in the cathedral that is the *Recherche* ... No, there aren't that many. Celine is fascinated by him, but just rejects him more completely as a rival supposed to have only written in 'Franco-Yiddish' ...

PHILIPPE PETIT: Would you say that today's French society is as clannish

as it was at the beginning of the century?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Yes, and I'll say exactly why. France is one of those countries where national unity is an essential historical realisation that has an aspect of myth or a cult. Of course, each person belongs to his family, a clan of friends, a professional clique, his province etc., but there is a sense of national cohesion that's anchored in language. It's an inheritance of the monarchy and of republican institutions, rooted in the language, in an art of living and in this harmonisation of shared customs called French taste. The Anglo-Saxon world is based on the family. Certainly, in France, the family is an essential refuge, but Gide could still say: 'Families, I detest you!' There is an entity above and beyond the family that is neither the Queen nor the Dollar, but the Nation. Montesquieu said it once and for all in the *Spirit of the Laws*: 'There are two sorts of tyranny: one is real, consisting in the violence of government; the other is the tyranny of opinion that makes its presence felt when those who govern set things up that go against the way the nation thinks'. Everywhere this 'way of thinking of the Nation' is a political given, it's a source of pride and an absolute factor in France. It can degenerate into a prickly and xenophobic nationalism, and we have many to testify to that in recent history. You would be slightly mistaken (to say the least), if you didn't take this into account, What is more, this cohesion has a tendency to fragment, so that you get networks, sub-groups, clans, each one as specious as the next, and all rivals, generating a positive and entertaining diversity, as much as a pernicious cacophony. Chamfort already said it: 'In France, there is no public or nation because rags don't make up a shirt'. What you can minimally argue is that rags remained prevalent under the Fifth Republic—the different parties all know quite a bit about that!

Proust described all this well: the Verdurins, the Guermantes, the professional circles, sexual ones ... Many meta-families that are initially liberating, enabling talents and vices to flourish, art to blossom, freeing up political debate and personal behaviour, but then they close in on themselves just as quickly in order to exclude the person who doesn't submit to the clan's rules—for being too personal, too free, too creative, like the artist, the Jew, the homosexual ... This is the sado-masochistic logic of clannishness: we like you as long as you are one of us but we expel you if you are yourself. It's impossible to 'step out of line' (Kafka), 'society is founded on a crime committed in common' (Freud). Proust shares a lot with Kafka and Freud, but he's funnier; he doesn't display his chagrin too much, doesn't set up a program of therapy, doesn't ever

withdraw into personal isolation or into ‘art for art’s sake’. He plays the game the better to laugh at it, laugh at the clan, at society, at oneself.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Outside society, no salvation. Unlike the Americans, we can’t be reborn in the desert ...

JULIA KRISTEVA: No salvation outside society? I wouldn’t say that, because you should add that we immediately create clans when jokers appear to put other people’s sense of humor and endurance to the test, society’s too ... The French all want to be jokers like d’Artagnan: nothing to do with Dostoyevski’s tragic joker, nor with the Protestant conquerors chasing Moby Dick, managing their fish factory with the Bible in their right hand ...

PHILIPPE PETIT: Jean Schlumberger said, ‘France will be in a state of dialogue for ever. I doubt, I know, I believe—take away one of these three assertions and France falls apart’. Do you find dialogue in France is a bit stifled these days?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Dialogue the French way isn’t intended to establish a consensus, but to surprise, to reveal, to innovate. It can seem disconcerting, and I’ve often felt that myself after a talk, for instance. French people listening to me go up to the mike and tell me that not only do they do it better than you but they’re doing something different entirely. Americans, on the other hand, ask real questions, they want to know essential truths, like whether you believe in immortality. I start off preferring the Americans’ naive curiosity, but in the end I get taken in by the dialogue of the deaf that the French carry on, because it uncovers insolent, often interesting, characters. And, anyway, psychoanalysis tells us that there is no dialogue, just desires clashing, forces colliding. From this point of view, the French are maybe more mature, more knowing than others.

That said, the political domain is designed to harmonise these conflicting desires and incompatible forces. Is this balance more lacking in France than in other countries? Frankly, I don’t think so. The French like appearances, like to show themselves, to show off in public, let other people in on how bad they’re feeling or what the state of their bank balance is. At the same time, this exhibition of unease doesn’t mean a total concession to media spectacle: one doesn’t believe in it so much, one remains mistrustful, not really taking it seriously. The French are

impressed by the media, of course, but don't allow themselves to get caught up in a Monicagate or an O. J. Simpson trial. Although they like spectacle, the French make fun of histrionics.

As for national pride, it can become Poujade-like arrogance and a lack of enterprising energy: the French aren't open to Europe and the world, and are content to cultivate tradition as a consolation. But it also offers aspects that are real advantages in this post-industrial age. For the 'people'—the people of Robespierre, Saint-Just and Michelet, I mean—poverty isn't a flaw. Sieyès spoke of the 'ever unhappy people', Robespierre was pleased that the 'wretched were applauding me', Saint-Just's conclusion was that 'the destitute are a world power'. Is it any wonder that the people on minimum wage and on welfare make their claims heard? More than in other countries, they have a sense of superiority because they belong to a prestigious culture. They wouldn't exchange that for the temptations of globalisation, not for anything. You'd say that's a pity, because the French will stay uncompetitive and lacking in enterprise. Even our students are hesitant about studying abroad, while we have a lot of foreign exchange students, eager to come here and learn. But a lot are beginning to realise it and are making up for the unbalance. On the other hand, this sense of dignity, i.e. taking away the guilty stigma of poverty and valuing the quality of life, is an increasingly welcome new perspective for both developing peoples and the people of industrial countries feeling oppressed by automation, inhuman hours, unemployment, lack of social security and so on. Clearly, when this proud and demanding entity we call the 'people' addresses itself to the public authorities then the dialogue that one would wish for turns into an open confrontation. For all that, though, I still don't think the channels of communication are blocked. But what if we took at face value popular demands to redistribute national and global wealth? It would be a precedent that would make other countries sit up and take notice ...

PHILIPPE PETIT: I find you optimistic, because it's very often grand-standing theatricals that overshadow what is really and intellectually at stake ...

JULIA KRISTEVA: I find you pessimistic. In what other country would you find the intellectual stakes more fundamental and more in the spotlight? Really! Just to stay in my own field: we have opened up a debate on modern psychoanalysis and its relations with neuroscience and politics that you don't have in any other country. I have just come back from a

conference in Toulouse where 800 people stayed on afterwards from six o'clock to eleven thirty that evening to discuss the detective novel and new maladies of the soul, asking fascinating questions on literature, mental health, the evolution of the family ... I really don't find the French half-asleep or theatrical.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Yes, but doesn't that explain a real absence of historical perspective in contemporary debate?

JULIA KRISTEVA: The grand historical perspectives, as well as the great challenges in history, are a function of their time, and you can't ask a globalised industrial society to follow the models of the last two centuries. The dichotomous logic of the great men and intellectual figures who fight obscurantism and power in anticipation of happier tomorrows has given way to a more complex situation. There's no use in looking for a Jean-Paul Sartre going up against Charles de Gaulle, Voltaire against the King. In our period of transition and endemic crisis, what counts is rather the questions than the answers. Just like it is in psychotherapy, the truth of 'historical perspective' would be to let new forms of questioning come in, instead of proposing solutions to meet the anxieties of the person under analysis. Modern revolt doesn't necessarily take the form of a clash of prohibitions and transgressions that beckons the way to firm promises; modern revolt is in the form of trials, hesitations, learning as you go, making patient and lateral adjustments to an endlessly complex network ... That doesn't prevent prospective ideologies from appearing to satisfy the psychological need for ideals and seduction. But we know better now where to put them in their rightful place—as actors in the 'Spectacle'.

PHILIPPE PETIT: What are the ways open to us?

JULIA KRISTEVA: The nation, for example, which we mustn't leave to the National Front. It's a common denominator that many people need, and we still need to separate what's best about it from what's worst. The idea of the people has to be protected from Poujadist and Le Penist conceptions, and safeguarded as guarantor of generosity and a culture of *jouissance*—the very opposite of anodyne globalisation.

PHILIPPE PETIT: How do you explain the new dimension the nation is taking on these days?

JULIA KRISTEVA: I'm going to rely on psychoanalysis to answer you.

Depression is one of this century's commonest maladies, particularly in France. A recent statistic showed that our country is one of those where suicide deaths are the highest, fourth in Europe behind Finland, Denmark and Austria (not counting the ex-Eastern bloc and China). The causes of depression are complicated: wounded narcissism, inadequate maternal relations, the absence of paternal ideals, and so on. They all make the subject forget how important it is to make connections: initially language (a person who is depressed doesn't speak, he 'doesn't believe' in communication, wraps himself up in silence and tears, inaction and immobility), and ultimately connections to life itself (it ends in the cult of death and suicide). More and more, you sense that today individual depression is also the expression of social distress: losing a job, longer and longer-term unemployment, problems at work, poverty, lack of ideals and perspectives.

Above and beyond individuals, you sense that France is suffering from depression on a national scale, analogous to the one private people have. We no longer have the image of a great power that de Gaulle restored to us; France's voice is less and less heard, it has less weight in European negotiations, even less when in competition with America. Migrant influxes have created familiar difficulties and a more or less justifiable sense of insecurity, even of persecution. Ideals or clear and simple perspectives like the ones the demagogic ideologies used to offer—and they are no less tempting—are out of place. In this setting, the country is reacting no differently than a depressed patient. The first reaction is to withdraw: you shut yourself away at home, don't get out of bed, don't talk, you complain. Lots of French aren't interested in community life and politics, they aren't active, gripe a lot. And then what do you do with French patriotism, a crowing arrogance that is part of our tradition? It's a too easy contempt for others, an excessive self-assurance that makes them prefer to forget the world outside and avoid going to the trouble of undertaking something worthwhile. Today, the French are both boastful and self-deprecating, or lacking in self-esteem altogether. What is more, a person who is depressed has tyrannical ideals, and it's his draconian superego demanding a supposedly deserved and expected perfection that, at bottom, orchestrates the depression. I formulated this hypothesis in 1990, in *Lettre ouverte à Harlem Désir* (translated as *Nations without Nationalism*). Since then, this malady has had moments of growth and decline, and we were at rock bottom before the 'dissolution' of Parliament in 1997. Still, as a result of the subsequent elections and the real or perhaps simply promised economic upswing, the French mood is

visibly improving. But that latent depression hasn't gone away despite everything.

PHILIPPE PETIT: What does the analyst do faced with a patient who is that depressed?

JULIA KRISTEVA: He begins by restoring self-confidence; you do this by rebuilding both their self-image and the relation between the two partners in this cure, so that communication can begin again and a real analysis of this unease can happen. Similarly, the depressed nation has to have the best image of itself that it can, before it can be capable of going ahead with European integration, for example, or industrial and commercial expansion, or a warmer reception of immigrants. It's not about flattering the French, nor trying to foster illusions about qualities that they don't have. But it's the nation's cultural heritage that isn't stressed enough, which means as much its aesthetic as its technical and scientific capabilities, despite such a lot of justified criticism. Particularly guilty of this are intellectuals: they're always ready and willing sceptics, quick to push Cartesianism to the point of self-loathing. Giraudoux wrote: 'Nations, like men, die from imperceptible discourtesies'. I wonder if our generosity to the Third World and our cosmopolitanism haven't often led us to commit imperceptible discourtesies that aggravate our national depression. It's time to attend to it. For if depressives commit suicide first, they find consolation for their pain by reacting like maniacs: instead of undervaluing themselves, lapsing into inertia, they mobilise, sign up for war—holy wars, inevitably. Then, they hunt down enemies, preferably phony ones. You'll recognise the National Front and integrationist movements there.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Ernest Renan said: 'The nation is a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's very existence is the perpetual affirmation of life'. To a greater or lesser degree, the nation is a historical unit born out of conflict. Making these conflicts come to the surface isn't an easy thing to do for the kind of individuals we are.

JULIA KRISTEVA: When contemporary psychoanalysis encounters these 'new maladies of the soul', what shows up are failures to work out psychic conflicts. It gets to the point where not only are some people today incapable of telling good from bad (both become banal as a result—Hannah Arendt had already seen that happen during the Holocaust—but for many, their psyches can't represent their conflicts for them (in

sensations, words, images, thoughts). And so they're laying themselves open to vandalism, psychosomatic illnesses, drugs. Conversely, you could say that modern society also offers spaces and occasions to try to remedy these deficiencies. Society has explicitly delegated psychoanalysis to the task, representing one of these opportunities individuals are offered to work out their conflicts and crises. It sort of takes over from politics and religion, which were traditionally the proper places for the expression of our conflicts. It has to adapt itself to historical change, be more involved in society's debates and not turn its back to the media, but, above all, build new bridges with the human sciences, medicine, and neuro-psychiatric research. More broadly, civil society is trying to find new political ways to allow its conflicts, for too long stifled by an excessively centralised national administration and political parties, to show up and develop. Associative life, which seems to be developing better and better, could be this new version of the nation: it could offer a unifying public space that provides a sense of identity, memory and an ideal—working like an antidepressant, in so many words. At the same time, it would multiply contacts between individuals, providing care geared to the diverse demands made on it.

PHILIPPE PETIT: In the talk 'Europhilia, Europhobia' you gave at NYU in November 1997, you say: 'Before you undertake a real analysis of its resistances and defense mechanisms, it is important to restore national confidence in the same way you would restore narcissism or the ideal self in a depressive patient'. Are you confident about national self-confidence?

JULIA KRISTEVA: I trust the respect for public space, the capacity to take away the stigmas that surround misery and the exercise of solidarity in the face of it. But also the pride in cultural heritage and the culture of *jouissance* and freedom. I distrust the attraction of 'the good old days,' nationalism (which isn't the same as the nation), and sexism. But I've already gone over that, so let me say a bit more about what I'm personally confident about.

Even if a nation defines itself in terms of its ties to blood or soil, most base their image of identity on language. It's particularly true for France. The history of the monarchy and the republic, given their administrative cultures, the verbal code, and their rhetorical and pedagogical institutions, led to an unprecedented fusion of national and linguistic entities. It means that literary avant-gardes have to be more subversive and extremist in France than anywhere else, just to disrupt this protective layer of rhetoric.

Those avant-gardes are severely marginalised or abolished during a time of national depression, invariably met by a retreat behind set ideas about identity. There is then a cult of traditional language, or ‘French good taste’, which shores up a failing, or even unrecoverable, sense of identity.

The foreigner, who is always a translator of sorts, hasn’t much of a chance in this kind of context. Of course, there have always been Jewish courtiers and foreigners admitted to the the *Académie française*. But these alibis, which flatter the national conscience, shouldn’t mask the basic tendency: just like the avant-garde’s daredevil feats, those who dare to incorporate themselves into an ‘other language’ are met with suspicion and quickly fall victim to ostracism. It’s easy to understand why, in France, people who are the most shrewdly nationalistic, the most insidiously xenophobi, set up and exercise their power in the institutions that oversee literature studies. He or she who speaks the ‘other language’ is invited to be silent ... unless he or she joins one of the reigning clans, or one of the rhetorics that hold sway. Naturally, she or he can also try to leave the country, to be translated abroad. Actually, the fate of the outsider is open by definition: perhaps that’s its salvation in the end ...

When I come home to France after trips to the four corners of the globe, it sometimes happens that I don’t recognise myself in these French discourses, despite the fact that it’s been my only language for thirty years now. They are discourses that look the other way on evils, on the world’s misery, and instead applaud the tradition of irresponsibility—when it’s not nationalism—as the sole remedy to our century. For alas, it’s not the glorious seventeenth century, nor the century of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau ... After a day of psychoanalysis sessions—where there’s a place for real speech, even if it is dysfunctional—there’s nothing worse than reading or meeting some journalist or other, punctiliously serving up the stereotypes of stylistic and philosophical protectionism. French excels in false praise, in hollow enthusiasms, in heady eulogy of those who are ‘one of us’. It’s more resistant to hybrid versions of itself, unlike English, and it’s not interested when it comes to adding new things to the language, unlike American, which constitutes a new body of language, nor even Russian, despite everything. French today has a tendency to be satisfied by an untranslatable authenticity. All in all, it’s a temple, and certain institutions and organs of the press—more than writers themselves, by definition nomadic and scorched souls—are trying to wall it in. If the outsider gets worried, starts talking or criticising, he is accused of disparaging France. Frenchness hardens into a regionalist stance, and,

like in Aeschylus's time, only allows outsiders one discourse—the humble supplicant's ...

PHILIPPE PETIT: What did you think about getting rid of military service?

JULIA KRISTEVA: You're bringing me back to serious matters. I totally approve of getting rid of it. I'm going to make a confession: I've always detested military service. I've never understood why some of my female friends, when I was a little girl, wanted to be boys. The mere idea of military service made a choice like that awful.

PHILIPPE PETIT: From a republican point of view, doesn't it shock you that we're getting rid of something that was after all a place (like school too) of social mixing?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Do you seriously think military service is the only place for social mixing? Frankly, though I'm convinced patriotism isn't passé yet, I still think there are other ways of cultivating it—scientific, artistic, or sporting competition, for example. As for social mixing, public schools and universities are appropriate places. In a modest way, I'm taking part in a rethinking of how higher education is organised; among other things, it includes a possible fusing of the *grandes écoles* and the universities. It's definitely not about taking away from the excellence of the former or the generosity of the latter, but allowing a better mix. In a civilian context—for it doesn't have to be necessarily military—there are other, similar activities you can think of, like helping the disadvantaged at school, in the so-called 'fourth world', and so on. They're activities that develop a real concern for others, i.e. love and caring. That's what 'public service' means, doesn't it? To serve, care for, preserve, revive? Caring, like a basic degree of love, is also a powerful anti-depressant. 'Service'—OK; but 'army'—no. It's not my thing ... But don't you think you're overdoing it a bit, asking me all sorts of questions, as if you take me for one of these intellectuals—though they don't exist anymore—who has an answer for everything? From military service to theories of the Big Bang—why not, while we're at it?

PHILIPPE PETIT: People have been talking recently about reintroducing lay morality in schools. Do you think we should teach children to love their country?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Why not? But a sense of 'my country' as a reserve of

memory or an imaginary limit, rather than in terms of a religious foundation or an ultimate origin. So you would go in search of the past, and get a sense of being different from others. A memory and limit that one would love: it's a long march that may give love itself a new flavour. It would be a more internalised and sober sense of love.

PHILIPPE PETIT: What is a successful transfer?

JULIA KRISTEVA: For me, it would be just like analytic transference. This implies that there is a separation: at the end of my analysis sessions, I leave my analyst. My inhibitions and censoring mechanisms are relaxed, I'm in touch with my unconscious drives and my creativity increases; it is a state of autonomy that makes me capable of freedom and choice, far beyond what my analyst has transmitted to me right there and then (literally). In short, a successful transfer is one you can question and modify, one that stimulates the creativity of the 'disciple'.

PHILIPPE PETIT: At the same time, you recognise that you can't master what you're conveying?

JULIA KRISTEVA: That goes without saying. If the two extremes are dogma and just anything goes, what a good 'master' conveys to his disciple is both a set of literal meanings and a sense of rigour. And at the same time, an ability to question, make new beginnings, re-births.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Don't you find it a shame that we've got rid of the oath-swearing ceremony that confers nationality?

JULIA KRISTEVA: It seems logical to me that children born of foreign parents raised on French soil, educated in French schools, and speaking French, get French nationality without having to ask for it. You would put the matter differently for new-comers.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Yes, but there isn't the symbolic act of commitment. It's a formality. It's not symbolic, or ritualised. There is no civic oath ...

JULIA KRISTEVA: I attach a lot of importance to ritual because it harbours an irreplaceable symbolic potential. I have been very touched by the ceremonies of American or Canadian universities, especially when they have elected me to honorary doctorates. The elections also include the students: there is a tangible recognition of their status as intellectual

individuals, their integration into a national and international academic community, and into the symbolic memory of their school. This tradition has been lost in France, or it's pretty perfunctory. I try in vain to revive it, and it just earns me pitying smiles. People tell me that the French have too good a sense of humour to go along with all that play-acting. That remains to be seen. You could think of rituals adapted to this ludic spirit: for example, if we're talking about the university of Paris Denis-Diderot, where I teach, it could borrow from the symbolism of the *Encyclopédie*, and include the arts and poetry, as well as a party of course ...

PHILIPPE PETIT: 'If we are only free subjects in so far as we are strangers to ourselves, it follows that the social ties shouldn't associate identities, but federate alterities.' You wrote this in the journal *L'Infini*. Can you be more specific on that?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Following on from Rimbaud, psychoanalysis makes us admit 'I is an other', and even several others. Overturning the traditional notion of a person's 'identity' is in the same spirit as the 'deicidal' movement I was talking about in the context of May '68. If God becomes a stable Value, if the Person coheres into a stable identity, all well and good, but all the energy of modern culture is directed against this homogeneity and tendency toward stagnation—what it exposes instead is fragmentation. Not only are we divided, harbouring within 'ourselves' alterities we can sometimes hardly bear, but this polyphony gives us pleasure. This is enough to threaten facile morality and compacted entities. Consequently, it's not surprising that a lot of people are giving twentieth-century culture a miss, don't want to open their eyes and see the actually troubling truths, all that reveals. However, by recognising this strangeness intrinsic to each of us, we have more opportunities to tolerate the foreignness of others. And subsequently, more opportunities to try to create less monolithic, more polyphonic communities.

PHILIPPE PETIT: What do you mean by 'federation'?

JULIA KRISTEVA: An accord between polyphonic people, respectful of their reciprocal foreignness. A couple that lasts, for example, is necessarily a federation of at least four partners: the masculine and the feminine sides in the man, the feminine and masculine sides in the woman. I dream of a public and secular space in France that stays committed to preserving the 'general spirit' dear to Montesquieu, but wouldn't erase the foreignness of each of the constituent parts of the French make-up

either; it would federate, respect, and unify them instead. And this is neither a neutralising incorporation into a larger universal whole nor English-style communitarianism that breaks the ‘general spirit’. All in all, it’s a subtle balance we haven’t yet managed to put into practice.

PHILIPPE PETIT: Outside France and its culture, what are the countries you feel closest to?

JULIA KRISTEVA: Greece is my cradle; my homeland, Bulgaria, is a part of old Byzantium. I’m writing my next novel on it—it’s another detective novel, but this time on the Crusades. I feel close to the Russians, because of the melancholy and carnivalesque sensuality of the ‘Slavic soul’. But, I get the strongest impression of civilisation from Italy and Spain. By way of reply, I’ll read a few passages from my novel *Possessions*: ‘Many fall in love with Italy, and I have too: its profusion of beauty that perpetually astonishes one, an excitement akin to serenity. Others desire Spain: it is haughty because it is unreasonable, mystical but nonchalant. As for me, I have definitively taken refuge in France ... I lodge my body in the logical landscape of France, take shelter in the sleek, easy and smiling streets, rub shoulders with this odd people—they are reserved, but disabused, and possessed of an impenetrable intimacy, which is, all things considered, polite. They built Notre-Dame and the Louvre, conquered Europe and a large part of the globe, and then went back home again because they prefer a pleasure that goes hand in hand with reality. But because they also prefer the pleasures reality affords, they still believe themselves masters of the world, or at any rate a great power. An irritated, condescending, fascinated world that seems ready to follow them. To follow us’.

Cultúr an Phoblachtánachais

Faoi Léigear

TOMÁS MAC SÍOMÓIN

D'fhógair Uachtarán S.A.M., an 'poblachtánach' George W. Bush, mí na Samhna seo caite go raibh faoi an 'daonlathas' a chraobhscaoileadh an fuaid an domhain. Ní hé fearacht an oirfidigh chéanna, is éard is aidhm don daonlathas, dar le údar an aiste seo, smacht iomlán ag pobal feasach ar na cinntí uilig a bhaineann leis. Agus is éard atá sa bpoblacht idéalach, dar leis, dispeansáid ina mbeadh a leithéid de dhaonlathas i réim. Déanaimse idirdhealú riachtanach, dá réir sin, idir poblachtánachas Dhara Phoblacht na Fraince (poblachtánachas maorlathúil), ar mhúnla riaracháin é do 'phoblachtaí' agus stáit áirithe eile, agus poblachtánachas na Réabhlóide (poblachtánachas eiticiciúil, sóisialachas). An poblachtánachas eiticiciúil a sholáthraíonn an pheirspeictíocht as a bhfuil an aiste seo a leanas scríofa. Aiste phoileimiciúil seachas alt acadúil, breac le tagairtí léannta, a bhí fúm a chur ar fáil. Ach, don té ar spéis leis é, tá liosta de na saothair ar tharraing mé orthu ar fáil sa nóta ag deireadh an ailt.

Fir ghlúine an phoblachtánachais

FÁS nó bás!

Í féin a chaomhnú agus a iolrú sin é an dlí a leagann an dúlra ar chuile orgánacht, poblacht nó pollóg, a bhfuil todhchaí i ndán dí. Ach córas soch-eacnamaíoch a bheith i gceist, bheadh a sheasmhacht agus cumas a atháirgthe ag brath, cuid mhaith, ar éifeacht oideachasúil 'intleachtóirí orgánacha' an chórais chéanna. Gníomhaithe cultúrtha, sa gciall is leithne den fhocal, a mhaireann ar an teorainn idir smaoinemh sóisialta agus gníomh, an chiall atá le leagan seo Antonio Gramsci. Is faoi na hintleachtóirí céanna a bhíonn sé an pobal a oiliúint, iad ag cinntiú go n-inmheánaíonn sé pé ar bith leagan den réalachas is gá lena leanúnachas féin mar phobal ar leith a chinntiú. Ba shampla thar barr dá leithéidí Sofaistigh na seanGhréige, múinteoirí agus gníomhaithe cultúrtha a chruthaigh agus a chraobhscaoil 'cultúr' na linne a raibh siad beo inti. Bá é an cultúr céanna a sholáthraigh an comhtháiteachas idé-eolaíoch a theastaigh le go gcaomhnófaí agus go bhforbrófaí daonlathas poblachtánach chathair-stáit na Gréige.

An idé-eolaíocht phoblachtánach a d'fhás i mbroinn Shoilsíú Mór na

Gréige san dara leath den 5ú Aois R.Ch., b'in an 'cultúr' a chraobhscaoil na Sofaistigh seo. Ba iad a bhunaigh córas oideachais inar tugadh droim láimhe do chothú na modhanna aingialta smaointeoireachta a bhí i réim sular tháinig siad siúd ar an bhfód. Ba éard a bhí uathu, córas ina mbeadh saoránaigh a bheadh lánoilte ar rannpháirtócht i ndíospóireachtaí céillí á gcruthú. Saoránaigh a dhéanfadh cinntí réasúnacha nuair a bheadh an crú ar an tairne, agus a bheadh rialaithe ag an réasún seachas ag siotaí fánacha an chroí nó ag fasaigh an traidisiúin chalchta! Ghlac na nua-shuáilcí poblachtánacha seo, a bhí bunaithe ar mhachnamh loighiciúil maille le cothú na spride is úsáid na teanga, áit na miotas traidisiún-bheannaithe is na n-idéal uasalaicmeach a chuaigh rompu. Den chéad uair ariamh i stair an chine, ba é an cuspóir a bhí ag an oideachas an duine nua, ar dá ndlúth is dá n-inneach géire na beachtaíochta, a chruthú agus a chur ag feidhmiú sa bpobal.

Agus aríst, i gcás na Sofaistigh seo tá muid ag bualadh den chéad uair ariamh le haicme intleachtúil a bhí, ní hé fearacht dhraoi-aicmí dúnta na réamhstaire, fite fuaite le gnáthmhuintir an phobail. D'fhorbair agus mhúin siad bunús idé-eolaíoch na Nua-Ghréige gur chuir ar aghaidh é ó ghlún go glún.

D'eascair cur chuige na Sofaistigh as tuiscint a bhí réabhlóideach ag an am, .i. nach bhfuil teorainn le cumas an duine é féin a oiliúint ná a fheabhsú. Ba thuiscint í a tháinig salach go hiomlán ar sheandogma miotach úd na fola a thug le fios go raibh suáilce an duine teoranta ag a dhúchas. Nó ag pé ar bith cinniúint a bhí leagtha amach ag mná na tuirne nó ag fórsaí osnádúrtha eile dó. Leis an smaoinemh céanna a chur i dtéarmaí comhaimseartha, déarfaí gurb iad na crómasóim a rialaíonn iompar an duine. B'as prionsabail oideachasúla seo na Sofaistigh a d'fhás coincheap an chultúir, mar a thuigtear in Iarthar Domhain é, coincheap atá bunaithe ar chomhfhios, ar fhéintuiscint, ar bheachtaíocht is, thar ní ar bith eile, ar an mbuancheisniú. Ba iad na Sofaistigh chéanna a thionscnaigh stair réasúnachas an Iarthair, maille le díchonstruáil na miotas is na ndogmaí seanbhunaithe agus feachtas géarscrúdaithe mhachnamh an ghnáthaimh. As an bhfiuchadh intleachtúil seo, d'eascair an choibhneastacht stairiúil agus an t-aitheantas don bhunús daonna stairiúil atá ag fírinne na heolaíochta, norma na heitice agus dogmaí reiligiúnda. Dar leis na Sofaistigh, is torthaí ar ghníomhú intinn an duine na luacha is na dlíthe uilig a bhaineann le heolaíocht, dlí, moráltacht, agus miotaseolaíocht. Agus an pragmatachas atá taobh thiar de luacha an duine aitheanta acu, ba iad na Sofaistigh seo réamhgharda intleachtúil na ngluaiseachtaí daonnachtúla a ghinfeadh An Athbheochan, Soilsíú na 18ú Aoise (maille leis an bpoblachtánachas teoriciúil agus practiciúil a

d'eascair as) agus ábharachas na 19ú Aoise.

Ba phoblachtánaigh iad na Sofaistigh, a raibh a mbá leis an té a bhí thíos, leis an té a bhí imeallaithe.

I bpobail eile seachas pobal Gréagach úd na hallóide, chomhlíonfadh seámain, draoithe, filí, manaigh, múinteoirí scoile, iriseoirí, scríbhneoirí, ealaíontóirí, bolscairí raidió agus teilifíse, gníomhairí fógraíochta, spin-dohtúirí etc. an dualgas bunúsach céanna: craobhscaoileadh chultúr an phobail ó lá go lá, ó ghlún go glún. Sa gcaoi is go mbraithfí na cultúir úd, arbh ionann chuile cheann acu agus an 'réalachas sóisialta' lenar bhain sé, a bheith chomh nádúrtha le gaoth na gcnoc, le huisce glan na bhfiodán ...

Cultúr, ardhcultúr agus caitheamh aimsire

Tá an focal 'cultúr' pas beag débhríoch i gcaint na ndaoine, áfach. Is éard atá i gceist leis go dtí seo, an bharrthógáil idé-eolaíoch iomlán, maille leis na gníomhaíochtaí uilig a eascraíonn uaithi, a bheadh ag córas soch-eacnamaíoch ar leith. I bhfocla eile, an t-eolas (daonna, ealaíonta, teicniúil), an meon agus na luachanna a thiomáineann an córas. É sin uilig, maille leis na déantúsáin ábhartha a ghinfí: b'ionann sin agus 'cultúr' i gciall antrapeolaíoch an fhocail. Sa mbealach seo labhraítear ar 'Chultúr Indiach Mheiriceá Láir', abair, ar 'Chultúr na bPrócaí Adhlactha' nó ar 'Chultúr Coca Cola', go fiú's ...

Is as iomoibriú leanúnach bhunús ábhartha an phobail (a bhuntógáil) lena bharrthógáil (cultúr, mar a shainmhínigh muid cheana é) a thig sainiúlacht saoil phobal ar leith. Gan athrú bunúsach ar cheachtar acu siúd, an bhun- nó an bharrthógáil, ní bheadh athrú sóisialta, réabhlóid ar bith, insamhlaithe. Sa gcaoi seo, tuigtear buntionchur polaitiúil—agus cumhacht—na n-intleachtóirí orgánacha. Gurb é a n-innealtóireacht bharrthógála siadsan a shainmhíneann mianach (agus teorainneacha) a réalachais féin do phobal ar leith. A mheallann an pobal chun a bheith sásta leis an réalachas seo. Nó a shaghdáíonn an pobal chun rúbriicí an ghnáthaimh a threascart agus nuaíocht shóisialta a chruthú ina áit.

An bhrí eile atá ag an bhfocal cultúr, an bhrí choiteann, ná na cruthanna, na comharthaí is na fuaimanna fré chéile trína sainmhíneann an pobal é féin dó féin. Trína n-aithníonn an pobal é féin agus trína nglacann sé, nó a mhalairt, lena réalachas féin. Bainfear feidhm as an leagan 'na healaíona' nó 'ardcultúr' go minic san aiste seo le cur síos ar an ngné seo de réalachas na beatha.

Is réimse leathan é a chuimsíonn na healaíona ceiliúrtha (ceol, damhsa), na healaíona plaisteacha (dealbhadóireacht, dathadóireacht, snoíodóireacht, criadóireacht etc.) agus na scéal-ealaíona (litríocht, dráma agus, go dtí pointe áirithe, scannáin). Tá an earnáil seo ró-roighin, ar ndóigh, sa

méad is nach bhfuil spás soiléir don cheoldráma ann ná do chumaisc chomhaimseartha éagsúla ar nós na filíochta canta, cuir i gcás, ná ceol nasctha leis na healaíona plaisteacha. Ach, i gcomhthéacs an argóint atá á forbairt anseo, tuigfear cén ghné den chultúr atá i gceist leis ‘na healaíona’.

Ba é Cicero an chéad duine a d’úsáid an téarma *cultura* sa gciall chúng úd, ‘ardchultúr’, atá go díreach mínithe. D’úsáid sé é le cur síos ar na gnéithe spioradálta agus teibí de phearsantacht an duine. Agus, spéisiúil go leor i gcomhthéacs argóint na haiste seo, nascann sé an téarma le cur chuige polaitiúil an té a mbeadh an ‘cultúr’ seo aige. Thig *cultura* ón mbriathar *colere*, a chiallaíonn cóilíniú nó an talamh a shaothrú. Labhraíonn sé dá réir ar *cultura animi*, ar shaothrú na hintinne, go díreach mar a labhraítear san lá atá inniu ann ar an intinn shaothraithe, an intinn chultúrtha. Sna *Tusculanae disputationes* maíonn Cicero go soiléir gurb éard atá san intinn, gort nach dtugann torthaí go réidh uaidh gan é a shaothrú roimhré. De bharr an tsaothrú seo, thuigfeadh an duine cultúrtha an bealach cuí le nithe, daoine agus smaointí a roghnú. Sa mbealach seo, samhlaítear *cultura* a bheith bonn ar aon leis na suáilcí cathartha eile, go speisialta *humanitas*, a bhainfeadh le saoránaigh ar ní barrthábhachtach dóibh a bheith saor, neamhspleách, gan ligint do bhrú ar bith cur isteach orthu agus iad ag plé le cúrsaí ealaíne, fealsúnachta ná eolaíochta. Mar a dúirt Cicero féin: ‘diúltaím a bheith curtha faoi bhrú ar bith, ag an bhfírinne féin nó ag an áilleacht, fiú’.

Le himeacht aimsire, sháraigh ciall an fhocail ‘cultúr’ an sainmhíniú a thug Cicero dó. Is éard atá i gceist anois le *cultura animi* ná deá-thoighis, íogaireacht shaothraithe i leith na háilleachta. Is éard is cultúr ann de réir na gnáth-thuisceana ná an chaoi a dhéileálann sibhialtachtaí leis na nithe is lú feidhme, saothar na bhfilí, na gceoltóirí, na scríbhneoirí, na bhfealsúnaithe etc. Ach cérbh as do chaighdeáin na dea-thoighise faoi na coinníollacha seo? Dhearbhaigh Peiricléas gurbh é an *pólis*, an chathair ina dtarlaíonn an chumarsáid dhaonna agus ina mbíonn polaitíocht ar siúl, an ball as a n-eascaíonn slat tomhais na haeistéitice. ‘Mórann muid an áilleacht taobh istigh de na teorainneacha atá leagtha síos ag caighdeáin na dea-pholaitíochta’, a dúirt sé.

Dar leis na Rómhánaigh, ba é an *banausia* (a chuireann, a bheag nó a mhór, coincheap an fhilistíneachais in iúl) malairt ghlan an *cultura animi*. Shainigh siad é mar easpa iomlán caighdeáin chun nithe a shamhailt agus a mheas taobh amuigh den fheidhm phraicticiúil a d’fhéadfaí a bhaint astu. Agus, pointe nár mhiste a mheabhú i gcomhthéacs chathréim reatha an nualibrálachais, shíl na poblachtánaigh Rómhánacha go mba bhagairt do dheariar shaol na polaitíochta an filistíneachas céanna sa méad is nár

chuir sé slat ar bith ar fáil le leas an phobail a thomhas, seachas norma loma an fheidhmeachais. Cheadódh filistínigh dá samhail pé ar bith gníomh ba ghá, dar leo, chun a gcuspóirí a bhaint amach, beag beann ar pé ar bith dochar comhthaobhach a dhéanfadh an cur chuige áirithe a roghnóidís. Ní call a rá go bhfuil an clamhsán ceannann céanna le cloisteáil go minic ar urlár an lae inniu. Gan ach beirt de mhórrthachtairí cultúrtha na linne a lua, tá sé curtha ar an taifead ag George Steiner agus Hannah Arendt araon gur bagairt mhór don daonlathas filistíneachas an lae inniu. Ar mórán na cúiseanna céanna a bhí ag na Rómhánaigh leis an bhfilistíneachas a cháineadh.

Ar éigean más call a rá gur bagairt mhór é an cur chuige filistíneach seo do na healaíona. Arae, nuair is norma an fheidhmeachais an tslat tomhais a úsáidtear le saothair ealaíne a mheas, ní féidir ach gan iad a dhíluacháil (sa gciall leathan den fhocal).

Ag an bpointe seo, ní foláir an difríocht idir ardchultúr, mar atá sé sainmhíniú ag ainm, agus caitheamh aimsire a rianú. Déanann Hannah Arendt talamh slán de go bhfuil difríocht bunúsach idir an dá shlí seo le fuinneamh an duine a chur in iúl:

Caitheamh aimsire, agus ní cultúr, a bhíonn a dhith ar phobal na mórshluaite. Ídionn an pobal na hearraí a chuireann tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire ar fáil dó mórán mar a d'ídeodh sé tráchtearra fánach ar bith. Bíonn gá ag an bpopal le caitheamh aimsire, bíodh is nach mbíonn sé chomh riachtanach le harán ná feoil.

Meileann sé an t-am, mar a deirtear go minic. Ach ní fhéadfaí a rá go mbíonn an t-am a mheiltear sa gcaoi seo caite le *recreation*, 'ath-chruthú' an duine i gciall bhunúsach an fhocail. An t-am a bhíonn ar fáil dúinn le páirt chruthaitheach a ghlacadh sna healaíona, nó le taitneamh gníomhach a bhaint astu, i ndiaidh obair an lae, sos, atá i gceist leis an gcoincheap. Ní díspeagadh ar chaitheamh aimsire atá i gceist. Is eadarlúid riachtanach i ngnáthamh an tseachtain oibre í an t-am falamh úd a líontar le sos agus caitheamh aimsire, a laghdaíonn an strus agus teannas a chothaíonn an gnáthamh-choigilt chéanna.

Ach, a bhuí le conníollacha strusúla na linne a bhfuil muid beo inti, tá méadú gan staonadh ag teacht ar an am a chaitear le caitheamh neamhghníomhach aimsire. Agus laghdú dá réir ar an am atá ar fáil don ardchultúr. Anuas ar sin, tá claonadh láidir ann chun 'an t-am falamh' seo a líonadh le táirgí gearrshaolacha thionscal an chaitheamh aimsire. Ní earraí cultúrtha iad seo a mheastar ar a gcumas chun iad féin a bhuanú sa mbeatha dhaonna, agus chun an tsibhialtacht a shaibhriú dá réir, dála déantúsáin na n-ealaíon. Ní luacha ach an oiread iad a d'fhéadfaí a úsáid

nó a mhalartú. Níl iontu ar deireadh ach tráchtearraí tomhaltais atá ann le bheith ídithe, scriosta, dála tráchtearra ar bith. Is ar a ‘nuaíocht’ is ar a n-úire amháin a mheastar iad. Ní ag déanamh leas shaol na n-ealaíon atá an claonadh a bhraitear ar na saolta seo chun an tslat tomhais cheannann chéanna á chur le déantúsáin na n-ealaíon agus a chuirtear le táirgí thionscal an chaitheamh aimsire ...

Le craos dosháraithe an tionscail seo agus é ar thóir ábhair dá ghoile, is fearann dlisteanach sealgaireachta dó é stair uilig an chine dhaonna go nuige seo, gan trácht ar an stair chomhaimseartha. Ní chiallaíonn sé sin go scaiptear ardcultúr imeasc na n-ollsluaite, áfach. Arae, agus ardcultúr á phróiseáil le caitheamh aimsire a chumadh as, scriostar a eisint. ‘Tá i bhfad Éireann níos mó craic le baint as *Jesus Christ Superstar* nó as *Calvary* Mel Gibson ná as léamh an Bhíobla!’ B’in a d’áiteodh giománaigh thionscal an chaitheamh aimsire orainn. Níorbh ionann go baileach an éifeacht intleachtúil nó spioradálta a bheadh ag an léamh agus ag an scannán ar an saoránach. Ach ba achoimriú beacht ar an bhfeidhm atá ag a leithéid d’intleachtóirí in atháirgeadh thimpeallacht chultúrtha na linne, timpeallacht an fhilistíneachais, a leithéid de ráiteas.

Ní hé ardcultúr na mórshluaite (nach ann dó dháiríre) toradh na sealgaireachta seo—ach caitheamh aimsire na n-ollsluaite. Rud eile uilig é seo, arb é an mothú gearrshaolach a sprioc. Beathaíonn sé é féin, mar a bheadh ollsúmaire ann, le déantúsáin ealaíona na cruinne. Is éard atá i gceist leis, ná cuireadh muid fiacail ann, ná ísliú na daonnachta go leibhéal ainmhíoch na beatha. Ach nach cuma, fhad’s a choinnítear na daoine sásta?

Ach an cuma, dháiríre? Tógaimís ceist na polaitíochta i ré seo an chaitheamh aimsire, mar shampla. Tharla an díospóireacht pholaitiúil a bheith tiontaithe ina thaispeántas teilifíse gona lucht fulangach féachana, seachas ina dhiospóireacht oscailte rannpháirtíoch, ní dóithín é an smacht atá ag tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire ar mheon is ar chlaontaí idé-eolaíocha an phobail. Is fada ó chomhthionóil phoiblí na hallóide atá cur chuige pholaitiúil na huaire. Níorbh aon chuid de pholaitíocht Chathair na hAithne ná na Fraince am na *gcommunards*, abair, tionchur na n-ollnuachtán, an raidió ná na teilifíse ollchumhachtaí. Gan trácht ar an gcumhacht agus ar na foinsí airgeadais a bhíonn ar fáil do mhaorlathais na bpáirtithe. Déantar aithris go forleathan thall is abhus ar mhúnla pholaitíocht Mheiriceá ar na saolta seo. Ar na comhthionóil údan a eagraítear le hiarrthóirí a roghnú, ar toradh iad, shílfeá, ar chrosphóru chluichí peile le haontaí capall. Agus ina mbíonn ‘an pholaitíocht’ feannta anuas go fuaimghreimeanna bídeacha a bhíonn i bhfeil do leanbaíocht pholaitiúil an phobail. Bhí ceangal ann ariamh idir an amharclann agus an

pholaitíocht, ar ndóigh. Ach san lá atá inniu ann, dhealródh sé go bhfuil na teorainneacha a dhealaigh ó chéile an dá ghné riachtanach seo de shaol an phobail imithe ina ngail soip. Bíodh muid ag smaoineamh ar Reagan agus ar Schwarzenegger ...

Agus seo an buille tromchúiseach, má tá an scéal mar atá á léamh go beacht anseo: Tá dochar mór déanta, agus á dhéanamh go leanúnach, ag seó polaitiúil na meán do chumas an tsaoirneach chun roghain feasach réasúnach polaitiúil a dhéanamh, *sine qua non* an fhíordhaonlathais. Na meáin cheannaithe chéanna a d'fhógródh go neamhnáireach gurb í an tsaoirse tuairimíochta an chloch ba mhó ar a bpaidríní. Na meáin chéanna a ruaigeann an bhrí as an díospóireacht phoiblí agus as an ardchultúr trí chaitheamh aimsire a chumadh astu. Agus ar meicníocht iad na meáin chéanna, dá réir sin, le tabhairt ar an bpobal glacadh le clár oibre na scothaicmí a rialaíonn.

Fadhb mhór an daonlathais, nach bhfuil a réiteach aimsithe fós, áfach, ná an chaoi le saoirse tuairimíochta a chaomhnú agus a fhorbairt agus ag cinntiú ag an am céanna nach mbainfí feidhm as an tsaoirse chéanna mar uirlis chun smacht intleachtúil, morálta agus polaitiúil a bhunú!

I ndomhan dá leithéid, ina bhfuil roghain an tsaoirneach (seachas roghain éaganta an tomhaltóra) á chúngú agus á chur ar ceal go gasta, saoirsí pearsanta á gcreimneadh go leanúnach, agus frithpholaitíocht á cothú go hoscailte is go neamhnáireach, tá dualgas soiléir ar dhaonlathaithe an réimeas reatha a throid agus a threascairt agus an tuiscint dhaonlathach phoblachtánach den pholaitíocht a chur ina áit. Dispeansáid a fhorbairt ina dtiocfadh leis na suáilcí daonlathacha úd atá cuimsithe ag an bhfocal 'saoirse' bláthú athuair. An mbeadh áit ag cúrsaí ealaíne sa gcoimhlint seo?

Is don mhóramh an t-ardchultúr

Is dual don ardchultúr, cúrsaí ealaíne, fuinneog a oscailt trína bhfeiceann an duine a réalachas féin agus réalachas an tsaoil ina mbíonn sé gafa maille leis na féidirtheachtaí leithne a bhronnann a dhaonnacht air. Nuair a bhraitear, áfach, nach bhfuil sna healaíona, agus iad tiontaithe ina gcaitheamh aimsire, ach ornáid ar shaol an duine, craic seachas casán chun na soiléire, sásamh ainmhíoch seachas bealach amach as pluais Phlatóin, cuireann siad anam agus corp an duine i bhfeil do shaol chime na pluaise céanna.

Eascaíonn an riaradh as a ngintear an fíorshaothar ealaíne as claonadh radacach anama. A bhraitheann an t-ealaíontóir siocair a lánpháirtíocht dhianasach sa mbeatha dhaonna. Ealaíontóir nach ligfeadh do na fórsaí éagsúla a dhallfadh súil an duine go hiondual soiléire a

thuisceana i leith chroí na beatha seo a choilleadh. Níor chóir go mba ghné eisiach ná corr de shaol an duine é an teannas cruthaitheach úd a fhéachtar lena réiteach trí mheán an tsaothair ealaíne. An rud is iontaí agus is scannalaí—ná gur teannas é seo nach mbláthaíonn ionainn uilig.

Ardaíonn sé seo an cheist phráinneach seo a leanas: céard a thugann le fios don mhóramh nach bhfuil sé sách maith, nó nach bhfuil ar a chumas, aghaidh a thabhairt ar an dúshlán úd ar cuid de nádúr an duine é?

Bheadh cúiseanna maithe eiticiúla agus aeistéiticiúla againn, bunaithe ar luacha poblachtánacha, le cáineadh géar a dhéanamh ar an scoilt idir saol spioradálta iad siúd a mbíonn a dtoighis aeistéiticiúil bunaithe ar réimse leathan de thagairtí ealaíne agus iad siúd a mhaireann á n-uireasa siadsan. Ní hionann seo agus a rá gur féidir le duine ar bith taitneamh agus éadáil a bhaint as scéalta Uí Chadhain nó Beckett, abair, nó siomfóin de chuid Beethoven, gan an oiliúint chuí, gan na tagairtí cultúrtha cuí a bheith ar eolas aige.

Ní hann d'aon tasc domhain spioradálta nach féidir a chur in iúl trí shaothar ina bhféadfadh cách, ar a laghad go póiteinsealach, a bheith rannpháirteach. Sin bunphrionsabal cultúrtha an phoblachtánachais. B'ionann seo agus a mhaíomh gurb í an t-aon ealaín fhírinneach ná an ealaín a bhfuil baint aige le chuile dhuine, ealaín a thuigfeadh chuile dhuine a labhraíonn siocair labhairt a bheith aige. Ach, aire duit, ní hionann é seo ar chor ar bith agus a mhaíomh gur féidir saibhreas na healaíne a bhlaiseadh gan an spiorad a chothú, a oiliúint. Níor mhór don oiliúint seo a bheith dírithe ar chroí na ceiste, áfach, agus gné imeallach neafaiseach na healaíne a chaitheamh i dtraipisí. Le fíorphoitéinseal an tsaothair a thabhairt chun solais, níorbh fholáir diriú d'aonturas ar an smior chailligh, ar an ngné bhunúsach úd gur féidir le cách go poitéinsealach aríst—meabhair a bhaint as. Is éard atá á athfhógairt anseo ná tráchtas úd Shocraitéas, a ndearbhaítear ann go bhfuil ceangal riachtanach ann i gcónaí idir saol domhain na spride agus gnátheolas an duine. Ceangal nach feidir leis an mbeatha shibhialaithe, ná an tsibhialtacht féin, déanamh dá uireasa.

Is airm chumasacha iad uirlisí leochaileacha an ealaíontóra, thárla go mba éard atá iontu ar deireadh, uirlisí an réasúin choitinn. Agus bíonn baint bhunúsach i gcónaí ag saolú an ghné choiteann seo a neadaítear i gcroí an tsaothair le pé ar bith geit a bhainfeadh saothar ealaíne as pobal a mheasta. Gan saolú dá leithéid, ní bheadh ábhar ceiliúrtha ann don phobal céanna, ná ní aithneodh ná ní mhórfadh sibhialtacht ar leith í féin sa tsaothar.

Scothaicmeachas agus cultúr

Go mí-ádhúil, géilleann tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire, agus go leor de na saothair a d'éileodh an teideal 'ealaín' san lá atá inniu ann, do na teorainneacha a leagann an tsibhialtacht chomhaimseartha síos d'aonturas le riachtanas daonna amháin a mhúchadh. An t-éigean buile úd a chuireann an t-ealaíontóir ag tochailt sna réigiúin chosctha atá ina luí faoi shraith chalctha an ghnáis d'fhonn toibreacha nua fuaraisce a aimsiú. D'fhonn fírinne nua (nó seanfhírinne faoi chló na húire) a chur ag rince go treascairteach ar an mblár coiteann.

An chaoi a bhfuil fiontar na healaíne, an cultúr, á loit ag tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire atá á phlé go nuige seo againn. Le casadh beag a thabhairt don scéal, tabharfaidh muid aghaidh anois ar loitiméarachta a ionsaíonn prionsabail chultúrtha an phoblachtánachais ó threo eile: scothaicmiú na n-ealaíon. Lena rá go lom, tá feidhm threascairteach na healaíne á cur ó rath go leanúnach tríd an ealaín a nascadh go heisiach le léaschríocha tagartha an acadaimh. Fágann sé seo na healaíona dealaithe amach ar an mórgóir ó shaol an mhórphobail. Agus sactha isteach i ngarraí gabhainn na scothaicmí, na saineolaithe, na *bposeurs* is na *gculture-vultures*. Fágann seo bunmhistéir fhírinneach na daonnachta, gona saibhreas, a hilghnéitheacht is an t-iontas a bhaineann léi, stróicthe anuas ón bpeirspeictíocht choiteann. Agus manglam de théamaí neafaiseacha is de chluichí páistiúla curtha ag tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire ina háit. Is as íomhánna seo na teilifíse agus táirgí tionscal an chaitheamh aimsire atá an t-aon réalachas sóisialta, agus an luach-chóras a rialaíonn saol an mhóiraimh mhóir, á gcruthú.

De réir na tuisceana poblachtánaí, ní féidir gach atá daonna a mhíniú i dtéarmaí meicniúla ná bitheolaíocha amháin. Thabharfadh sí le fios go bhfuil an spiorad saor ó theorainneacha. Lena rá ar bhealach eile, is de dhlúth is d'inneach an duine an tsaoirse. Mar shaoránaigh réasúnacha sa tóir ar shoiléire, feidhmíonn muid, dar le téacs Arastatail, sa mbealach 'is dual don saoránach': ag iarraidh an fhulangacht a sháru, cailmhineoga na spride a dhíothú, etc. ... Glacann muid chugainn féin an chumhacht chun cinntí a dhéanamh. Agus a fhios againn i rith an achair cé muid féin agus céard atá ár dtreorú. Ar an lámh eile, ba ionann easpa shoiléire an duine, dar le buneitic an phoblachtánachais, agus an duine céanna a thumadh sa ndorchadas. Dorchadas dlúth ina maireann púcaí, cuid acu le dreacha sonraíocha scanrúla orthu, cuid acu coiriúil, fiú. Mar sin, is gnó do chách é an tsoiléire seo, má tá muid le bheith taobh le leagan amach poblachtánach Arastotail. Leagan amach atá bunaithe ar chothromaíocht agus comhar maidir leis na tionscadail is na tascanna is dual do shaoránaigh.

Sa bhfíorphoblacht, mar sin, ní choscfadh a stádas sóisialta ar éinneach a shaol a lárnú ar an bpoitéinseal iomlán a chuireann a stádas daonna ar fáil dó.

Sa bhfíorphoblacht, tharla nach ann d'éinne nach n-iompraíonn síol lus na healaíne ina lár, ní tharraingeofaí saothar ealaíne ón áit dhlisteanach is dual di i lár shaol an phobail chun an t-idirdhealú scannalach reatha idir ealaín na scothaicmí agus ealaín na mórshluaite a chruthú.

Sa bhfíorphoblacht, in aoráid na dispeansáide lán-daonlathaí, ní bheadh cluas bhodhar ag éinneach, cuma cén ghairm a bheadh aige nó cén chéim ar a mbeadh sé ar an dréimire sóisialta, do dhioscúrsaí daonnaitheacha na healaíne.

Ach céard is ciall leis an 'dioscúrsa fíordhaonnaitheach' seo i dtéarmaí polaitiúla? Bhí polaitíocht na gcathair-stát Gréagach bunaithe ar an tuiscint go dtig le saoránaigh chriticiúla, agus iad go hiomlán ar an eolas, cinntí stuama neamhleithleasacha i leith riaradh an *pólis* a ghlacadh. Rinneadh talamh slán de gurbh í saordhíospóireacht, bunaithe ar shaorthuairimíocht, an t-urlár ar a raibh an daonlathas tógtha. Bhí an bealach le dul i bhfeidhm ar shaoránaigh soiléir: labhraíodh óráidithe, iad oilte sa reitric, go díreach leis an bpobal agus iad ag iarraidh an snas ab fherr ab fhéidir a chur ar a gcuid pleananna is a gcuid geallúintí.

Ní rabhthas in ann barántas a thabhairt i gcónaí go raibh na polaiteoirí seo, ná na saoránaigh ach an oiread, ciallmhar ná ionraic a ndóthain chuile bhabhta. Ná gurbh í breith an phobail an roghain ba stuama domhnach is dálach.

Dá ainneoin sin, móradh spiorad seo na beachtaíochta. Arae, aithníodh gurbh í an bheachtaíocht smior chailligh an daonlathais phoblachtánaigh. Agus gurbh é an daonlathas rannpháirtíoch poblachtánach an córas ab fherr le leas an phobail agus leas an tsaoránaigh a dhéanamh. Rud a d'fhágfadh gurb é folláine agus feabhas na beachtaíochta an tslat lena dtomhaistear sláinte an daonlathais, cuma cén aois nó cén áit ina mbíonn sé.

Fáinne fí dhaonlathú an ardchultúir

Is fada fánach an difríocht atá ann idir pobal sásta (ach gan a bheith comhlíonta, iomlán daonnaithe) an chaitheamh aimsire agus an t-idéal daonlathach Arastatalach úd atá inchollaithe ag an mana 'soiléire do chuile shaoránach'. Agus é ag teacht le leagan amach Arastatail, d'aithin Karl Marx an chruthaíocht ealaíonta mar 'shaorghníomhú' an 'daonnaí shaibhir' (saibhreas spioradálta seachas ábhartha a bhí i gceist ag saoi Trier, ar ndóigh). De réir na tuisceana seo, ní fhéadfaí an t-ardchultúr a áireamh mar 'speisialtacht' atá teoranta do mhionlach pribhléidithe

amháin. Is diminsean riachtanach é don bheatha dhaonna i gcoitinne. San lá atá inniu ann, áfach, agus ar leibhéal atá níos bunúsaí fós ná tionchur na mórmeán cumarsáide, téann coimhthiú an duine (bunaithe ar roinnt ghaimbíneach chúraimí na hoibre, mar a mhínigh Marx an scéal) idir é agus suáilcís an ardchultúir. Mar go mbíonn teorannú seo an ardchultúir don mhionlach nasctha i gcónaí lena choscadh ar na mórshluaite. ‘Ní túisce an obair a bheith dáilithe’, a deir Marx, ‘ná go n-airíonn an duine go bhfuil réimse ar leith gníomhaíochta fáiscthe anuas air agus ní éiríonn leis éalú as.’ Ach ní hé sin deireadh an scéil. ‘Faoin gcóras gaimbíneach’, a deir sé, ‘díothaíonn “mothú na seilbhe” na mothúcháin eile uilig, bíds corpartha nó intinniúil.’ Ach sin iad go baileach na mothúcháin cheannann chéanna atá faoi bhun na comhthuisceana daonna, a chothaíonn an t-ardchultúr agus atá barr-riachtanach ar deireadh d’fheidhmiú an fhíordhaonlathais.

Saothrú na spride agus brabús do mhionlach na pribhléide—obair tháir agus caitheamh aimsire don mhóramh mór, b’in an chontrárthacht a bhain leis an bpobal tháirgthe tráchtearraí ón gcéad lá riamh, dar le Marx. An t-aon leigheas a bhí aige siúd ar an scéal, deireadh a chur le táirgíocht tráchtearraí. Mar go ndídhannaíonn a leithéid chuile ghníomhaíocht dhaonna. Agus cuireann sí an t-ardchultúr féin faoi chuing riachtanaisí eacnamaíocht mhargadh an ghaimbíneachais.

Cailleann moltaí útóipeacha a chuirfeadh ‘ilghnéitheacht oibre’ agus forbairt chaitheamh aimsire chun cinn mar réiteach ar an scéal an bunphointe a bhí i gceist ag Marx. Is é sin le rá, an easpa bhunúsach céille a bhaineann le chuile ghníomhaíocht a chuireann é féin i bhfeil do na laincisí a bhaineann le táirgíocht tráchtearraí don mhargadh gaimbíneach.

Maidir le forbairt iomlán ar chumais agus ar bhuanna an duine agus é saor ón táirgíocht tráchtearraí úd arbh é sásamh riachtanaisí an mhargaidh a buaic seachas leas an duine—ní fhéadfaí a leithéid a bhaint amach mura mbeadh ciall bhunúsach ag chuile fheidhm agus ag chuile ghníomhaíocht de chuid an duine. Gan eisceacht ar bith. Bhí an easpa céille a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí an duine faoin ngaimbíneachas nuair is uirlisí iad siúd le cuspóirí coimhthithe a bhaint amach ar cheann de na nithe a tharraing cáineadh Marx ar roinnt úd an tsaothair shóisialta a scarann an pobal ina n-aicmí, ina n-ísle is ina n-uaisle.

Is í bunteachtairacht Marx, arb í an bhunteachtairacht phoblachtánach í freisin, ná gur gá leagan amach reatha an phobail a dhaonlathú ó bhonn aníos. Sa gcaoi is go rachadh an duine, gan éinne ag tabhairt air é a dhéanamh, i mbun cruthaíocht ealaíonta. Chomh réidh céanna agus a théann sé i mbun atháirgeadh choinníollacha a bheatha féin. Chiallódh sé seo, thar ní ar bith eile, athrú ó phréamh ar an nasc reatha idir táirgíocht

agus ídiú. Sa gcaoi is go méadódh is go láidreodh gné chruthaitheach an ídiú an ghné chruthaitheach a bhaineann ó cheart le táirgíocht ealaíonta.

Níorbh fhéidir athrúintí bunúsacha dá macasamhail, a bhainfeadh le chuile ghné de shaol an duine, a shamhailt gan fás a theacht ar fhorbairt aeistéiticiúil an duine. Sa gcomhthéacs seo, ba ghnéithe éagsúla den ghníomhaíocht chéanna an táirgíocht agus an t-ídiú ealaíonta. D'fhéadfaí 'féin-oiliúint an duine de réir na haeistéitice practiciúla' a bhualadh mar lipéad ar an gclár oibre seo..

Ach nár leor oideachas ealaíne agus litríochta a fhorbairt sna scoileanna le luachanna an ardhultúir a scaipeadh? Nó an mbeadh a leithéid d'oiliúint insamhalta faoi choinníollacha an ghaimbíneachais, d'ainneoin *caveat* Marx? Ní chreideann an fealsúnaí marxach Istvan Mészáros go mbeadh. Ar údar thar a bheith bunúsach. 'Ní tharlódh oiliúint aeistéiticiúil i mball ar bith seachas i bpobal fíorshóisialach ina sárófaí teorainneacha "coimhthiú na gcéadfaíocha".' Agus b'in an fáth nár leigheas ar bith ar leathnú 'réasúnachas an ghaimbíneachais' an oiliúint aeistéiticiúil úd nach dtugann aghaidh bhunúsach ar chroí na ceiste. Níl ina leithéidí, dar le Mészáros, ach 'útóipeachas gan dealramh' nuair atá chuile ghné de shibhialtacht na dtráchtearraí, an t-oideachas san áireamh, 'ag freagairt go heisiach do riachtanaisí na táirgíochta'.

Bheadh an léamh seo ar an scéal ag teacht le claontaí i leith an oideachais atá le brath faoi láthair. Sa Spáinn, le sampla atá ar eolas ag an údar a lua, atá ag teacht lena bhfuil ag tarlú ar fuaid an domhain fhorbartha, mhol an rialtas coimeádach a bhí ag rialú na tíre i dtús 2004 dlí nua leis an gcóras oideachais a chur i bhfeil do riachtanaisí feidhmeacha lucht gnó. Faoin dlí nua seo (nár chuir an rialtas nua sóisialach i bhfeidhm, áfach—fós ar aon chaoi ...) laghdófaí oideachas ealaíne anuas go dtí uair a chloig amháin in aghaidh na seachtaine, agus bheadh an méad sin féin teoranta do bhlianta tosaigh na meánscoile. Bheadh an t-am a chaithfí le fealsúnacht agus le litríocht ciorraithe go suntasach freisin. (*Avui, Males arts*, 22 Eanáir 2004.) Fiafraíonn údar an ailt, Pere Rovira: 'céard a chiallaíonn sé nuair a mheasann na rialtais seo againne nach bhfuil aon tábhacht oideachasúil ag baint le fealsúnacht, le litríocht ná leis an ealaín?' 'Gan iad siúd,' a deir sé, 'fágtar daoine gann ar phléisiúr, ar dhínit agus ar shaoirse; éiríonn muid lag, ceansaithe agus furasta a mhealladh ... Ach sin atá uathu siúd ... pobal neamhliteartha brúidiúil ...'.

Mhaígh Cicero gurbh í feidhm an oideachais an macléinn a scaoileadh saor ó thíoránacht na haimsire láithrí. A léaschríocha a leathnú, lena chur i bhfocla eile. Cuireann lucht tacaíochta an oideachais fheidhmigh tairiscint seo Cicero bun os cionn, áfach. Agus fógraíonn siad a mhalairt ghlan: is í

aidhm an chórais oideachais an macléinn a chur faoi chuing thíoránacht na haimsire láithrí.

D'aontódh chuile phoblachtánach le dearcadh seo Cicero i leith an oideachais. Agus leathnódh sé scóp na díospóireachta leis an bproiséas sóisialta ina iomláine, agus ní an córas oideachais amháin, a chuimsiú. Deir Mészáros:

Is é croí éigeandáil reatha na bhforas oideachais ná ... *raison d'être* an oideachais féin. Is ceist í seo a bhaineann ní hamháin le hiomláine an oideachais a fhaigheann 'idir óg agus aosta', ach le *raison d'être* na n-ionstraimí is na n-institiúidí uilig a bhaineann le hidirghníomhú an duine. An bhfuil na hinstiúidí céanna ann le freastal ar an duine nó ar chóir don duine coinneáil air ag freastal ar chóras ar dá dhlúth agus dá inneach giniúint a choimhthís phearsanta féin—sin croí na ceiste.

Tuigtear as seo a lárnaí is atá an córas oideachais don 'inmheánú' úd trína ndathaíonn an coimhthíos céanna meon na muintire. Ach tuigtear as seo freisin gur broim dhreancaide in aghaidh ruaghaoth na Márta é uaisliú ghradam an oideachais chultúrtha taobh amuigh de chomhthéacs ina mbeadh chuile ghné de shaol an phobail á dhaonlathú.

Agus bailchríoch á chur aige ar a rí-shaothar, léiríonn Arnold Hauser an t-aon bhealach atá as an bhfáinne fí seo:

Tá dlúthbhaint ag leathnú léaschríocha ealaíonta na mórshluaite le cúrsaí oideachais. Ní trí mhórshimpliú a dhéanamh ar an ealaín, ach trí mhéadú ar an gcumas chun breithiúnais aeistéiteacha a dhéanamh, a choscfar monaplú leanúnach an mhionlaigh bhig ... San lá atá inniu ann, ní féidir le fíorealaín chruthaitheach fhorásach gan a bheith casta. Seans nach dtarlóidh sé go brách go mbeidh chuile dhuine in ann an taitneamh céanna a bhaint as. Ach is féidir rannpháirtíocht na mórshluaite a leathnú agus a dhoimhniú. Bheadh na coinníollacha ar a mbeadh maolú ar mhonaplacht chultúrtha an mhionlaigh phribhléidithe bunaithe, thar aon ní eile, ar chúinsí eacnamaíocha agus sóisialta.. An chuid is lú gur féidir linn a dhéanamh ná troid ar son cruthú na gcoinníollacha seo.

Tabharfaidh muid an focal scoir don tráchtair aitheanta cultúrtha, George Steiner. Cuireann seisean bochtainiú spioradálta an duine a leanfadh ar dhíothú na n-ealaíon in iúl go soiléir sna téarmaí seo a leanas:

Gan na healaíona, sheasfadh intinn an duine lomnocht os comhair a dhíothú pearsanta féin agus rialódh loighic na gealtachta is an éadóchais. Bail an chreidimh reiligiúnda, agus é bainteach leis ar bhealach, is é an *poesis* a cheadaíonn amaidíocht an dóchais. Sa gciall ríshuntasach seo, is tábhachtaí go

mór na healaíona don chine daonna ná na heolaíochtaí is na teicneolaíochtaí is forbartha dá bhfuil (b'iomdha sin pobal a bhí in ann maireachtáil gan a leithéidí ar feadh na gcianta cairbreacha). Ach ní hionann cruthaíocht sna healaíona ná cumadh thairiscintí na fealsúnachta ... agus fionnachtain na n-eolaíochtaí. Is ainmhithe muid ar anál na beatha dúinn an bhrionglóid aithriste, shnoite nó chanta. Ní hann, ná ní fhéadfadh a bheith ann, do chomhluadar ar bith ar dhromchla na cruinne seo, ba chuma cé chomh bunúsach agus a bheadh na meáin ábhartha ar fáil dó, nach bhfuil ceol aige, ealaín ghrafach de chineál éicint, nó na hinseachtaí údan a eascraíonn as an gcuimhne shamhlaíoch a nglaoonn muid miotas agus filíocht orthu. Aimsítear an fhírinne taobh leis an gcodramán agus leis an tairiscint, ach is fírinne níos lú í.

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The Cultural Turn versus Economic Returns: The Production of Culture in an Information Age

PASCHAL PRESTON

Whereas the central preoccupation of critical social analysis has traditionally been the way in which economic rationality dominates culture, contemporary social theory has been increasingly concerned with the central role of cultural processes and institutions in organising and controlling the economic

Don Slater and Fran Tonkiss¹

The cultural turn in recent criticism and social thought

THERE HAS been a remarkable rise in the attention paid to culture within recent social thought and critical theory. The 'cultural turn' is manifest across a very wide spectrum of academic disciplines and fields of inquiry. These range from international relations and development studies to various analyses of a new information society or economy in the advanced capitalist world, and from the sociology of gender and ethnic inequalities to studies of consumerism and the role of the media and new communication technologies. This turn to culture has also been very prominent in the expanding field of globalisation studies and across various related debates in cultural and political studies, including debates around the issues of citizenship, identity and multiculturalism. The cultural turn is now manifest and expressed in a massive literature. For its proponents at least, there are a number of specific and significant aspects of recent socio-cultural change that justify and underpin the recent cultural turn.

One key strand of this discourse is centred on the idea that culture and the symbolic have now expanded their role and influence in economic processes and that they have become relatively autonomous, even tending to dominate over economic processes and rationalities. This is allied to the claim that the economy itself and the commodities that flow through it are now largely constituted through informational and symbolic processes.

Many such contemporary theorists draw selectively on concepts borrowed from post-industrial theory, postmodern analyses of consumer culture, and specific versions of post-Fordism*. These are mobilised to indicate and emphasise that market economies increasingly comprise ‘cultural goods and cultural logics’.² One influential source of this argument has been the work of the postmodernist theorist Jean Baudrillard, who emphasises the simulation effects of the explosion of media images and the increasingly symbolic character of all types of commodities. In essence, Baudrillard suggests that these developments imply nothing less than a reversal of the base-superstructure model that framed so much debate around cultural themes in previous periods of modernity.³ Some proponents of the cultural turn suggest an implosion of the economic and the cultural spheres, suggesting that any clear distinction between the two is no longer meaningful.

Secondly, the cultural turn emphasises the amplification of globalisation processes, a key theme shared with many socio-economic, cultural and political discourses. As their role increases, the weightless and diverse informational services, including cultural commodities, are viewed as key drivers of the increasing internationalisation of economic and cultural relations. For many proponents of the cultural turn, globalisation contributes to the erosion of the relatively fixed forms of social solidarities and cohesive identities framed around the nation state and nationalism that characterised earlier stages of modernity. Such trends are deemed likely to become even more important with the development and use of technological innovations in the form of faster and cheaper communication networks, including the internet. Thirdly, we may note that, since the 1990s especially, these cultural discourses tend to emphasise specific impacts or implications of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). These are taken to further amplify the trends towards the dematerialisation and globalisation—and, indeed, towards the implosion—of economic and cultural processes. The multiplication of electronic media formats and channels are viewed as additional factors leading to the erosion of existing forms of social solidarities and national or other cultural identities.

Fourthly, the cultural turn is marked by increasing attention to consumption processes and leisure activities, as these are assumed to play

* Fordism refers to the large-scale mass-production methods pioneered by Henry Ford. Post-Fordism is based on the idea that new electronic and information technologies have made work more flexible and given workers more scope: it is linked to decentralisation in the workplace, social and political fragmentation, and a greater emphasis on choice and individuality.

a much more significant role in social and economic relations than in previous periods of modernity. Consumption is now taken as the crucial sphere where individual members of late modern society actively or reflexively express and construct ever more diverse, fluid, fragmented and hybrid identities. If earlier critics viewed the increasing commodification of cultural production and consumption as a source of potential cultural decay, their contemporary counterparts adopt a much more relaxed, if not quite celebratory, perspective. Consumerism, especially that related to cultural and media products, is now highlighted as a key site for active, playful, or pleasurable appropriation and the creative, even subversive, construction of diverse identities. Fifthly, the cultural turn literature asserts that in today's materially abundant and multicultural societies economic or material dimensions of inequality matter much less relative to the past or compared to those inequalities centred around cultural and political resources and status markers. This theme is manifest in recent discourses that highlight the politics of representation over the politics of distribution.

A sixth and final theme centres round an emphasis on the increasing role of signification, self-reflexive subjectivities, and extended individualisation. The presumed consequences include a diminution or dissolving of the relatively fixed, socially-framed identities (national, ethnic, class-based, political, etc.) that characterised earlier stages of capitalist modernity. This suggests that the social containers which framed relatively fixed and robust national identities (or other cultural and political identities) are now deemed to be redundant or eroded. One popular implication of this position suggests that both the production and consumption of culture have become highly individualised and have broken free of their moorings in social, cultural and political collectivities, including the nation.

In this paper, I will interrogate the core claim that the cultural and symbolic realms can be understood as autonomous and even tending to dominate over economic processes and logics. I will start with a historical approach that seeks to address the differentiations and relations between the cultural and the economic spheres in modern society. This approach will also lead me to question whether or how the production and consumption of culture can be best understood as autonomous (or, indeed, as individualised and fragmented) on the one hand, and closely shaped and bounded by the evolution of a complex of economic, administrative, infrastructural and social conditioning factors on the other. I will move on to criticise core aspects of the cultural turn's discourse related to more contemporary developments. These include a critical

interrogation of its understanding of the dematerialisation of contemporary social and economic processes and the changing role of cultural functions and the cultural industries in the economy.

Modernity and the formation of economy and culture

In the middle of the awful realm of powers and of the sacred realm of laws, the aesthetic creative impulse is building unawares a third joyous realm of play and of appearance, in which it releases man from all the shackles of circumstances and frees him from everything that may be called constraint, whether physical or moral.

Schiller⁴

As with postmodernist thought, to which it is closely bound, the cultural turn discourse is marked by a certain historical amnesia or, at best, a jaundiced, reductionist understanding of the early modern period and of the subsequent evolution of ‘the unfinished project of modernity’.⁵ For example, there is a frequent tendency to rely on a nerdish, technology-centred understanding of the historical role of print media in the rise and decline of the nation-state system, nationalism and national culture. Whilst this technological determinism clearly follows the path pioneered by McLuhan in his later and popular writings, it is also in keeping with the techno-fetishism favoured by influential industrial and political elites in the 1990s.

Here, I will borrow and adjust one of McLuhan’s favourite tools, the ‘rear-view mirror’, in order to take a backward glance at the processes of structural change in the early modern era that directly impinge on current concerns and emerging developments. I will focus on the constitution and separation of the realms of culture and economy. This will provide a basic conceptual and historical platform from which to explore the salience of the key tenets of the cultural turn and the stakes involved in the extended commercialisation, regulation and mediation of culture over time. The historical treatment here will be necessarily brief and schematic, addressing the general trends across western Europe, as space will only permit occasional reflections on the specific situation of nations and cultures under colonial domination.

In this approach, the rise of the modern nation-state system, nationalism and national culture cannot be viewed as an effect of print (or other) technology, nor of any other single cause. Rather, they are aspects or components of that multi-dimensional set of changes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe that are now usually embraced in the umbrella concept of modernity. Like the growth of capitalist industrialism, urbanisation, the increasing spatial scale of economic exchange and

mobility of labour, secularisation, or liberal democracy and the ‘dialectics of enlightenment’, they are best understood as aspects of ‘the Great Transformation’, as Polanyi so aptly defined it.⁶

Even the emergence and variable meanings of the category of culture itself can only be understood in the historical context of this great transformation—the multi-dimensional set of differentiations or disembedding processes associated with the rise of modernity in Europe. For, this transformation involved much more than the deepening social and technical divisions of labour that classical theorists (notably Adam Smith) viewed as key to the growing ‘wealth of nations’. More fundamentally, it involved the structural separation of activities and spheres that were previously embedded or interwoven. In Polanyi’s account, a core concern and key element of this transformation is centred round the separation of the economic from the social and cultural systems. For Runciman and others, the key dimensions of modernity’s structural differentiation centre on the separation of the modes of production, persuasion and coercion. Whatever the preferred typology of categories, modernity’s differentiation processes involved a crucial reframing of the meaning, role and character of the sphere of cultural production and its relation to other social spheres.

Karl Polanyi’s analysis draws on economic history and anthropological literature to emphasise that prior to the eighteenth century ‘the economic system was absorbed in the social system’.⁷ For him, regulation and markets had grown up together and the self-regulating market was unknown before this time. Thus, for Polanyi, the emergence of the very idea of self-regulation represented ‘a complete reversal of the trend of development’. In this particular transformation, nothing must be allowed to inhibit the formation of markets, nor must incomes be permitted to be formed other than through sales. The only legitimate policies and measures now became those which help to ensure the self-regulation of the market, not least by creating conditions that make the market the only organising power in the economic sphere. By the nineteenth century, economic activity had been isolated and imputed to a distinctive economic motive. According to Polanyi, such an institutional pattern could not function unless society was somehow subordinated to its requirements. To include labour and land in ‘the market mechanism’ means to ‘subordinate the substance of society itself to the laws of the market’. This economic logic and its characteristics had profound implications for culture and for the relations between the two realms, as I will indicate below.

Central to the concerns of the present paper is the manner in which

modernity's great transformation also inaugurated significant new differentiations and separations *within* the domain of knowledge. One involves the separation of the three faculties of practical reason, judgement, and theoretical reason, a distinction first proposed by Kant. By the end of the eighteenth century, these spheres of knowledge were being differentiated from one another institutionally as the 'spheres of science, morality, and art'. In each, the questions of truth, of justice, and of good taste 'were discussed under differing aspects of validity', if still under the same discursive conditions of criticism. One implication was that any conflicts between these value spheres could no longer be resolved rationally from the higher standpoint of a religious or cosmological worldview.⁸ Thus, artistic and related cultural knowledge domains became separated from the scientific and legal knowledge domains and, by extension, from economic and other instrumental forms. In one of his more nuanced passages, McLuhan recognises how Polanyi's analysis of the embedded nature of economic and social processes prior to the great transformation 'is exactly parallel to the situation of literature and the arts up till that time'. Indeed, he suggests that this remained 'true till the time of Dryden, Pope and Swift, who lived to detect the great transformation'.⁹

Secondly, this transformation implied that the domain of culture and art acquired a new role and character, quite distinct from its prior religious associations and ritual roles. Its realm and remit focused on the aesthetic, transcendent and sublime, and it increasingly embraced secular characteristics and concerns, even if retaining some of the aura of its prior spiritual role. These, too, were distinct from the ever-expanding modes of instrumental rationality which increasingly framed and shaped knowledge related to the economy and other institutional realms.

Thirdly, the realm of culture and art embraced an important new social and political role in relation to the formation of the early modern public sphere—a role which preceded the political dimension of the public sphere in most countries, according to Habermas' seminal account. This literary or cultural dimension of the public sphere provided a domain that expressed and corresponded to the increasing sense of individualised identity, subjectivity, and interiority. It addressed the quest for new modes of socially- and spatially-extended expression and exchange of largely non-instrumental ideas, thoughts, and feelings, inaugurated or amplified by other aspects of modernity's 'great transformation', not least its new modes of subjectivity and self-consciousness and its 'self-referentiality of a knowing subject'.¹⁰ This cultural dimension of the public sphere simultaneously connected with and stretched beyond the individual's

private realms of home, family and everyday life. In many respects, it complemented and reinforced the importance of modernity's political public sphere, especially in the challenge of constructing viable modern communities comprising large groups of rational, reflexive human subjects. This role embraced the production, consumption and critical discussion of diverse cultural forms, which, in turn, functioned as supports for the formation and renewal of spatially-extended forms of national collective identities and civic solidarity, linked to the democratising potential of modernity (however incomplete or unfinished that might be). In this light, the sphere of culture and its symbolic forms represent important sites of moral education, and the specifically modern character of art and the role of aesthetic pleasure cannot be reduced to the purely ideological.¹¹

Fourthly, new tensions appear relating to the structural separations constructed between the culture and art knowledge-domain and those domains pertaining to economic and administrative rationality and instrumental knowledge. As Polanyi noted, the institutional separation of the economy and the idea of self-regulation represented 'a complete reversal of the trend of development' hitherto. The legitimate policies and measures now became those which ensured the self-regulation of the market, not least by creating conditions that tended to position the market as the sole or dominant organising power in the economic sphere. The concomitant utilitarian principles are precisely those that Pope had mocked with the quip 'whatever is is right' and Swift ridiculed as 'the mechanical operation of the Spirit'. Here, too, the principle of non-interference in the natural order 'becomes the paradoxical conclusion of applied knowledge'. Over the eighteenth century, the process of applied knowledge had reached such a momentum that it became accepted as 'a natural process which must not be impeded save at the peril of greater evil'.¹²

Yet, such principles directly clash with the particular set of social roles, functions, responsibilities, and value orientations allocated to the realm of cultural knowledge in modernity's structural separations (described above). Henceforth, there will be many sources of tension and conflict between the cultural realm, on the one hand, and instrumental forms of knowledge and 'mechanical' value orientations associated with the competitive market and the self-regulating economic system, on the other. Such tensions are not lessened by the subsequent tendency for cultural production to depend increasingly on this same economic realm and market as a source of revenue.

Markets, state and national cultural production

Writers in England no longer depend on the Great for subsistence [rather, they depend on] the public ... a good and generous master.

Oliver Goldsmith¹³

This takes us to a further crucial feature of the cultural and artistic knowledge realm inaugurated by modernity's diverse structural differentiations: the shift from patronage to the market as the increasingly important sponsor of certain (media-based) forms of cultural production. This particular shift was entirely natural, given the other structural separations of modernity's great transformation. For Adam Smith, it was self-evident that the mechanical laws of the economy and the efficiencies of the division of labour should apply equally to the things of the mind as to the products of modern industry: 'to think or to reason comes to be, like every other employment, a particular business'.

This shift from patronage to the market was especially manifest in the case of print-based cultural objects following Europe's appropriation of movable printing techniques from Asia, two centuries after they were first developed in Korea in 1234. The subsequent growth of print-based cultural forms, especially the novel, poetry, newspapers and other periodicals, had significant economic impacts as well as cultural implications. Indeed, it provided one of the first instances of the mass-production of standardised products and constituted one of the earliest economic success stories of a still nascent capitalist modernity.

But, as the capitalist market society began to define itself and the market-based public became the patron, many writers, artists, and critics became increasingly wary of the commodification process. They were critical of the particular forms of restraint and regulation that it imposed on artistic and literary expression. Thus, as literature and other cultural forms moved into the role of consumer commodity, there emerged a tradition of concern that 'art had reversed its role from guide for perception into convenient amenity'. Many cultural voices and movements expressed a wariness of the peculiar forms of constraint and incentive that were imposed by this dimension of capitalist commodification: 'henceforth, literature will be at war with ... the social mechanics of conscious goals and motivations' associated with ever-expanding capitalist production relations.¹⁴

As novels, poetry, and other forms of literature increasingly became an industry or trade alongside newspapers, many cultural producers tended to question or reject the legitimacy of market-based definitions of the public or popularity, refusing these as measures of the standards of value, worth or

truth. Pope and other writers worried that language and the arts ‘would cease to be prime agents of critical perception and become mere packaging devices for releasing a spate of verbal commodities’.¹⁵

As indicated above, the emergence of a capitalist market as a new source of income for the production of culture (and a concomitant decline in direct dependency on wealthy patrons or the church) was closely bound up with other changes unfolding in the early modern era. These included the emergence of specifically modern concepts and self-understandings or sensibilities concerning the autonomy or freedom of individual expression within the fields of artistic and cultural production. In many senses, these had their parallels in the notion of consumer sovereignty with respect to markets and notions of citizenship rights in the political realm of the public sphere. At the same time, the rise of capitalist industrialism, new ideas about the self-regulating market, and specialised production (via the division of labour) also prompted new kinds of relations between authors, artists, critics, and other producers of cultural forms and functions, on the one hand, and their audiences, readers, and public, on the other. This involved ‘a new system of thinking’ about the arts and culture more generally, whereby artistic production became a special (if not superior) means of access to imaginative truth and the writer or artist became defined as a special kind of person in many respects. In some senses, this amounted to a representative or brokerage role that was somewhat analogous to the representative role played by politicians in the political public sphere.

In important respects, the shift from patronage to the market also had a distinctly socialising effect with respect to the production and consumption of cultural expression and communication. The author or other cultural producer must now imagine, consciously address, and engage with, even attempt to woo, a certain collective audience, especially in the case of mediated culture. The dependency on market logics served to forge closer (conscious) connections between writers, artists, and other cultural producers and their audiences. Even if the social communication process was indirect, spatially extended, and mediated via money and the market, it produced a community-building effect irrespective of content, genre, and the intentions of individual authors and cultural producers or of those in gatekeepers roles.

This is partly manifest in the manner in which cultural producers introduced aesthetic and stylistic innovations and cultural forms that addressed their audiences in new ways, and, in some respects, these had a socialising, if not democratising, effect. This was evident in the case of the new eighteenth-century form of the novel, where, as Dr. Johnston suggests, ‘an adventurer is levelled with the rest of the world and acts in such scenes of the universal drama, as may be the lot of any other man’.¹⁶ It was also manifest in the work

of Goldsmith, who innovated by incorporating the (anticipated) experience of the reader into his criticism, thereby changing the concept of the critic into a two-way function of reviewing the merits of the cultural work in question and interpreting the public back to the writer.¹⁷

Of course, the market-based print media also included newspapers and periodicals whose content was generally more directly focused on the political, as opposed to the cultural, dimensions of the modern public sphere. For much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, access to all forms of market-based media was, like access to citizenship status and membership of the public sphere, largely confined to the upper and middle classes endowed with certain levels of material means, status, education, literacy, and leisure time. The elitist character of the free market itself, no doubt, provided a certain structural preselection or censoring effect on the content, in keeping with the prevailing political values and cultural sensibilities of what Goldsmith and his contemporaries called polite society. But, where individual writers and artists transgressed the ruling norms guiding the operations of the free press and other media, the state administration was very inclined to manifest its visible hand in multiple ways, ranging from licensing, taxation, and selective bribery to the cruder forms of censorship. In this context, the 'Castle press' was but one localised form in the Irish colonial context.

Successive political and social forces, rather than any technological logic, ensured that the precise configurations of the legitimate political coverage and content of the new media of social communication were adjusted over time, with significant variations from country to country. The major shifts in these boundaries, like those governing access to the public sphere, were largely shaped by the trajectory of political conflict, not least the impact of labour, nationalist, and other social movements seeking to construct more universal forms of electoral democracy and conceptions of citizenship rights. Indeed, this brief historical summary must also note the frequent emergence of periodicals and other printed media produced by, or orientated towards, such radical political and social movements rather than for reasons of profit. Once again, however, the availability of print media did not singularly determine the existence or concerns of such political movements. Rather, it is a case of social rather than technological determination, as the flow of causation may have been the other way round. Indeed, we may note that at times of heightened political activity there were notable surges in the circulation and readership of the radical newspaper media (as at the time of the Chartist movement in 1840s England or of the United Irishmen in 1790s Ireland).

Yet, we must emphasise that it was only towards the turn of the twentieth century that we find the emergence of national newspapers and magazines as a truly mass medium, even in the advanced industrial societies. This was

largely due to rising disposable incomes and educational and literacy standards amongst the working class and especially to the growing impact of advertising. The expanding role of this large and lumpy customer (or privileged patron) had a significant impact on the editorial content and orientations of the legitimate media over the past century. It also had a foreclosing effect, by raising the economic barriers to market entry and survival faced by new entrants, especially for media orientated to a radical politics, like those that flourished at various times in the nineteenth century.

Modern social formations and cultural space

Over time, the increasing role of market-based print literature and periodicals had the important social effect of developing and spatially-extending the use of standardised (vernacular) languages in many European countries—Switzerland being an obvious, if rare, exception to this general case.

Here, again, I am dealing with the typical or schematic history of these developments in the European context. Yet, it may be noted briefly that in the case of colonised or stateless nations matters were very different indeed. For example, the absence of an autonomous, self-determining political and economic capital slowed and distorted not only the accumulation of material wealth and the incomes required to support market-sponsored cultural production: imperial domination also operated to hinder the development of the modern conceptions of self-determining, reflexive selfhood and citizenship, as well as the construction of relatively open political and cultural public spheres. Imperialism required the more brutal devaluation and marginalisation (if not annihilation) of the traditional layers of the local culture (not merely the language) of colonised peoples, which, in other parts of Europe, served as important resources in the construction of modern social communication systems, national political identities, and meaningful public spheres. Beyond the usual qualification thresholds of material status and cultural capital required for access to and participation in the early public sphere (what Goldsmith used to term polite society), imperialism also meant the privileging of specific forms of cultural identity and the exclusion of others by additional barriers. In Anglophone Europe, for example, this is well borne out by the subtle dances around the prevailing assumptions of polite society concerning the legitimacy of Irish identity or cultural traditions—or even Catholicism—framing the writings and shaping the career strategies of both Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke.

In combination, the structural separation of the cultural spheres together with the shift towards market-based funding of cultural production, the diffusion of print-based and other cultural industries, and innovations in

expressive forms and styles, all contributed to the formation and maintenance of viable large-scale modern social formations. Cultural production became more spatially disembedded and social in scope. In turn, the social was increasingly or primarily framed around national-level political communities and cultural identities (the modern nation-state system) and materially underpinned by an increasingly marketised economy and money system. In effect, if not always by intention, cultural production has operated to support, express, and construct new kinds of disembedded and reflexive forms of social solidarity that hold complex modern societies together. This is one of the more sustainable and insightful truths lurking within McLuhan's best known slogan, 'the medium is the message'. Of the three major forces that hold society together—solidarity, money and administrative power¹⁸—the contribution and role of cultural production has had most pronounced, but not exclusive, relevance to the first.

But, to speak of contribution means that the role of cultural production and the media of public communication must be understood in the context of its articulation alongside a set of other equally important factors. The former cannot be defined as the sole carriers or primary drivers of the emergence of the modern national social formations and the other new forms of cultural and social space that frame individual and collective identities within the modern nation-state system in Europe. Rather, these must be understood as the outcome of successive over-layerings of a complex set of determinations that were unfolding before and during modernity's great transformation from the eighteenth century onwards.

For one, the construction of a modern social space in Europe can only be understood in the light of successive waves of bloody wars and extensive violence.¹⁹ For another, the structural separation of the economy and the growing autonomy of the economic sphere and of the market as primary steering mechanism—alongside the increased mobility of labour, the deepening social and technical divisions of labour, and other institutional reforms—also played a major role in this regard. These and other aspects of the great transformation in the economic realm served not only to expand the role of the market and intensify the population's dependence on traded goods and services and money-based exchanges: their operations also prompted significant extensions in the spatial scale of trade and of other socio-economic relations, from the local and regional levels to the national and beyond, the latter being especially evident in the case of the colonial powers. The upward shift in the level and intensity of the spatially-extended mobility of marketised commodities released an intensifying trend towards the 'annihilation of space by time', as Marx put it, in an age of railways and telegraphy. Together with competitive pressures, these provided incentives to improve the technical

means of transportation, which further reduced the cost and time taken to move goods, information, and people across space.

The structural separation of the modern state administration and political system from the economic sphere did not mean that the 'hidden hand' of the market achieved the position of monopoly steering mechanism, whether in the sphere of cultural production or elsewhere. If the state became ultimately dependent on the market economy for its revenues (via taxation, etc.), it continued to possess many autonomous capacities and unique sources of power, not only in relation to the economic sphere but even more so in the realm of cultural production. Thus, the state administrative system must also be included as an important force with respect to the social character of cultural production, for it too played a key part in the genesis and shaping of the large-scale modern social formations framed around national political and cultural identities.

The more visible hand of the state administration and elites controlling the political system are manifest in, for example, the regulation and funding of the modern cultural institutions of mass education, museums, libraries, and the like, which expanded significantly from the early nineteenth century. Indeed, many of the media-centric treatments of cultural production reveal a certain amnesia when it comes to the crucial role of education as a force for socialisation and an aspect of cultural production. Even if we recognise that the education sector is not solely orientated to the cultural forms of knowledge, this largely non-media based institution remains, by most measures, the single most important cultural sector and means for the socialisation of individuals in modern large-scale societies.

Here, then, even this brief glance in the rear-view mirror reveals that the state has played a major role in the realm of culture through its funding measures and its rationalisation processes, as well as through a variety of formal and informal regulatory mechanisms. Despite modernity's structural separation of the economy from other social spheres and the expanding role and freedoms of the market with respect to cultural production (alongside the spatially disembedding effects of modern communication systems), the influence of state administration cannot be regarded as marginal. Rather, it has played a very significant role in the complex of factors shaping the predominantly national character of socialisation and cultural identity formation since the early modern period (e.g. via the direct provision, funding and regulation of cultural production, including education).

Cultural production and the post-industrial or information society

I have borrowed McLuhan's device of the rear-view mirror to sketch the evolution of the modern realm of culture as a structurally distinct sphere,

but one that is integrally connected to, and dependent on, the great transformations across other social and economic realms. The very genesis, character, and role of culture, no less than the expressive possibilities of cultural production, are intimately bound up with the evolution of modernity's foundational social and economic processes. The production and consumption of culture combine modernity's typical processes of disembedding, individualisation, fragmented privacy, and competitiveness, on the one hand, and the simultaneous multiplication of reconnections, increasing interdependencies, functional and affective social solidarities, and even novel modes of intertextuality (within and across media forms), on the other.

Today, the late-modern cultural production system consists of a vast social studio, comprising an increasingly technological, spatially-extended, organisational complex (predominantly market and state funded) that links together the cultural producers and their audiences, who are citizens as well as consumers. To an increasing extent, art and culture in the age of late-modernity are produced, distributed, and consumed via a complex technological, social, and economic infrastructure. It is produced by a growing number and range of actors—individual authors, artists, directors, and designers—and their gatekeepers—managers, agents, publishers, editors, distributors, censors, and (increasingly) publicists—using ever more diverse networks, such as the media of money, print and paper, electronic hardware, software, and networks and electronic pulses, etc.

This major cultural production-consumption complex is only rendered possible by modernity's deepening social divisions of labour, technological infrastructures, and other differentiation processes. These, in turn, structurally frame the lived experience and expressive opportunities, as well as the material incentives, confronting individual authors and artists and even serve to channel important aspects of their conscious and imaginative sensibilities.

The specific organisational setting for cultural production may well vary from individual desk space or workshop to high-tech studio or multinational corporation—or some combination of them, as even the creative stages of the cultural artefacts distributed by transnational multi-media conglomerates often retain an artisanal character. Certainly, this vast cultural production-consumption complex also provides scope for, indeed requires, some degree of individual imagination, creativity, and autonomous initiative, as is the case in other knowledge-intensive occupational groups. But, such artistic autonomy is always relative and the cultural worker's freedom is double sided. The production and communication of culture is generally preconfigured by the institutional structures and incentive systems and by the evolving grammars, codes, and conventions, as well as technical modes and

resources, that are socially available and shared between the creative originators, gatekeepers, intermediaries, and intended audience. For actors in the cultural realm, as elsewhere, ‘the higher levels of system differentiation bring the advantage of a higher level of freedom’, but this always goes hand in hand with ‘a new sort of compulsion imposed on actors’ arising from systemic constraints. Examples of the latter include dependency on market rationality, the discipline imposed on artists by the labour market and unemployment, bureaucratic regulation, and the contingencies imposed by economic cycles.²⁰

To speak of a large cultural production-consumption complex in this way is not only a matter of pointing to the socially structured character of such activities in late modernity: it is also to acknowledge that, in absolute and relative terms, cultural production accounts for a larger share of the social division of labour in this so-called information age compared to earlier stages of modernity. This, in turn, directly engages us with a key foundational idea underpinning the contemporary cultural turn in the social sciences and humanities fields—one that I wish to critically interrogate, as promised at the outset.

Let us start this discussion by referring to some relevant empirical measurements, even if this particular methodological recourse offends the sensibilities of so many advocates of the cultural turn. In terms of the changing industrial division of labour, the media and cultural industries (excluding education) accounted for 3.3 per cent of total employment in the USA in the year 2000, compared to 2.56 per cent in 1980. But, of course, we might expect that many creative workers and cultural specialists are self-employed or employed in non-media industries and, similarly, that not all of those employed in the media and cultural industries are engaged in cultural or creative functions. Thus, it is equally necessary to examine the changing role of cultural production in terms of the changing occupational division of labour. Here, we find that cultural occupations accounted for 2.11 per cent of the total for all occupations in 2000, again in the case of the USA, which is usually deemed the most advanced information economy.²¹

These and similar empirical findings serve to deflate some of the foundational claims of the cultural turn theorists. For one thing, they suggest that the role of cultural occupations and industries in the contemporary economy has been expanding in recent decades at a much slower rate than the advocates of the cultural turn imagine and imply. For another, they indicate that the absolute levels and rates of growth of other information-intensive occupations and industries have been much more significant. Indeed, the small expansion in the numbers of cultural specialists has been dwarfed by those occupations involved in the production of technical, managerial, bureaucratic,

and other forms of instrumental knowledge. Besides, a large portion of the most rapidly growing occupations deemed to have a bearing on contemporary cultural production are particularly tied to specific economic rationalities, such as those engaged in advertising and public relations. In addition, sociological research indicates that the organisational settings within which cultural and other knowledge production takes place have increasingly been subject to bureaucratic logics and market-based rationality in recent decades. This development applies with particular force to universities, the very location of so many advocates of the cultural turn. Yet, we may note, there is a significant silence surrounding such matters, despite all the genuflections towards reflexivity that pervade the cultural turn literature.

But such empirical evidence may not dent the post-representational teflon surrounding the postmodern theorists on their home turf, where everything is a matter of interpretation or signification. However large or small the (measured or imagined) growth of specifically cultural functions and industries, I want to argue that the contemporary world is clearly marked by the extended hegemony of a specific economic logic rather than any hint of a cultural turn. It is utter dreaming to suggest that cultural production has somehow assumed a new autonomy or hegemonic role vis-à-vis capitalist economic rationality or, indeed, that the contemporary era is marked by some fundamental shift towards a post-industrial or post-capitalist logic of development.

Far from cultural processes or institutions (or, for that matter, any other knowledge functions) asserting control over economic or bureaucratic rationality, we are confronting a mere shift in the division of labour, and such shifts have been a central feature of the self-expansive dynamic of capitalist industrialism from the outset. That much is clear from even a cursory glance at the work of the classical social theorists of modernity, including Smith, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and even the later Polanyi. More than two centuries ago, Adam Smith suggested that in 'commercial societies to think or to reason', by which he meant the production of creative, technical, and other forms of knowledge, would become 'like every other employment, a particular business', in line with the dictates of the deepening division of labour unleashed by the market economy. Of course, as the anointed founding father of the hegemonic strand of modern economic thought and rationality, Smith was not merely engaged in descriptive analysis. He was both describing and prescribing that the function and orientation of the artist, no less than that of the intellectual, is to 'prepare for the market' his or her own particular 'species of goods', which will then be 'purchased, in the same manner as shoes or stockings'.²² Marx, Weber, and Polanyi may have pointed to many of the same developmental tendencies, including the deepening divisions of

labour, but, like many of modernity's classical artists and writers, they were much less inclined to celebrate the benefits or universalising sway of the naked cash nexus within the cultural and other realms.

Even if, as indicated above, Adam Smith could lay claim to a pioneering prognosis of the knowledge economy, US sociologist Daniel Bell is usually designated as the founding father of post-industrial or information society theory. Certainly, most of the sociological ideas underpinning contemporary postmodern and cultural turn discourses comprise unsubstantiated assertions borrowed from the portfolio of post-industrial theory. These ideas were successfully translated into the cultural studies field in the 1980s by the influential postmodernist writings of Lyotard, even if they had been almost universally rejected by the previous generation of critical social and cultural theorists, not least because of their conservative political and ideological freight. These borrowings are not only highly selective—ironically, they also frequently and directly echo the selective borrowings to be found in the information society discourses of the high-tech industrial and policy elites. One important example is the determinist view that changes in the technological infrastructure or division of labour are inherently liberating and presumed to lead to a significant reduction in scarcity of material needs. Another is the assertion that material issues (such as those pertaining to wealth and income) and the politics of distribution are now much less salient compared to the politics of representation or, in extreme cases, compared to the 'end of politics'.²³ Besides, the obsession with individual or small group identities and culture, together with assumptions about the decline, if not death, of larger-scale social solidarities and integration mechanisms, provides some striking complementarities between the core tenets of the cultural turn and those of neo-liberalism, the now dominant political-economic theory.

A more rounded engagement with Bell's post-industrial thesis, however, would reveal that, notwithstanding its analytical flaws and conservative ideological leanings, it was certainly not singing along to the 'there is no such thing as society' hymn sheet, which has become the increasingly dominant anthem of our own times. Its core analysis, concerning post-industrial society as a just or progressive society, was not solely predicated on changes in the technological infrastructure and division of labour or the newly influential role of intellectual knowledge. Rather, it placed an equal emphasis on the growing role of the Keynesian welfare state and the concomitant decline in the sway of market relations and unregulated economic rationality. Bell's 'venture in social forecasting' was also predicated on a trend towards reducing economic inequalities within an increasingly meritocratic order. It was only in such a social and political context that Bell envisaged the new role (or new social character) of knowledge and planning as a direct counter to the economic

rationality of the market and competitive capitalism.

Of course, much has changed since Bell first advanced his thesis in the early 1970s, not least the increasing sway of economic rationality and market forces over all forms of knowledge and information production. Hence, the selective contemporary borrowings from the post-industrial society thesis, as manifest in the cultural turn literature and in elite information society discourses, are highly partial. Indeed, as socially situated cultural productions of a sort themselves, these borrowings cannot be understood as innocently accidental or neutral but are closely attuned to the political and economic currents of these new times.

Cultural turns versus economic returns

Overall, then, I suggest that the cultural turn literature provides an impoverished frame for a nuanced understanding of the key cultural, socio-economic, and political aspects of contemporary society, at least compared to that provided by classical theorists and also, in certain respects, to the original post-industrialist analysis provided by Bell.²⁴ On the one hand, the cultural turn's preoccupation with discourse and the incestuous circularity of its obsession with texts minimise direct engagement with social developments or sustained sociological argument. On the other hand, its justification for such shifts in agenda and concerns usually rests on certain foundational claims that have an essentially social or sociological tenor. But, in most cases these are merely asserted or presumed to be self-evidently true. Despite all the privileged attention the cultural turn gives to consumption over production, it remains the case that one's relationships to and differential position in the production sphere still serve as the key conduit and determinant of performance in the carnival of consumption. This aspect of the cultural turn's thesis is marked by a further failure to address the socially-determined character of basic needs or material standards of living, such as one finds in the works of the discarded classical sociological theorists of modernity. We may also note a frequent amnesia concerning the non-utilitarian character of many production and consumption processes in earlier modern, as well as pre-modern, societies. There is ample historical and anthropological evidence that indicates that the symbolic or cultural freighting of major portions of total production and consumption may be the rule rather than the exception.

Related assertions about the end of scarcity or the declining importance of the distribution of material resources ring hollow in a social world in which access to the ever increasing array of socially necessary services and functions is governed by the naked cash nexus. There is ample evidence from

empirically grounded ethnographic studies of shopping and shoppers to indicate that much of this activity is routine, mundane, and centred around boring old value-for-money considerations. Such studies suggest that the much-celebrated shift towards pleasure-seeking, playful games, and identity formation via consumption are processes largely confined to specific categories of goods and relatively privileged consumers.²⁵

The continuing importance of material matters applies also to the arena of mediated culture and systems of public communication, where, despite the peculiar patronage and far-from-neutral subsidy bestowed by advertising and despite the rhetoric concerning the boundless benefits of new technology, the pay-per-view mode increasingly dominates over public service. This has become even more the case as material inequalities have vastly widened over the past twenty years, directly in line with the born-again zeal of political elites to expand the sway of economic rationality and intellectual property rights, including those which directly impinge on the sphere of cultural production, distribution, and consumption.

As noted, the cultural turn is now manifest and expressed in a massive literature. The literature emphasising an epochal shift towards a symbolic, information, or knowledge society, centred around a new self-reflexive subjectivity and the manipulation of signs or free-floating symbols, now comprises a mini-cultural industry of its own. The sheer scale and weight of the literature within these particular fields of academic cultural production and consumption have been enormously productive, at least if judged by its own discursive and textual criteria of validity. Indeed, it has created, and continues to reproduce, its own peculiar object of study, a virtual world based on an apparently endless circularity of symbolic referents in the form of books and journal articles.

But, when judged by more modern and conventional criteria of validity, all we find is a socially situated shift in emphasis and approach within a particular academic domain of cultural production, whose content and concerns have little real bearing on the contemporary socio-economic or cultural domains it presumes to describe and understand. By such criteria, it amounts to a rather unproductive expenditure or waste of still scarce human time and energy resources, not to mention paper. It also imposes opportunity costs, including diversions from more fruitful approaches to understanding production and consumption in other, more socially important, cultural domains.

Notes

¹ Don Slater & Fran Tonkiss, *Market Society: markets and modern social theory* (Cambridge: Polity 2001), p. 175.

² P. du Gay and M. Pryke (eds.), *Cultural Economy: cultural analysis and commercial life* (London: Sage 2002), p. 3.

³ For a more detailed treatment, see P. Preston, *Reshaping Communications: Technology, Information and Social Change* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 2001).

⁴ Schiller, cited in Nicholas Garnham, *Emancipation, the Media, and Modernity: arguments about the media and social theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), p. 157.

⁵ J. Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2001).

⁶ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrer Strauss 1944).

⁷ *Ibid.* The rest of this paragraph also draws on Polanyi.

⁸ These differentiations were identified by Kant and taken up by many subsequent theorists, including the young Hegel and Weber. Habermas suggests that Hegel later revised his position on the grounds that ‘what appeared as differentiations on the discursive level’ were experienced on the horizon of ethically integrated lifeworlds as ‘just so many “diremptions” of an intuitive whole’. See J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, pp. 134–138.

⁹ M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1962).

¹⁰ J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹¹ N. Garnham, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

¹² McLuhan, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

¹³ Oliver Goldsmith, ‘Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe’ (1759), cited in P. Preston, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

¹⁴ McLuhan, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

¹⁹ This point is convincingly emphasised by, amongst others, H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell 1974).

²⁰ J. Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²¹ A more detailed presentation of this empirical research can be found in P. Preston, *op. cit.*

²² Adam Smith, cited in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* (London: Chatto & Windus 1958), p.35.

²³ Habermas, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

²⁴ See P. Preston, *op. cit.*

²⁵ See Daniel Miller’s work, for example.

Peadar O'Donnell, 'Real Republicanism' and *The Bell*

LAWRENCE WILLIAM WHITE

IF THERE is any truth universally acknowledged in Irish cultural debate, it is the central importance of *The Bell* in the cultural history of twentieth-century Ireland. Published in 131 numbers over a span of fourteen years (1940–54), *The Bell* was less a literary magazine than a broad cultural review: a stimulating forum for creative writing, sophisticated criticism of literature and the arts, documentary social observation, and informed, reflective commentary. It was a nursery for an entire generation of Irish writers and critics: Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, James Plunkett, John Montague, Vivian Mercier, Conor Cruise O'Brien (under the nom-de-plume 'Donat O'Donnell') and Anthony Cronin were among the talents nurtured on its pages, many of their early, if not their first, published works appearing within its covers. More established writers such as Frank O'Connor, Francis Stuart, Denis Johnston, Elizabeth Bowen, Hubert Butler, Lennox Robinson, John Hewitt and Flann O'Brien also found in *The Bell* a welcoming and congenial haven.

The Bell is generally interpreted in literary and cultural criticism as having sounded the first peals of revisionism, the range and tenor of its discourse represented as among the first attempts to revise the official ideology of the youthful Irish state. At a time when the Irish cultural landscape was at its most barren, cloistered and introverted nadir, delineated by clichéd Gaelic revivalism, nationalist pieties, clerical triumphalism and an aggressive censorship, *The Bell* espoused alternative values that were urbane, liberal and modernising. Critics, thus, have situated it within a tradition of humane dissent against the social and cultural mores of the young Irish state that began with the *Irish Statesman* of the 1920s, a tradition it would bequeath to later generations who were able to transform such marginalised dissent into actual social change. *The Bell*, then, is represented as a prophetic voice in the philistine nationalist wilderness, preparing the way for the liberal agenda.

What is usually overlooked in such analysis—or, if observed, left unanalysed—is the fact that the two persons most intimately involved in the founding and subsequent progress of *The Bell* were both anti-treaty

republicans. Sean O'Faolain (1900–91), editor of the journal over its first six years and thereafter a steady contributor, had been an IRA director of publicity during the civil war and through a subsequent career as an academic and professional writer had retained an interest in the historical relationship between political issues and questions of cultural import. Peadar O'Donnell (1893–1986), managing editor under O'Faolain and then editor for the remainder of the journal's lifespan, had pursued a longer and more prominent career within the republican movement, sitting on the army council of the IRA till 1933, the year before he launched the socialist republican movement Republican Congress. Since the values and ethos of Irish republicanism are usually presumed to be antithetical to the revisionist project, it would seem most paradoxical that the two leading principals in *The Bell's* history emerged from republican backgrounds. This article will examine the relationship between the editorial policy of *The Bell* and the character of discourse that it stimulated on the one hand, and republican ideology and ethos on the other. Did *The Bell* represent a break, witting or unwitting, with its founders' republican pasts, or did it represent a continuity?

Real republicanism

The Bell originated with Peadar O'Donnell. For some twenty years, according to one of his biographers, O'Donnell had nursed the idea of a 'really high-class monthly' linked to the republican movement. Then, one day in the summer of 1940, he strode purposefully up to O'Faolain in a Dublin street 'like a policeman' and asked him to edit the new magazine he was contemplating.¹ Why was it at that particular moment in Irish history and in his own career that O'Donnell determined that the time had come to realise his long-held idea? And what was the ideological perspective that he brought to the project?

Having come to republicanism from the trade-union movement, O'Donnell was by 1940 the leading figure on the Irish left. In the autumn of 1918, he had given up a post as a national school teacher in his native Donegal (he had been a militant activist in the teachers' union) to become a full-time organiser with the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). The following spring, while remaining for the time with the ITGWU, he also joined the IRA, going on to lead a flying column and become a brigade commandant in the troubles of 1920–21. He served in the anti-treaty Four Courts garrison, was arrested on its surrender and spent the rest of the civil war in Free State prisons. Prominent in the IRA leadership throughout the decade after 1924, he strived continually to nudge the republican movement into a leftist ideology and to wean the

IRA away from its primarily militarist strategy to active engagement in political and social activity on 'concrete issues'. Even the sacred cow of abstentionism was subjected to scrutiny, though with the activist's proviso: 'I had no patience with Sinn Féin hesitations to tramp through Leinster House on the way to the Republic. Equally, I had no time for parliamentary agitation not linked with field work'.² From 1925 to 1932, in the foremost of his 'field work' agitations, he spearheaded the grassroots campaign to withhold payment of land purchase annuities.

Never a left-wing sectarian or republican factionalist, O'Donnell regarded with interest the emergence of Fianna Fáil. Eyeing the party's populist base among small farmers and urban workers (the very constituency at which he aimed his own appeals), he detected within the party a latent radicalism with which he could ally. He drew Fianna Fáil militants into active involvement in the land annuities agitation, and in the 1932 general election he went so far as to endorse de Valera's party in the IRA newspaper *An Phoblacht*, of which he was editor, under the slogan 'Put Cosgrave Out!', and encouraged IRA volunteers to canvass for Fianna Fáil candidates. With Fianna Fáil in power, he strategised, pressure from a socially radical and agitating IRA on its left flank would unleash that party's latent radicalism and propel it—with or without de Valera at the helm—into radical social reconstruction. Disillusionment was rapid. The IRA leadership, wary as ever of contamination by 'politics', declined to exert the requisite pressure, and de Valera was thus allowed to reveal his own economically conservative colours, encouraging the growth of small-scale native capitalism behind protectionist trade barriers and shunning the radical land reform and redistribution that O'Donnell urged as fundamental to social transformation in the Irish context. In 1934—in defiance of IRA policy and resulting in his expulsion from the army—O'Donnell launched the Republican Congress, conceived as a popular front of republicans, socialists and trade unionists and hoping to attract the more radically populist elements within Fianna Fáil. Enacting quite literally the adage about the first item on the agenda of every new Irish political organisation being the split, Republican Congress divided at its first national conference between those who wished to launch a new socialist political party seeking as an immediate objective a 'workers' republic' and those who, following O'Donnell, wished the new venture to remain what it was: a congress, a coming together of all republican opinion representing disparate organisations, to pursue the common objective of 'the republic'. Terminally enervated by the split, for a few years the tiny body sputtered through sporadic agitations on various local issues, including tenants' rents and industrial strikes. By 1937 the

Congress was little more than a name kept alive by O'Donnell and a handful of colleagues as a tag for their activities and polemics.

There were, then, by the late 1930s, three strains of self-styled Irish republicanism, each claiming to be the authentic embodiment of the republican tradition and all competing for leadership of republican Ireland. By far the most dominant was the Fianna Fáil strain, moderate in policy and populist in appeal, but bourgeois driven and led, latterly travelling the constitutional road; there was also the IRA strain of physical-force and abstentionist republicanism; and there was O'Donnell's strain of social republicanism, concentrating on militant direct action on social issues. O'Donnell and his Republican Congress colleagues accused their competitors of not being 'real' or 'genuine' in their republicanism; O'Donnell said of de Valera that he only pretended to be a republican, that he was not 'a real Republican'.³

What did O'Donnell mean by so asserting that he was espousing 'real republicanism', while the competing strains—and Fianna Fáil especially—were ersatz in their republicanism? The assertion involves various connotations. He insisted that his republicanism was 'real' in its fundamental identification of radical social reform based on a movement of 'workers and working farmers' with the very idea of the republic. This identification had two dimensions, one strategic, the other ideological. The strategic dimension rested on the insistence that the natural constituency of the republican movement would always be found among the lower classes, 'the men of no property', and that to secure their active involvement in the struggle the movement must promote comprehensive social reform, even social revolution. Every other social class had an interest in maintaining certain aspects of the status quo, a 'stake in the country', and, hence, could realise its aspirations within some accommodation with British imperialism short of sovereign republican independence. The ideological dimension involved the conviction that implicit in the republican idea were the principles of social egalitarianism and radical democracy. Fundamental to republicanism as a political philosophy is the concept that legitimate political sovereignty resides with the people of the nation. However, this principle of popular sovereignty is a meaningless formula unless the people of the nation—each and every one of them—possess authentic political power and thereby govern themselves. And such a principle of popular rule cannot be realised if society is dominated by privileged elites of property, wealth or social position. Thus, implicit in the republican idea is a levelling political and social egalitarianism. In modern industrial society, the republican principle of popular sovereignty can be authentically realised only under a socialist

ordering of the economy. James Connolly described the republic as the point of departure for the socialist. To O'Donnell, socialism was the logical destination of the republican. Throughout the various political agitations of his career, the vehicle for this ideology was O'Donnell's emphasis on galvanising public engagement in practical politics at grassroots level: the land annuities campaign was founded on a myriad of local committees, federated into a national umbrella body; Republican Congress was organised around similar local branches. In the spirit of his early ITGWU syndicalism, O'Donnell predicted that these decentralised, democratically controlled 'organs of struggle' would become the 'organs of government'.⁴ Finally, O'Donnell situated this 'real republicanism' within a tradition of theory and praxis originating with Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen, continuing through the agrarian radicalism of Fintan Lalor and the democratic republicanism of the early Fenians, and then to Michael Davitt and such later figures as Connolly and Liam Mellows.

But O'Donnell's real republicanism embraced other principles besides a socialist consciousness. A succinct expression of the wider scope of its concepts, containing within it the seeds of *The Bell*, may be found in the terms of the debate in which O'Donnell and his left republican associates engaged in response to the proposed enactment in 1937 of the new Irish constitution, *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, sponsored by the Fianna Fáil government. Not only a demarcation of the national territory and an outline of the institutions of the state, the constitution was also a statement of the fundamental political principles and social values meant to guide the Irish nation and, as such, a definitive codification of the de Valerean dispensation. In campaigning against its ratification by popular referendum, the left republicans formulated arguments that amounted to an outline of the fundamental principles and values underlying their alternative concept of the nation. The left republican argument was contained in the *Irish Democrat*, a short-lived but lively weekly newspaper co-sponsored by Republican Congress, other leftist organisations and progressive-minded individuals.⁵ A series of articles analysing the constitution and attacking its terms appeared over three issues of the *Democrat* in May 1937, as the draft constitution was being debated in the Dáil.⁶ The series culminated in a Republican Congress manifesto on the constitution, published in the 22 May number over the names of O'Donnell, as Congress chairman, and Frank Ryan (editor of the *Democrat* while on a three-month invalided home-stay from the Spanish civil war) as honorary secretary. In common with the broadsides against the constitution in the earlier issues of the *Democrat*, the manifesto did not base its argument solely, or even principally, on the failure of the

constitution to declare an Irish republic, nor on its accommodation to the fact of partition. Rather, the argument concentrated on three issues of social import raised by the section of the constitution dealing with 'fundamental rights'. The first of these was the provision of Article 43 on property rights that declared 'the private ownership of external goods' to be a 'natural right, antecedent to positive law' and guaranteed that the Irish state would not seek to abolish the rights of private ownership and conveyance of property. The Congress manifesto responded by charging that 'private property is raised here almost to the dignity of a sacrament'. True to the spirit of the 1930s and to the socialism that was the key identifying feature of their brand of republicanism, it was this topic that had dominated the earlier issues of the *Democrat* debate, in terms likewise redolent of religious imagery. One article, in the 8 May issue, tersely summarised the import of the draft constitution under the heading 'No Republic, No King—But Capital!' and condemned the constitutional declaration of the capitalist system:

... as something ordained by Providence for ever, amen! Private property is declared sacred—a 'natural right' overriding all law. What does this mean if not that the despoiled and dispossessed masses, without property ... are forever to remain despoiled and dispossessed ... Poverty is sacred; having no property is sacred; wage slavery is sacred; the Poor Law is sacred.

Another *Democrat* article of the same date asserted that 'present property relations' were being given constitutional guarantee as natural human rights, and 'thus the capitalist system is in effect declared eternal'.

The second issue was the recognition accorded in Article 44 to the 'special position' of the Roman Catholic Church. In rejecting this provision, the manifesto proclaimed that republicans 'take their stand on the principle of equality before the state of all citizens, irrespective of religious belief ... [and] are opposed to a State or a semi-State church'. Having made this assertion of general republican principle, the manifesto then stressed the difficulties that the article on religion would pose to the realisation of a particular Irish republican aspiration: the cessation of partition and reunification of the nation. In the Dáil debate, both de Valera and Sean T. O'Kelly had described the constitution as appropriate to 'a catholic nation', while envisioning that no fundamental change in the constitution would be required when national reunification was accomplished; the protestants of the north, as those of the south, would thus be expected to abide within the constitutional framework of 'a catholic nation'.⁷

The third issue addressed by the manifesto was the implications for the

status of women of the provisions on the family enshrined in Article 41. Objecting to the regression from ‘the guarantee to women of equal rights and equal opportunities stated so clearly in the 1916 Proclamation’, the manifesto demanded ‘that it be openly declared in any constitution for the Irish Republic that equal pay and opportunities for women in industry shall be assured’. This affirmed the more trenchant observations made in the *Democrat* of 8 May by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington (‘Feminist Leader Flays Constitution: Even Worse Than Cosgrave’s’), who surveyed the steady erosion of the legal and practical status of women since the establishment of the Free State, concluding that these ‘inequalities’ were now being given constitutional sanction, with ‘the implication that God sanctioned them too’. An accompanying unsigned synopsis of the provisions of the constitution that described how ‘one half of the nation’s citizens ... are proscribed as having but one function—to keep house’ spoke of ‘this stone-age conception of womanhood’, concluding tersely that the ‘right of divorce is prohibited’.

In a 1945 *Bell* editorial, Sean O’Faolain posited that the republican rebels of the civil war—citing himself as a prime exemplar—‘had no concept of the state we wished to found’.⁸ Whatever about the general validity of this observation to 1922, it certainly seems that by 1937 the social republicans writing in the *Irish Democrat* had a quite clear concept of the type of nation that they were espousing. It was to be socialist, secular and feminist: a democratic and egalitarian republic.⁹ On the three key issues identified in the Congress manifesto, the positions taken by O’Donnell and his left republican comrades foreshadowed the ethos of *The Bell*. While by no means specifically socialist, *The Bell* was socially conscious, alerting its readers to conditions among the urban and rural poor and raising related issues of social injustice. It was especially noted for its brave denunciation of the clerical domination of Irish political, social and cultural life, and its broad sense of social equality and inclusiveness embraced the contemporary concerns of feminists regarding the status of women. Furthermore, regarding the latter two of these issues—the religious question and women’s rights—the *Irish Democrat*, three years before the launch of *The Bell*, was raising social and constitutional concerns that would become central points of the latter-day ‘liberal agenda’, resulting in eventual amendment of the very terms of the constitution to which the *Democrat* had objected: the special position of the Roman church and the article on the family that prohibited the dissolution of marriage. The 1937 left republicans, standing on the grounds of fundamental republican principle, thus foreshadowed the ‘pluralist society’ pursued by later generations of Irish liberals on some of

its most contentious and representative features.

The enactment of the 1937 constitution was one of a series of events in the late 1930s that seem to have persuaded O'Donnell of the collapse of the political strategy he had been pursuing since the end of the civil war and of the marginalisation on the political spectrum of his strain of social republicanism. The first of these events was the early split and rapid demise of Republican Congress, intended, as it was, as the organisational vehicle for his strategy and ideology. The second was the fierce and febrile debate aroused in Ireland by the Spanish civil war: ferociously vilified by right-wing clergy, politicians and press over his outspoken support for the Spanish republic, O'Donnell became a hate figure to a substantial chunk of the Irish populace, caricatured as an irreligious, priest-hating, church-burning red. The third of these events, the enactment of the constitution, was deeply symbolic of the clear dominance and likely entrenchment of the de Valerean strain of republican ideology, which to O'Donnell was a betrayal of republican principle and the true republican tradition. The fourth event was the turn taken by the third strain of Irish republicanism, the physical-force movement, which also had a constitutional form. A newly installed IRA leadership under Sean Russell expunged from army policy any remaining vestige of leftist leaning or dabbling in politics and embarked on an exclusively (and highly aggressive) militarist strategy. Just prior to the start of the 1939 IRA bombing campaign in British cities (described privately by O'Donnell as 'brainless'), a transfer was declared of recognition as the legitimate government of the Irish republic from the republican members of the second Dáil to the army council of the IRA, which then proceeded to declare its war on Britain.

The Republican Congress manifesto on the constitution had boldly called for a redeclaration of the republic by the people of Ireland in defiance of the Fianna Fáil regime and outlined the kind of republic it wished to see declared. The other two competing strains of republicanism had also played their hands and had done so in constitutional terms. Bourgeois-led republicanism, while still brandishing the republican label, had promulgated a constitution that failed either in name or in substance to declare the republic, but, rather, openly purported to be a constitution for a 'catholic nation'. Physical-force republicanism *had* redeclared the republic, but without a social programme or political strategy and to the desperate din of bombs. Such was the historical context in which, in the summer of 1940, O'Donnell approached O'Faolain with his idea for a broad political, social and cultural review. It must have been clear to O'Donnell that the constituency for his strain of republican ideology—

never overwhelming in fact, however so he had regarded it in potential—had all but vanished: it was minute and marginal. Ever the incurable optimist (to a degree that often exasperated his friends and colleagues), ever faithful to the ultimate victory of ‘the people’, what O’Donnell determined upon in the bleak political circumstances of 1940 was not an abandonment of the struggle, but a new departure, a renewal of the struggle on a field of battle more appropriate to the circumstances. Over the years of his political activism, he had also emerged as a figure on the Irish cultural landscape; in addition to his journalism, he had written five novels and two volumes of autobiographical documentary. Now, he determined to shift his primary concentration from political agitation to cultural activity. Surveying the terms of the 1937 constitution and the course of the 1939 IRA bombing campaign, it must have seemed to O’Donnell that the republic—his idea of the republic—had not been achieved because it had been misunderstood. Before the republic could be redeclared, the idea of the republic had to be reclaimed from the other two strains of republican ideology and action. In order for the republic to be reclaimed, it had first to be re-explained and redefined. This could be attempted, not via yet another political organisation or initiative, but via a concerted effort on the field of discourse. Through such a discursive process of redefinition and re-explication, a new constituency for O’Donnell’s idea of the republic might be shaped.

The nation and the republic

Various scholarly enquiries into the nature and history of nationalism have tended to identify two fundamental variants of the phenomenon, distinguished primarily by the manner in which they define ‘the people’ who constitute the nation.¹⁰ One variant arises from a political definition of the nation as essentially a body politic that expresses its collective will as to the mode in which it wishes to be governed. The other variant conceives of the nation as essentially a cultural community that expresses its collective choice to govern itself apart from other such communities. These two fundamental variants can be designated as *political nationalism* and *cultural nationalism*, provided that it is clear that what is meant by these terms is not an opposition between nationalism expressed as a political movement and nationalism as expressed in ‘cultural’ production (literature, music, art, etc.). Rather, the terms are meant to designate two variant structures of nationalist thought and feeling, one defining the nation in political terms, the other in cultural terms. Both variants of nationalism can find expression in cultural production—indeed, the subject of this discussion is the genesis and character of one such

article of cultural production, *The Bell*.

Following from their fundamental definitions of the nation, the two variant forms of nationalism may be further described as having distinct sets of characteristics. Political nationalism emphasises definition of the civic space, the arena in which power is exercised and political decisions rendered. Addressing the individual as a functioning member of the body politic, it concerns itself with definition of the individual's rights and responsibilities as citizen of a self-governing nation state; in a word, with the individual as *citoyen*. In cultural nationalism the emphasis is on definition of the character of the cultural community, on examination and celebration of the cultural characteristics that render the community unique and distinct from other communities. Of prime concern are the innate characteristics of the individual as member of an organic community, a *volk*, distinguishable from other such *volks* by the unique cultural attributes that each individual in the community shares. Political nationalism tends toward what Maurice Goldring calls an 'open' concept of citizenship, one that includes among the people of the nation every individual born or resident within the national territory, without reference to other defining characteristics. Cultural nationalism tends toward what Goldring calls a 'closed' citizenship, in which membership of the nation is restricted to those individuals possessing the specified set of essentialist characteristics that defines the national community: usually some combination of language, ethnicity, religion, and race.

Rooted intellectually in the rationalism of the eighteenth-century enlightenment and engendered in opposition to the political and ecclesiastical institutions and hereditary class distinctions of the *anciens régimes* that it usurped, political nationalism is secular, sceptical, anti-monarchic and anti-aristocratic. Its ethos embodies the enlightenment emphasis on social organisation, public affairs and civic-mindedness. Cultural nationalism, tracing its intellectual origins to nineteenth-century German romanticism, tends to a mythic irrationalism in its emphasis on the locus of individual identity in mystical union with the soul of the larger community. Cultural nationalism concentrates on definition of the composition and character of the nation, demarcation of the national territory, and assertion of the nation's right to cultural and political autonomy; the precise manner in which the nation is to be governed is of secondary and contingent interest. A national monarchy and a particular religious confession may both be regarded as portions of the nation's cultural heritage, essential links with the nation's past; the latter may be regarded as a badge of national identity. In its exploration of cultural uniqueness, cultural nationalism concerns itself deeply with language,

folklore and historical continuity with the nation's past; the peasantry, deemed uncontaminated by contact with alien cultures, is idealised as reservoir of the authentic national character. Language is a subject of paramount interest, for, akin to religion, it combines a communal function with a profound expression and penetration of the individual psyche. Culture, in the sense of cultural product, is approached by the cultural nationalist for its value as an expression of the national character; art is expressive, emotive, and comes from the heart. To the political nationalist, culture is primarily a medium for communication between rational beings, a medium for the exchange of ideas; art proceeds from the head, and is a stimulus of thought.

At the core of political nationalism, then, is the principle of *popular sovereignty*, of the right of *the* people (the citizens) to govern themselves. At the core of cultural nationalism is the principle of *national self-determination*, of the right of *a* people (the *volk*) to govern itself. John Hutchinson, in a meticulous (if in places overly categorical) study, has discussed the complex relationship between a political and a cultural variant of nationalism within Ireland since the late eighteenth century. He argues that the prevalent ideology of the 1916 revolutionaries, which they bequeathed to both the founders of the Irish Free State and their anti-treaty opponents, was a form of cultural nationalism rooted in the Gaelic revival of the late nineteenth century; enunciated by figures of the catholic bourgeois intelligentsia, this revival looked to the 'golden age' of medieval Christianity for the origins of the Irish nation as a unique cultural community. While Hutchinson's contribution is impressive and has provided the basis for much of the above delineation of the two variants of nationalism as structures of ideology and feeling, he affords, I believe, inadequate attention to the ideology of Irish republicanism and its place in the historic dynamic. He also tends to equate Irish political nationalism too easily with constitutional political movements and personages, and Irish cultural nationalism, in its 'socio-political articulation', with the tradition of physical-force separatism. As a modification of his model, I propose a designation of republicanism, in Ireland and elsewhere, as a species of political nationalism—as, indeed, the generative species of political nationalism as a political movement, in that the first modern nation states founded by political nationalists, in the Americas and in France, defined themselves as republics.¹¹ Republicanism entered Ireland in the late eighteenth century under the direct influence of those American and French examples. However, throughout the nineteenth century, and especially in its final decade, the ideology of the Irish republican movement was indeed infiltrated by concepts more appropriate to cultural

nationalism. Through such organisations as the Gaelic League and the GAA, the IRB generation of the 1890s, the incubator of the future direction of the movement, was deeply influenced by the ideas and values of a 'Gaelicist' cultural nationalism, to the extent that the prevalent ideology of the movement did veer away from a political to a cultural concept of what constituted the Irish nation. The descriptive term 'republican' became more a designation of the aspiration to total separation from Britain and its empire than a set of ideas and values describing a 'republican' definition of how the nation should be defined, governed and constituted. This process probably happened because of the wide currency of cultural nationalism in that era as an all but essential ingredient of the spirit of the age, not only in Ireland but also throughout Europe and beyond. Even within traditions formerly identifiable as politically nationalist, there was a compulsion to fortify the nation's claims to a separate national identity and a self-governing nation state with assertions of historic cultural distinctiveness, where, before, political arguments for self-government had sufficed. This was a complicated process, and for most individuals the structure of ideology and feeling would have been a complex amalgam of political and cultural ideas and notions, in a fluid blend that could change in emphasis for each individual throughout his or her life. Nonetheless, from the 1890s, the prevalent ideology among extra-constitutional Irish separatists, including those who described themselves as republican, did become a Gaelicist cultural nationalism. This ideology remained dominant in the nominally republican Sinn Féin party that emerged from the October 1917 Ard-Fheis. When that party split in 1922, its pro-treaty element proceeded to shape the ethos of their new state in accord with this Gaelicist cultural nationalism, now become the official state ideology. After 1932, de Valera's Fianna Fáil, likewise heirs to the post-1890 IRB, affirmed the values of Gaelicist cultural nationalism with yet more vigour and populist appeal and codified them in the 1937 constitution of a Gaelic catholic nation.

It would seem that Peadar O'Donnell had some sense of such a dynamic in Irish history, between two competing concepts of what defined and characterised the nation. In a reminiscence published in 1974, he observed:

The Irish Separatist Movement from Wolfe Tone onwards has always consisted of two streams, one stretched back to the Republic, the other to the old Gaelic State, old glories and majesties, more Monarchist and pre-Republican and concerned with sovereign independence rather than with the Republic.¹²

It is interesting that he describes the 'old Gaelic state' tradition as 'pre-

republican'. As a historic phenomenon, republicanism, as the generative species of political nationalism, predates the nineteenth-century phenomenon of cultural nationalism. However, the historic myth to which cultural nationalism appeals—in Ireland, that of the Christian Gaelic nation—does refer back to an older time than that of the first republican nation states. In speaking of the 'old glories and majesties' of that Gaelic state, O'Donnell evinces an understanding of the mythic memory of a historic national greatness that supplies cultural nationalism with much of its emotive power. Also interesting is the distinction that he draws between 'sovereign independence' and 'the republic'; as suggested by the constitution debate, for O'Donnell the idea of 'the republic' is about much more than political independence, it is about the definition and character of the nation state.

The 1937 Republican Congress manifesto decried the constitutional provisions on both property and religion as a 'betrayal' that had 'outraged ... the whole tradition of the Fenian struggle'. This is an important locution: 'Fenian' is a key word in O'Donnell's vocabulary of political discourse. Throughout his career, his polemic was riddled with references to 'Fenian Ireland', 'Fenian radicalism', and 'the Fenian countryside'. In the same 1974 reminiscence quoted above, he suggested that the phrase that best described his political ideology was 'social Fenian'.¹³ In its call to the Irish people to 'redeclare the republic', the Congress manifesto made specific reference to the 1916 proclamation as 'the people's charter', but its reference to the tradition of Fenian struggle harkened back to a yet earlier republican declaration, the proclamation of an Irish republic rendered by the Fenian Brotherhood on the eve of the 1867 rising. Expressive of a politically nationalist ideology in its consciousness of an aggrieved citizenry moved to revolution against despotic government and of society as a compact intended to safeguard natural human rights, this document foreshadows by some seventy years the 1937 Congress manifesto by linking together republican principle, social radicalism (specifically radical reform of property relations), secularism, and equality of all citizens before the law. Declaring that, 'unable longer to endure the curse of monarchical government, we aim at founding a republic based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour', the 1867 Fenians addressed in successive clauses the same two issues of property rights and religious liberties that would be contentious constitutional issues for the 1937 left republicans:

The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored.

We declare, also, in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and complete separation of Church and State.¹⁴

Herein may be identified another dimension of O'Donnell's assertion of a 'real republicanism'. His republicanism was 'real' in reaffirming a version of republicanism in Ireland that existed prior to the dilution of the republican idea and the usurpation of the republican name by a species of cultural nationalism. His was the republicanism of Wolfe Tone and of the 1867 Fenians, the republicanism of the American and the French revolutions.

Thus, the conflict in 1940 among the competing strains of Irish republicanism and between republicanism and Fine Gael nationalism, was not in essence an argument about the terms of the treaty, the legitimacy of the Free State, or the use of constitutional means versus physical force. These were all parts of the argument, but not the core of the argument. The conflict was about the very idea of the nation, a contest between two competing concepts of the definition and character of the nation. It was a conflict between two cultures, one signified by the republic, the other by the Gaelic nation. It was, therefore, appropriate that O'Donnell's new departure into the field of discourse would take not the form of polemic, but of cultural discourse in the broadest sense.

The discourse of *The Bell*

Throughout his political activism, O'Donnell had repeatedly striven to forge alliances: broad coalitions of related, but disparate political forces. Republican Congress had been the exemplar of this, as a popular front of republicans, socialists, trade unionists, agrarian radicals, progressives of every ilk. Now, as his field of engagement moved from politics to cultural discourse, he would forge an alliance among cultural figures—artists of disparate backgrounds, viewpoints, interests and visions, but alike in a commitment to open and humane dialogue and debate. The Republican Congress had had its day. The new departure would be a republican symposium in print.

Foremost among the allies recruited by O'Donnell was, of course, Sean O'Faolain. As late as 1945, O'Faolain would state in a *Bell* editorial his continuing belief that the anti-treaty republicans had been politically and morally right in refusing to accept the treaty even after its ratification by popular vote because that vote had been secured under threat of force, while conceding that the form taken by their refusal might have been politically unwise.¹⁵ However, it is unlikely that by 1940 he would still have described himself as a republican, being deeply suspicious of terms

that he saw as ‘abstractions’. But, he did bring to *The Bell* a concept of the Irish nation, a concept which can, I believe, in light of the above discussion, be described as ‘republican’. O’Faolain typified the creative artist with a deep social concern, engaging in discourse on matters of civic interest. O’Donnell complemented him, being more the political activist with an interest in literature, who turned to creative writing as one weapon in his arsenal. This article has concentrated on the political career and ideology of O’Donnell, as the person who initiated the idea of *The Bell* and who had maintained a more intimate connection with the republican movement and the republican name. It remains to look at *The Bell* itself, at what it had to say and how it said it, and to identify how the discourse in which it engaged could be described as republican. Although O’Donnell had been the prime mover in initiating the journal and remained a powerful influence on its policy through his role on the editorial board, it was O’Faolain as editor who had the determining role in shaping its ethos.

From its inception, *The Bell* challenged the ethos and ideology of the Gaelic national state, the essentialist cultural community of the catholic Gaels. Direct attacks on the Gaelic state were launched through the medium of its commentary, enunciated largely in the early years in O’Faolain’s monthly editorials. But, it was not so much in what was said in direct political comment that *The Bell* expressed an ethos of civic republicanism, as in the whole body of its discourse and the style in which the discourse was conducted. *The Bell* was republican in its content and in its style.

The Bell was expressive of a civic republicanism in two interrelated ways: it was *inclusive* and it was *inquisitive*. From the very first number, that of October 1940, O’Faolain made this crystal clear: ‘We are absolutely inclusive ... Whoever you are, then, O reader, Gentile or Jew, Protestant or Catholic, priest or layman, Big House or Small House—THE BELL is yours’. In the issues that followed, he astutely made good on that pledge, publishing the work of a varied set of contributors. He exhorted his readers to contribute material drawn from their own ‘actual experience’, on life as they knew it and daily lived it: ‘You who read this know intimately some corner of life that nobody else can know’. The magazine’s purpose was to depict ‘a bit of Life itself ... to encourage Life to speak’, for ‘THE BELL stands ... for Life before any abstraction’.¹⁶

Thus, *The Bell* set out to be not just a literary magazine (though the quality of its creative writing and literary criticism was high), but also a compendium of Irish life as it was actually lived. It published a lengthy series on the country theatre; Lennox Robinson on the county libraries;

Flann O'Brien on Dublin pubs, dog racing and dance halls; Elizabeth Bowen on the big house; the personal experiences of a slum dweller, of an orphaned child, of illegitimacy, of life on the dole; an article on prisons; profiles of Irish writers based on personal familiarity: AE, Yeats, Joyce. *The Bell* included articles on vernacular furniture, house decoration and women's hats; a piece on life in a teacher training college; a personal experience of a tuberculosis sanatorium, another of a borstal (by Brendan Behan—the germ of *Borstal Boy*). An entire issue, that of July 1941, was devoted to Ulster. There was a series describing people's lives on certain levels of income, another on the daily routine of persons in different walks of life. The Irish ballet club; a country bookshop; the Irish fisheries; the Sisters of Charity; Dublin restaurants; Irish whiskey; the National Gallery: no subject was too mundane to escape *The Bell's* scrutiny. The first year in print concluded with a symposium of five contributors, each representing a particular strain of influence that had helped shape the national experience: the Gaelic, the classical, the Norman, the Anglo-Irish, and the English.

What does all this represent if not the republican value of inclusiveness, of open citizenship: every one and every experience belongs to the nation. Month by month, *The Bell* methodically composed a picture of the Irish nation as it really was, not as nationalist myth would have it. Thus, the nation was described as a diversity of people, places, activities, functions, and experiences. And O'Faolain insisted that each and every element of this diversity was equally Irish. Thus was unveiled the hidden Ireland of the twentieth century, those aspects of the national life ignored by official Ireland as incompatible with the national self-image propagated by Gaelicist myth. *The Bell* gave a voice to individuals marginalised by that official myth. In doing so, it realised yet another principle of O'Donnell's 'real republicanism': if the people of the nation are to rule, the people (all of them) must have a voice. *The Bell* was the forum in which each voice could be heard.

In thus refuting the nationalist myth, O'Faolain set out his own credo:

The romantic illusion, fostered by the Celtic Twilight, that the West of Ireland, with its red petticoats and bawneens, is for some reason more Irish than Guinness' Brewery or Dwyer's Sunbeam-Wolsey factory, has no longer any basis whatever.¹⁷

Therein lies the fundamental clash between the republican concept of the nation and the nationalist concept. To the republican, everything and everyone in Ireland is Irish. This assertion clashes head-on with the credo of the Gaelic nation that certain features of life in Ireland—the Irish

language, the peasantry of the west, Gaelic games—are more authentically Irish because expressive of the authentic character of the essentialist cultural community. The clash is apparent in the attitude taken by *The Bell* to the Irish language. To O’Faolain, the language was part of contemporary Irish life, of contemporary Irish experience. Some people in Ireland spoke Irish, and they spoke it with varying degrees of frequency. Almost every person in Ireland spoke English, and most of them employed English as their common medium of communication and expression. These are facts. The Irish language is to be respected and given its space as part of the national life as it was being lived. But, it was not to be granted preferential treatment, nor regarded as some sacred repository of the national soul.

The style in which this panoply of the Irish nation was presented may also be regarded as republican in ethos. *The Bell* was inquisitive, its method documentary and empirical, gleaming the cold light of fact on every subject covered. It took as its *modus operandi* the first stage of the scientific method: the observation, accumulation and presentation of fact. Such a methodology seems redolent of the spirit of enlightenment rationalism and scientific enquiry, the foundation of modern republican ideology. It is the methodology of the eighteenth-century French encyclopaedists, with their project of description and cataloguing, deemed subversive by the mystifying *ancien régime*. In fiction, *The Bell* championed realism as the mode most appropriate to Ireland in its present stage of development.

Cultural nationalism starts from the premise that certain things existing within the national territory are essential to the national character; the rest are alien. When the nationalist myth becomes entrenched, those things within the nation that conflict with the myth are ignored, denied, and swept into the margins. Therefore, the first step in the project of demystification is the presentation of things as they are: the facts in their totality. Myth is to be dispelled by laying out, patiently, methodically and comprehensively, the facts as they are. O’Faolain expressed this as another credo:

THE BELL believes that the first thing we must do in Ireland is to see clearly—*voir clair*—to have the facts and understand the picture. This has never been attempted before.¹⁸

(The language to which he briefly reverts is interesting—the language of the enlightenment, of republican revolution.) O’Faolain purported to commence this project without any preconceived idea as to what the national character was. A picture of that character could emerge only as

the facts were accumulated. He identified the character of *The Bell* with 'the character of Irish life which is here free to speak out for itself. That is happening: the pattern is emerging; but it will only emerge clearly and fully when everybody has co-operated'.¹⁹ Yet, this empirical approach does encompass a starting premise, a premise in the spirit of political nationalism, of republicanism: that the entire panoply of fact, of things as they are, of life as it is actually lived, is indeed what constitutes the national character.

In an editorial of June 1941, O'Faolain declared that 'this country is at the beginning of its creative history, and at the end of its revolutionary history ... The period of political and military struggle is over, or virtually over (we devoutly hope!); and the period of creation has arrived'.²⁰ Peadar O'Donnell would have put the matter differently: for him, political struggle (revolutionary struggle) was continuing, albeit in a different mode than before, that of cultural discourse, the mode most appropriate to the objective conditions then prevailing. However, O'Faolain's formulation did, in fact, mirror the shape of O'Donnell's career, in which the launch of *The Bell* proved a watershed. From his prior concentration on revolutionary political activity, to which his writing had been secondary, for the next fifteen years and beyond his primary preoccupation would be with cultural activity: his involvement with *The Bell*, the composition of his sixth and finest novel, *The Big Windows* (1954), and the patronage and promotion of literature and the arts. His subsequent political activity avoided revolutionary initiatives to overturn the system and the state and was confined to ad hoc pressure groups campaigning on specific issues.

The Bell represented a discursive intervention at a particular moment in Irish political and cultural history. It was a response to that moment and became a part of the moment. Its particular method of discourse, in its content and its style, arising from and promoting an ethos of civic republicanism, was conditioned by the circumstances of that moment, by the necessity to engage in cultural debate with the all-domineering and smothering ideology of a cultural-nationalist state. As such, it gives an insight into what a contribution to cultural discourse coming from a perspective of civic republicanism and intervening at a particular historic moment might be like.

Notes

¹ Peter Hegarty, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Dublin: Mercier 1999), p. 241. The other recent biography is Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Peadar O'Donnell* (Cork: Cork University Press 2001), which concentrates on analysis of his political development.

- ² Peadar O'Donnell, *There Will Be Another Day* (Dublin: Dolmen 1963), p. 120.
- ³ George Gilmore, *The Irish Republican Congress* (Cork: Cork Workers' Club 1978), p. 52; Michael McInerney, *Peadar O'Donnell: Irish Social Rebel* (Dublin: O'Brien 1974), p. 136.
- ⁴ The phrases were used by O'Donnell in his address to the first, fateful, Republican Congress in Rathmines town hall, Co. Dublin, on 29–30 September 1934. See George Gilmore, *The Irish Republican Congress* (Cork: Cork Workers' Club 1978), p. 53.
- ⁵ The leftist organisations were the Communist Party of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Socialist Party.
- ⁶ The issues of the *Irish Democrat* were those of 8, 15 and 22 May 1937. Dates of specific references are indicated in the text.
- ⁷ See J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), pp. 203, 206.
- ⁸ *The Bell*, vol. x, no. 3 (June 1945), p. 200.
- ⁹ Some of the *Democrat* articles, including that by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and another, of 15 May, by her son Owen Sheehy Skeffington, took issue with the constitutional provisions regarding personal rights (Article 40); in particular, with the fact that the guarantees of free speech and assembly and a free press were made conditional, 'subject to public order and morality' and 'the authority of the state'. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington noted that capital punishment had been retained, wryly observing that 'the British hangman has not been dispensed with—perhaps he is the link with the Crown ...'
- ¹⁰ In the discussion that follows, I have relied primarily on: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1991) (Rev. ed.); John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London: Allen & Unwin 1987); and Maurice Goldring, *Pleasant the Scholar's Life: Irish Intellectuals and the Construction of the Nation State* (London: Serif 1993).
- ¹¹ Benedict Anderson situates the origins as a political movement of what I have termed political nationalism in what he calls the 'Creole republics' of the Americas that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; these republican nation states were founded by 'Creoles', the American-born descendants of European settlers. The French revolution, though lacking the separatist dimension of American republicanism, was a powerful stimulus to the development and propagation of concepts of political nationalism. Cultural nationalism emerged as a political movement in the nineteenth century among separatist groupings within the polyglot empires of eastern and central Europe. Despite the republican origins of political nationalism, it is true that some later political nationalists, in Ireland and elsewhere as Hutchinson has demonstrated, accommodated a fundamentally political conception of the nation with monarchical or imperial institutions.
- ¹² Michael McInerney, *Peadar O'Donnell: Irish Social Rebel* (Dublin: O'Brien 1974), p. 94. McInerney's book is based on interviews with O'Donnell that were also the basis of a series of articles published in the *Irish Times* in April 1968.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- ¹⁴ Reprinted in Alan O'Day and John Stevenson (eds.), *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan 1992), pp. 76–7. The proclamation was originally published in *The Nation*, 9 March 1867.
- ¹⁵ See *The Bell*, vol. x, no. 1 (April 1945), p. 3.
- ¹⁶ See 'This Is Your Magazine', *The Bell*, vol. i, no. 1 (Oct. 1940), pp. 5–9.
- ¹⁷ *The Bell*, vol. vi, no. 6 (Sept. 1943), p. 460.

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. i, no. 3 (Dec. 1940), p. 6.

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. i, no. 5 (Feb. 1941), p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid., vol. ii, no. 3 (June 1941), p. 6.

Exploding the Continuum: The Utopia of Unbroken Tradition

RAYMOND DEANE

'... only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past ...'

Walter Benjamin: *Theses on the Philosophy of History (III)*

'FACED WITH a gap of centuries in Ireland's musical development, Ó Riada set about filling it himself.' These words were written a generation ago by Louis Marcus in a commemorative volume for Seán Ó Riada, subtitled 'Integrating Tradition'.¹ They echo Thomas Davis's 1845 assertion: 'There are great gaps in Irish song to be filled up'.² In this essay, I wish to propose that a different historical perspective might lead us towards viewing these lacunae in a less fatalistic light than has tended to be the case.

I

Marcus writes of Ó Riada's 'longing to touch the hand of the last Irishman for whom the Gaelic and European traditions of music were not irreconcilable', the eighteenth-century harpist and composer Turlough O'Carolan. The absence of such reconciliation in the intervening two centuries is equated with the absence of 'development'. Marcus wrote further:

Ideally, in an Ireland of unbroken musical development, any competent composer could have written a useful score for *Mise Éire* on the residue of our national contribution to the music of nineteenth-century Europe. But we made no such contribution; there was no Irish Smetana or Grieg to echo.³

If Marcus was claiming that there was no Irish classical music during this hiatus, then he was simply incorrect. Presumably, his point was that there were none of comparable status to the composers he mentioned. By implication, if the 'reconciliation' of Gaelic and European traditions had been pursued in Carolan's wake by equally gifted individuals, we might have had nineteenth-century composers of sufficient stature to inspire, by their influence, a national compositional 'school' in the twentieth century

and beyond. The unquestioned valorisation of continuity in the creation of a major canon is at the heart of this passage, which contains one or two further assumptions that, on another occasion, might warrant more detailed interrogation. Is it really self-evident that a film on the 1916 Rising should necessarily have ‘echoed’ the ‘residue’ of nineteenth-century music? Has the influence of Smetana and Grieg on subsequent musical developments in their respective countries truly been as decisive as is usually claimed?

‘Development’ comes into play when major figures influence subsequent major figures in an unbroken series; the word implies growth, maturation, progress. It defines each historical event as a transition between its predecessor and successor. Traditional music, on the other hand, is allegedly handed down in an unbroken chain from performer to performer. Indeed the image of the ‘chain’ is often avoided in favour of an aquatic imagery of flow—*Riverdance*, *Rivers of Sound*—implying that the transmission of this music is more of a continuum. Its ‘development’ consists in modifications of performance style that in no way affect the almost Platonic integrity of the music, which can thus stand as the ‘language’ of a people that has lost its language. Thus, music becomes a form of redemption. We know that Ó Riada saw his move to West Cork in precisely this light and how illusory this redemption ultimately proved. Subsequent Irish composers, for better or for worse, have been more content to acknowledge themselves beyond redemption.

II

Let us take a closer look at the figure of Carolan and attempt to imagine a musical history that might take him as its starting point. Donal O’Sullivan, in his magisterial two-volume study of the harpist, judged that ‘Carolan’s blindness and his lack of formal musical education prevent us from regarding him as a composer in the accepted sense of the term.’⁴ Some years later, the harpist Gráinne Yeats would write: ‘Though Carolan’s music is slight when viewed from the point of view of large scale composition, yet it is an amazing achievement ... that suggests that Turlough Carolan does indeed deserve the title of Ireland’s first national composer’.⁵

That the putative point of origin for a nation’s classical musical history should provoke such contradictory evaluations (even if both are ultimately favourable) may explain why someone like William Henry Grattan Flood, who early in the last century published the first ‘authoritative’ *History of Irish Music*, enthusiastically attributed spurious Irish origins to such English musical giants as John Dowland (1562–1626) and Henry Purcell

(1658–1695).⁶ The urge to lay claim to these monuments is a parodistic mirror-image of the colonial master's well-known predilection for appropriating the finest flowers of the conquered nation's culture. It is also, as we shall see, the other side of the procedure whereby Irish commentators renounce those who might with some justice be tentatively claimed as our own.

Edward Bunting (commenting, in the introduction to his 1840 collection *Ancient Music of Ireland*, on Carolan's assimilation of Italian influences) stated that 'Carolan was the first who departed from the purely Irish style in Composition'. This seems to imply that others followed along this path; but Carolan was, of course, the last of the great harpist-composers, and thus without any obvious successor. Thomas Roseingrave (1688–1766), 'the curious chromatic eighteenth-century Irishman',⁷ might well have heard some of Carolan's tunes and might even have met the older master (perhaps at Jonathan Swift's Deanery), but we have no documentary evidence either to substantiate or rebut such a pleasing fantasy. Neither can we assert or deny with confidence that Carolan's influence is traceable in Roseingrave's work, although a common Italian influence is indisputable.

Roseingrave went to Italy in 1709 and befriended the great composer and harpsichordist Domenico Scarlatti, whose music he edited and popularised. As opposed to Scarlatti's experimentalism, which seems to proceed directly from his virtuosity on the keyboard, the Irishman's deviations from the increasingly bland conventions of his time and place have their paradoxical origins in his loyalty to the more austere musical language of the Restoration. The great eighteenth-century English music historian Burney claimed Roseingrave's harmony was 'rendered intolerably harsh ... by a licentious and extravagant modulation', while Burney's rival Sir John Hawkins described his playing and composition as 'harsh and disgusting, manifesting great learning, but void of eloquence and variety'. A piece such as the keyboard *Voluntary in G Minor* (1728) goes some way towards explaining these reactions: it sets out from the very start on a vertiginous course of modulation that is potentially endless, being interrupted rather than rounded off by a cadence that is itself the cue for an almost equally chromatic fugue. Dissonances are frequent and frequently unresolved.⁸

Later in life, Roseingrave fell disastrously in love with one of his pupils, 'a lady of no dove-like constancy', in Burney's splendid phrase, and his mental equilibrium gradually disintegrated. Perhaps the belief that the most interesting aspects of his music stem from psychological alienation has contributed towards consigning his reputation to near oblivion. One

thinks of Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1561–1613), whose harmonic ‘eccentricities’ were until recently regarded as a product of his literally murderous mental imbalance. However, patient advocacy has overcome this prejudice, and Gesualdo has now taken his place in musical history as one of the most powerful musical voices of late Renaissance Italy. Roseingrave still awaits systematic advocacy, let alone rehabilitation, and such attempts as have been made in that direction have not come from Irish sources. Such an exclusion, as we shall see, is analogous to that of contemporary Irish music from the repertoires of most of our leading performing musicians and from serious musicological consideration worthy of the name.

III

If the gap between Carolan and Roseingrave admits of a certain hesitant mediation, the century between Roseingrave and John Field (1782–1837) is empty indeed—or, more precisely, filled with musical emptiness. We may console ourselves that this vacuity was evenly spread throughout the British Isles, and that during a period when the German-speaking countries alone gave us Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, the Dublin-born Field was the only Irish or British composer of any real stature.

David Branson writes that ‘Field’s overwhelming disadvantage, and one which led to the virtual obliteration of his larger works, was the lack of any sure sense of construction’.⁹ His seven extant piano Concertos ‘bear the look of a large span and are accompanied by full and interestingly laid-out orchestral parts, but ... prove on the whole to be uncertain in their direction, unenterprising in modulation ... and sometimes so rambling and discursive as to be shapeless’.¹⁰

Revisionism, in one of its happier manifestations, has rescued Field’s Concertos from obliteration, and slowly but surely his reputation has rebounded. Nonetheless, Branson’s critique stands: Field was a miniaturist whose career as the finest concert pianist of his day required him to compose occasional large-scale works with orchestra. It was his real achievement in his solo works to find a pianistic correlative to Italian *bel canto* and, thus, to make the piano, which had evolved from the plangent harpsichord via the fortepiano, available for a romantic age less interested in form than in feeling. Furthermore, his aversion to form had its positive side: ‘Field’s creation of the *Nocturne* as a genre was undoubtedly his greatest contribution to music’ according to Charles K. Moss. ‘It must be remembered that the piano “piece” scarcely existed before his time. Apart from dances and technical studies, there were only sonatas, sonatinas, sets of variations, fantasias, rondos, and fugues. Field

created an entity that did not develop a given theme; neither did it follow a known form.’¹¹

Field, then, was a modernist, an innovator who found forms to embody the absence of form—but was he an Irish composer? Professor Harry White is convinced that he was not, asserting apodictically that ‘in Field’s case the fact of his Irish birth and the potential of Irish culture were of no significance whatever to his English background and training’.¹²

The meaning of this sentence is somewhat unclear: how could Field’s birth and the ‘potential of Irish culture’ have any significance to his ‘background and training’ as opposed to his character and personality? A jester might claim that Field’s alcoholism proves that his Irish background was all too formative in the latter respects. Furthermore, his training was at least as Italian as it was English, since from the age of nine he studied with Tommaso Giordani and was subsequently apprenticed to the Svengali-like Muzio Clementi in London. His first works were a piano arrangement of the Irish tune ‘Go to the devil and shake yourself’, and two rondos on Italian songs by Giordani (1793), a juxtaposition that suggests intriguing if coincidental parallels to Carolan. In 1808, his *Air russe varié* was, according to Moss, ‘one of the earliest nationalistic piano pieces from the Romantic Era. Field showed the way for Glinka and others in his incorporation of Russian folk songs in his music’.¹³ So, was Field as Russian as he was British or Irish? The option is not even considered by Professor White, although his emphatic distinction between Chopin’s *Polishness* (essential) and Field’s *Irishness* (irrelevant) is based in part on the assertion that ‘his life in Russia was not (in creative terms) an exile, but an immigration, complete and unabridged’.¹⁴ The notion that an unabridged immigration cannot simultaneously be an exile, ‘in creative terms’ (whatever that means) or otherwise, is left undefended.

Professor White’s thesis—that ‘the preoccupation with “folksong” ... not as a resource but as a *substitute* for the art tradition, hindered the transformation from Gaelic to modern Irish modes of musical expression’—*requires* him to deny the pianist-composer Field any element of ‘Irishness’, just as it requires him to consider ‘the Carolan myth’ rather than the reality of Carolan’s work and to completely exclude the harpsichordist-organist-composer Roseingrave from consideration.¹⁵

IV

The lament that there exists a gap (or many gaps) in our musical history implies that other cultures are more fortunate in displaying a more seamless development. This thesis is difficult to defend. In Europe, only France—the oldest unified nation state on the continent—can boast an

‘uninterrupted’ tradition, loosely definable as classical and dating back at least to the early Middle Ages. Italy does not do too badly, but has to cope with the seeming disappearance of significant instrumental music during the nineteenth century. Germany, which in many ways defines our whole conception of what is or is not ‘classical’, only begins to enter standard musical-history books in the seventeenth century and hardly shone in the twentieth. The United States was a late starter, and Canada hardly features on concert programmes (outside Canada) to this day. If we move outside the Western world, its classical music has never been anything but an alien presence closely identified with colonialism. From this and many other points of view, Ireland has much in common with non-European recipients of the doubtful boon of British and other imperialism.

Britain itself presents a highly problematic picture. Having shone with exceptional effulgence during the period from John Dunstable (d. 1453) to Henry Purcell (d. 1695), Britain proverbially (and exaggeratedly) became ‘a land without music’ until the advent of the Dublin-born Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924), whose immense prestige and influence as teacher and composer gave him near patriarchal status. Even this over-simplifies the picture by failing to separate the constituent nations of our neighbouring island: the musical histories of Scotland and Wales are at least as porous as our own.

England’s ‘great gap’ of almost two centuries admits of a number of tentative explanations, including the baleful effect of Puritanism and the dubious influence of the Hanoverian monarchy and its imported but undigested (and sometimes indigestible) culture. It is only with Edward Elgar (1857–1934) that the ‘Anglo’ and the ‘Saxon’ amicably shake hands. As Elgar matured, the Teutonic afflatus diminished until a work like the Cello Concerto (1919) escapes almost completely from its grasp. With Benjamin Britten (1913–1976), the oppressive influence of the ‘Germanic centuries’ is overcome by a reaching back to Purcellian times and earlier—to the *Lachrimae* of John Dowland, for example. Here, and in the radical early works of Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934), the progressive impetus stems less from the recent past (although obviously Davies took the second Viennese School and the Darmstadt avant-garde on board) than from the Middle Ages and Renaissance: a ‘great gap’ proves to be productive rather than obstructive, and ‘continuity’ a red herring.

In the case of Stanford, the embrace of Germanic formal rectitude was a matter of principle. His seven Brahmsian symphonies—Bernard Shaw, himself an ardent Wagnerian, called Stanford ‘a kind of Anglo-Irish

Dvorák’—are full of good things that are not quite strong enough to merit the lengthy symphonic elaborations to which they are subjected with dutiful efficiency. Indeed, the very existence of this ultra-professional craftsman in the European mode might in itself seem to refute Louis Marcus’s assertion (quoted above) that ‘our national contribution to the music of nineteenth-century Europe’ was non-existent. However, the word ‘national’ provides the answer: Stanford’s avowed Unionism and opposition to Home Rule excluded him, according to nationalistic standards unquestioned until comparatively recently, from consideration as an ‘Irish’ composer, and, in his case at any rate, the dyad ‘Anglo-Irish’ was considered to be heavily weighted in favour of its first component.

Interestingly, this view of Stanford still prevails at a time when such narrow nationalistic standards have, in other areas of our social and cultural life, been displaced by a supposedly post-nationalist pluralism often associated with the likes of Fintan O’Toole. In other words, the notion that you can be simultaneously Irish and British has become axiomatic in all domains, save that of classical music. In general, I believe that advocates of civic republicanism should seek to reclaim this post-nationalist ground on their own terms within all disciplines. This is not the same thing as attempting to (re)appropriate our neighbour’s heritage in the manner of Grattan Flood. Rather, if we pluralise the concept of history by emphasising more fluid notions of cultural and civilisational admixture, then it becomes possible to see someone like Field as a part of Irish, or British, or even Russian musical history, and indeed an ethnic Englishman like Arnold Bax as part of both British and Irish musical history. The late Edward Said has frequently written of the importance of cultural admixture, even when one of the components of such a mix is identifiable as the colonial oppressor.¹⁶

It is interesting that despite his earnest endeavours in the fields of opera and symphony, until quite recently it appeared as though Stanford would be remembered only as the composer of the perennially popular ‘The Bluebird’ (1910). Lasting just over three minutes, this haunting part-song is most notable for its ending: it has none. The final supertonic e-flat hanging in suspension is perhaps the sole concession to modernism in Stanford’s output, and the fate of ‘The Bluebird’, by comparison with Stanford’s would-be ‘major’ works, suggests that he might have had a more productive career as a miniaturist, eschewing the pretentious certainties of symphonic apotheosis for the ambiguities appropriate to a fractured Irish background and an honourably ‘minor’ tradition.

V

A semi-illiterate blind bard, not ‘a composer in the accepted sense of the term’, whose music is ‘slight when viewed from the point of view of large scale composition’ (Carolan); a baroque keyboard virtuoso, whose music is ‘harsh and disgusting’, ‘licentious and extravagant’, and who was possibly insane (Roseingrave); an alcoholic concert pianist whose music ‘lack[ed] ... any sure sense of construction’ but who ‘created an entity that did not develop a given theme; neither did it follow a known form’ (Field): let us ponder some of the implications of such a hypothetical conjuncture.

Firstly, it is clear that neither the succession of these three figures nor the actual music they composed can be characterised by continuity or development. We might relate this to the well-known biological adage that ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’—i.e. the sequence of events involved in the development of an individual organism recapitulates the sequence involved in the evolution of a species—and suggest that the disintegrations characteristic of these composers are not unlinked to the fragmentation of Irish history under colonial oppression. Edward Said, in the context of his own disinherited people, has repeatedly spoken of ‘the difficulties of Palestinian narratives ... that is to say, we didn’t have and couldn’t formulate a linear narrative in the national sense ... There were too many obstacles, we were too divided over this and that, and the absence of a centre made our lives essentially fragmented’.¹⁷ A history of Irish literature in English focusing on such narrative fragmentation might proceed from Swift and Sterne, through Maturin, Mangan, and Edgeworth (*Castle Rackrent*), to the labyrinthine modernism of Joyce, Beckett, and Flann O’Brien. From such a perspective, the subsequent contentment of Anglophone Irish fiction with the certainties of linear realism might fall in line with the attempt to insert Irish society into the developmental narrative of ‘major’ nations, e.g. by aligning ourselves willy-nilly with US-UK imperialism, rather than with the cause of nations still struggling against colonial subjection. From this perspective also, we might consider Stanford’s project as one of establishing a musical equivalent of the imperialism to which he offered allegiance, while a fragmentary piece like ‘The Bluebird’ suggests a ‘molestation’ of this project from within.¹⁸

We might then move through the twentieth century observing how Irish classical music failed to establish its independence as long as composers sought to ally themselves with continuities of one kind or another—whether those offered by the imperial neighbour or by an idealised version of the Irish tradition itself. Thus, Frederick May (1911–1985) sought

again and again to match himself with the English pastoral tradition, yet approached greatness in the one work—his extraordinary and extraordinarily flawed String Quartet (1936)—in which he dramatised the incompatibility between this tradition and the Viennese modernism that had briefly seized his attention. Seán Ó Riada similarly flirted with the twelve-note method before striving in his significantly unfinished *Nomos No. 2* (1963) to mimic in musical terms the breakdown of mainstream European tradition and subsequently attempting to redeem himself within the perceived continuity of Irish traditional music. Seoirse Bodley sought, in the 1960s, to align himself unambiguously with the central European avant-garde, an attempt culminating, and perhaps collapsing, with the austere total-serial *Configurations for Orchestra* (1967). Subsequently, in *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* for 2 pianos (1972) and the orchestral *A Small White Cloud Drifts Over Ireland* (1976), Bodley juxtaposed avant-garde gestures with pastiches of Irish traditional music. It must be said that these brave attempts work neither as synthesis (the twain never meet) nor as antithesis (no spark is ignited by their failure to do so), and Bodley has subsequently moved in other directions. His unwillingness to stand still undoubtedly does him honour.

Composers born in the mid-twentieth century have generally been less tormented by these issues, yet it would be a mistake to suggest that they merely brush them under the carpet. Roger Doyle (b. 1949) has written of his response to Bob Quinn's *Atlantean* films and their claim that '[t]he thousand-year-old Irish *Sean-Nós* singing is the plainest evidence' of 'ancient and continuous influences [on Irish culture] from Morocco, Libya, Egypt, etc.': 'I found that I had a powerful link to the ideas the film was propounding and was very moved by Sarah Grealish's *sean-nós* singing ... included in the film. This music was like old weeds coming up through cracks in the tarmac that the Catholic Church and Tourist Board had covered Ireland with ... proof to me that something remains in our blood of other Irelands, uncharted'.¹⁹ This remarkable imagery is streets away from the staple vocabulary of aquatic flow prevalent in discussions of traditional music.

Already in the 1973 *Ceol Sídh* ('*Fairy Music*') for three traditional Irish instruments, Doyle had been evoking those 'old weeds' rather than quoting any tunes or tropes from the repertoire.²⁰ The most dramatic illustration of his approach is *Under the Green Time* (1995), in which a live piper interacts with a tape part derived from Brian Ó hUiginn's recorded uilleann pipes.²¹ 'An image of Ireland without the sweet Celtic wrapping,' writes Doyle of this powerful piece, in which those 'other Irelands, uncharted' assert themselves with a volcanic force that one

misses from the more commercially successful chart-toppers of Bill Whelan, Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, or Michael McGlynn.²² Doyle's huge *Babel* project (1990–99) uses 'many soloists around the world creating an ethnic musical language' in order to invent 'a large-scale musical structure ... with each piece of music being thought of as a "room" or place within an enormous tower city.'²³ This might seem to bring Doyle's efforts within the ambit of 'world music' or indeed Karlheinz Stockhausen's 'music of the whole world', but the divergences are far more significant. Whereas the former tends to impose a kind of western patina on a diversity of non-western traditions and hence often veers close to cultural imperialism, and the latter strives to mediate between all cultural traditions to attain a utopian but ultimately very Teutonic synthesis (e.g. in the 1967 tape piece *Hymnen*, which Doyle acknowledges as a major influence), Doyle is more concerned with the irreducibility of the differences between different cultures and between his own different 'styles'. His 'ethnic musical language' (perhaps an imprecise phrase) is a language of Babel after, rather than before, the fall. The same is true of his 'tower city', which is populated by the unredeemed speakers of a multiplicity of languages, something that is not seen as grounds for lamentation—rather the contrary.

In 1978, Gerald Barry (b. 1952) composed a piece for two pianos with the graphic title 'Ø'. Here, all the pitches are derived from the Irish folk song *Bonny Kate* by means of recondite procedures that leave the original unrecognisable, but part of the music's DNA nevertheless. Such an approach might seem to merge the kind of serialist principles he had imbibed as a student of Stockhausen at Cologne with his background in a County Clare environment saturated with traditional music. In the *Sextet* (1992–3), and above all in the first *Piano Quartet* (1992), the Irish elements have risen to the surface; this is avant-garde music that has taken the floor with a vengeance. Contemporaneously with these pieces, the orchestral *Hard D* (1992—the title refers to the lowest note on the uilleann pipes) matches the structure of Bach's late canonical variations *Vom Himmel hoch ...* with material derived from a dozen or so Irish ballads, including 'Take me up to Monto' and 'Finnegan's Wake'. The sheer sweep and cheek of the music renders questions of congruity or incongruity redundant.²⁴

Donal O'Sullivan wrote of Carolan that 'the emotional strain is wholly absent from the great majority of his songs—not unnaturally, since they are Bacchanalian in character.' His closing encomium on the composer was: 'It is not for his ecstasies that we value Carolan's work ... In an age of pallid gloom for Ireland, this blind harper brought ... a kind of puckish

joyousness which before it had seemed to lack'.²⁵ These traits—bacchanalian, puckish joyousness—seem to me singularly apt to describe a good deal of Barry's music. Yet it is clear that there is no intention on his part to self-consciously 'touch the hand of the last Irishman for whom the Gaelic and European traditions of music were not irreconcilable.' Rather, Barry reaches for whatever materials come naturally, here an obscure sixteenth-century English song, there a venerable Bach chorale, elsewhere a rollicking Irish tune. From all of his music, I think, we derive the odd sensation of a very great gap indeed—the nineteenth century, that portentous age that has defined so many of our cultural attitudes, yet left Barry's musical thinking entirely untouched (although to the best of my knowledge he is without prejudice against the period).

Here is how official musicology, in the familiar shape of Professor White, sees this phenomenon: while Stockhausen enjoys continuity with the German music that precedes him, '[n]o such continuity is available to Barry.'²⁶ That such unavailability constitutes a disability is an assumption subjected to no critical analysis; that it might constitute a fruitful resource is unthinkable.

VI

To anyone who has studied the outlines of Irish musical history, it will be immediately evident that there are holes in the above account. Where is Philip Cogan (1748–1833)? Where is Michael Balfe (1808–1870)? Where are Hamilton Harty (1879–1841), Ina Boyle (1889–1967), A. J. Potter (1918–1980), and Ian Wilson (b. 1964)? Furthermore, one would be hard put to define any of my chosen composers as constituting a transition between his predecessor and successor. Instead of charting the solar system, I have drawn up a constellation according to specific and explicit criteria and have 'censored' everything that does not fit into this pattern. However, there is no implication that my constellation excludes any of the other possible constellations making up the firmament of musical history, nor that individual stars need belong to one constellation alone. Traditional historiography insists that its exclusions are normative; in turn, this normativity tends to be self-fulfilling.

The reference to Walter Benjamin in the epigraph heading this essay is by no means fortuitous. For Benjamin, '[a] historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still'.²⁷ Such a historian has the courage 'to blast open the continuum of history'.²⁸ Furthermore, historicism (or historical idealism) 'contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason

historical. It became historical posthumously ... A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one.'²⁹

If those commentators who seek to establish a chain or a continuum are by definition historical idealists in quest of the national essence that grounds such continuities, historical materialists seek to establish the conditions of a discontinuity and to relate these conditions to the discordances within a composition or text, or the practice of an individual creator. The historical idealist sees causal historicism as 'the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate ... The spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment ... There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'. Benjamin's conclusion: 'A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain'.³⁰

Standard general histories of twentieth-century music will mention Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartok among the seminal figures, while relegating Satie to the category of minor curiosity. This is because Satie deliberately and aggressively courted minority—the status of being minor, of not having attained one's majority—and, in so doing, exerted an influence at least as 'major' as that of the other three, in part through the sense of transatlantic affinity he inspired in John Cage. Traditional historians, however, are obsessed with notions of 'development', as outlined earlier, and with the concomitant implications of 'maturation' and 'progress', notions that are subverted by such 'marginal' figures, who always seem suspended somewhere between the archaic and the experimental. Satie's novelty or progressiveness, like Barry's, consists precisely in his dislocation from broadly defined historical trends. While his contemporaries struggled with the immediate implications of Wagner, Satie looked back to the Middle Ages. His music is stripped of even such traces of nineteenth-century developmentalism as survive in Debussy and Ravel. Within a mainstream musical culture such as that of France, a more permissive and promiscuous historical methodology—embracing 'histories' rather than 'History', affirming 'minority' equally with 'majority'—is necessary to do justice to such a figure.³¹ It is, I believe, the *sole* means to do justice to Irish musical history without entailing the most blatant 'great gap' of all—that which marks the absence of contemporary classical music from the officially drawn maps of our cultural landscape.

VII

Our cultural managers and image-formers would have us believe that Ireland today is celebrated worldwide for its literature and music.³² Celebration of the former undoubtedly entails tourist-oriented lip service to Joyce, Yeats, and Beckett, but in the main focuses on more recent purveyors of the novel and short story in English, with one or two mainstream poets thrown in for good measure. It is as if, once the messy business of modernism had been put behind us, Irish literature proper began with Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain and culminated in Colm Tóibín and Roddy Doyle, with an honourable niche reserved for Seamus Heaney. With these writers, Irish literature at last grew up, merging with the Great Tradition of English realism and becoming eligible for British and Irish literary awards, and indeed the Nobel Prize itself. Such a perception involves ignoring literature in Irish and marginalising to the point of exclusion both the nineteenth-century figures mentioned earlier (Mangan, Maturin, Edgeworth) and modernists such as Thomas Kinsella or the poets included in Alex Davis's significantly entitled *A Broken Line* (e.g. the formidable Trevor Joyce).³³ As for prose, one gets the impression that 'experimental' fiction is either not being written or, more likely, not being published.

Celtic Tiger Ireland has become a developed country, as embarrassed by its tradition of opposition to colonialism as by the poverty and eccentricity of a Carolan or Mangan, exorbitantly proud of the wealth of a handful of millionaire tax-dodgers, and eager to be represented abroad by commercially successful authors and musicians. In this context, Ireland at last enters 'History', defined as the history of Western capitalism, and becomes part of 'an unbroken tradition' that breaks with the (anti-) tradition of Irish radicalism, which has always courted fragmentation. In this context, music is commercial or it is sidelined. Commercial music shuns discontinuity. In its appropriation of Irish elements, it often reverts to a Victorian or Edwardian mode of arrangement; in the absence of such appropriation, it embraces the canons of Anglo-Americanism. As against this, the best contemporary classical music seeks different ways of linking disparate musical events, including their radical non-linkage.

Although there are a great many classical³⁴ composers producing a great deal of extraordinary music today, it remains by and large undissemated, whether in published form or on CD.³⁵ The inability of our historians and musicologists to do justice to their work is inextricably linked with the unwillingness of such authorities to give living presence to composers of the past who cannot be subsumed within the parameters of continuity and majority.

Coda

To sum up: the assumption that an unbroken tradition is a precondition of a healthy musical culture is unproven. The concomitant assumption that a broken tradition is a liability leads to efforts to ‘mend’ that tradition, paradoxically by omitting those figures whose work does not belong within a recognisable main stream. That main stream tends to be defined in deference to the major or victorious historical tendency, which in our culture is that of neo-liberal, developmental capitalism.

As against this, I recommend reading Irish history, musical and otherwise, ‘against the grain’, bearing in mind those sentences of Benjamin’s third ‘Thesis on the Philosophy of History’ that precede the epigraph to this essay: ‘A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.’ Such a chronicler is also less likely to exclude contemporary figures and events that do not fit into the official interpretation of the present age. A retrieval of the broken tradition of Irish civic republican and socialist thinking might well be of service in such an enterprise, as might an adaptation of the concept of ‘minor tradition’.³⁶ In his fifteenth ‘Thesis’, Benjamin tells us that: ‘The awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode is characteristic of the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action.’ It would be childish to imagine that a different way of imagining musical history might usher in the revolution. It is more plausible to suggest that a revolution is necessary before that history can do full justice to the range of composers this country has produced in the past and is continuing to produce today.

Notes

¹ Louis Marcus, in Bernard Harris and Grattan Freyer (eds.), *The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada* (Ballina/Chester Springs: Irish Humanities Centre & Keohanes/Dufour Editions 1981).

² Thomas Davis: ‘Irish Songs’, *The Nation*, 4 January 1845.

³ Marcus, op. cit.

⁴ Donal O’Sullivan: *Carolan, the Life, Times and Music of an Irish Harper* (Cork 2001).

⁵ Gráinne Yeats, liner notes for *The Belfast Harp Festival*, double CD, Gael-Linn 1992, CEFGD 156.

⁶ William Henry Grattan Flood, *History of Irish Music* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan 1905).

⁷ Humphrey Searle, *Quadrille with a Raven* (Riverrun 1895). This entertaining and delightfully named memoir is practically unobtainable, but may be read on the web: www.musicweb.uk.net/searle (accessed December 18, 2004).

⁸ This piece is included on Paul Nicholson’s excellent CD, *Keyboard Music by Thomas*

Roseingrave, Hyperion, CDA66564.

⁹ David Branson, *John Field and Chopin* (London 1972), especially pp. 22–27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Charles K. Moss, *John Field: The Irish Romantic*, available online at <http://www.carolinaclassical.com/articles/field.html> (accessed December 18, 2004).

¹² Harry White, *The Keeper's Recital: Music and Cultural History in Ireland, 1770–1970* (Cork: Cork University Press), p.73.

¹³ Moss, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ White, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ White, *op. cit.* See the chapter ‘Carolan, Handel and the Dislocation of Music in Eighteenth-Century Ireland’, pp. 13–35.

¹⁶ See in particular, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus 1993).

¹⁷ Edward Said in conversation with W. J. T. Mitchell, *Boundary 2*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (Summer 1998). See also: Edward Said, ‘Permission to Narrate’ in *The Politics of Dispossession* (New York: Pantheon Books 1994).

¹⁸ On ‘molestation’, see Abdirahman A. Hussein, *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (London: Verso 2002), pp. 105–111.

¹⁹ Roger Doyle, liner notes for *Budawanny* (CD), Silverdoor, SIDO 011 CD.

²⁰ *Oizzo No* (CD), Silverdoor, SIDO 012 CD.

²¹ *Contemporary Music from Ireland*, Vol. 2 (CD), CMC CD02; also Netherlands Wind Ensemble, *Under the Green Time* (CD), NBECD 001.

²² Doyle, liner notes for Netherlands Wind Ensemble, *Under the Green Time* (CD), NBECD 001.

²³ Roger Doyle, *Babel* (CD), Silverdoor, SIDO 003-007 CD.

²⁴ Except for the two-piano piece, the chamber works are on *Gerald Barry* (CD), NMC DO22. *Hard D* is on *Gerald Barry: Orchestral Works* (CD), Marco Polo, 8.225006.

²⁵ O’Sullivan, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Harry White, ‘The Divided Imagination’, in Gareth Cox and Axel Klein (eds.), *Irish Music in the Twentieth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press 2003). See Benjamin Dwyer’s canny critique of this volume in *Journal of Music in Ireland*, vol. 3, no. 6.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (trans. H. Zahn), (New York 1966). The Roman numerals refer to the individual ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, XVI.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Thesis A.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, VII.

³¹ The classic exposition of the theory of minority is in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *KAFKA, pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit 1975). I have been much influenced by David Lloyd’s application of the theory in his *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press 1987).

³² Of course, a fuller exploration of these themes would require consideration of the visual arts, which suffer from a different set of exclusions and distortions. Broadly speaking, the temporal aspect of music and literature makes their linkage meaningful in the context of this essay.

³³ Alex Davis, *A Broken Line: Denis Devlin and Irish Poetic Modernism* (Dublin: UCD Press 2000).

³⁴ My retention of this admittedly dubious term will annoy some readers, who will, nevertheless, know exactly what I mean.

³⁵ Significantly, Gerald Barry had to be appropriated by the British before he could become the exception that proves the rule, and his advancement has owed little to his native country.

³⁶ The various issues of this journal offer many perspectives of relevance to such a project. See also David Lloyd, *op. cit.*

‘Our songs are our laws ...’—Music and the Republic (Part 2)

PATRICK ZUK

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IN THE FINAL sections of this essay, I wish to examine two other tenets of Platonic *paideia*, which are undoubtedly the *fons et origo* of many subsequent aesthetic debates concerning the function of art and the role of the artist in society. Once again, these could form a useful point of departure for civic republican theorists. The first tenet is the notion that music must be subservient to ethical concerns and that an artist’s work is only of interest or value if it serves to promote some morally ennobling creed or presents images conducive to virtue. This doctrine often views purely aesthetic enjoyment as suspect and seeks to repudiate any views that insist on the autonomy of art from ethical considerations. The second tenet holds attempts on the part of the state to control artistic expression to be not only legitimate, but also actively to be desired, in the interest of the general well-being of society.

In Platonic *paideia*, ethical, aesthetic, and political values are inextricably fused. In practical terms, this results in the elaborate plan presented in *The Republic* for the political regulation of musical life in the city-state down to the minutest detail. The principal goals of *paideia*, according to Plato, were to inculcate a sense of right conduct and to ensure that the gods were revered in the proper manner. In speaking of right conduct and virtue, Plato leaves us in little doubt of what he intends to convey by these terms: he is clearly speaking of behaviour that will reflect the values of the ideal state and ensure its stability. We have seen that he subscribed to Damonian doctrines that attributed to music a considerable influence on human behaviour. The choice of music used for educational purposes and for public ceremonies was therefore regarded by Plato as a matter of the utmost political significance.

Plato argued forcibly that poets and composers were not entirely capable of recognising good and evil or of arriving at the correct ethical

valuation of their own work. The results of this failure might potentially be very serious. An inappropriate choice of text or melody for religious rituals could cause the gods to be supplicated in an improper manner. In private life, exposure to bad music might have decidedly adverse effects on the formation of individual character. Plato held that the philosopher's first task, therefore, should be to ascertain which beliefs were most conducive to the well-being of the city-state. Once these were decided, texts and musical settings should be chosen that encouraged the propagation and maintenance of these beliefs. Since the melodic and rhythmic organisation of good music reflects the character traits possessed by noble and good men, he argued that music should be sought that would stimulate the proper development of the personality. Vulgar and cloying music would exercise a detrimental effect and should be avoided, while good music would impart grace of character. Rightness, rather than aesthetic qualities, Plato insisted, should be the decisive criterion. The young, being habituated to virtue by music like this, would find that the practice of appropriate social conduct became as second nature to them. The stability of the city-state would thus be assured by the wholesomeness of its cultural life. It is in this context that Plato made his celebrated pronouncement that 'our songs are our laws'.

In his zeal to secure the political ends he deemed desirable, Plato did not hesitate to advocate stringent controls on musical activities so that the educational efficacy of *paideia* should not be compromised. Plato saw little need for instrumental music and viewed it with thinly concealed contempt.¹ Musical settings for voices were of a greater educational utility, and the presence of a text made ethical criticism of their appropriateness a comparatively easy task for the censor. As far as the poets and composers themselves were concerned, the quality of their poetic and musical talent was a matter of little significance in Plato's eyes; it was more important that they should be citizens of proven virtue.² Their function would be to celebrate the deeds of virtuous citizens in epinician odes*, and they would be constrained to proclaim that virtue was happiness and that evil conduct brought unhappiness. Musical settings would then be composed that provided a fitting embodiment of edifying maxims like this in appropriate melodies and rhythms for choral performance. Compositions that did not occupy themselves with ethical matters were to be banned.

Plato was also deeply conservative in matters of style and saw no need of further innovation.³ In his ideal city-state, poets and composers would

* An ode in celebration of a military or athletic victory.

not be permitted to produce anything that was not in accord with the standards of excellence traditionally sanctified by custom. In artistic matters, the word of the lawgivers would be sacrosanct; and once appropriate songs and dances had been selected for civic ceremonies, no deviation from the regulations would be possible. Neither would these civic poet-composers be allowed to arrange performances of their work unless it had first been submitted to the scrutiny of specially appointed judges for approval. All performances would be strictly regulated, and choirmasters would not be allowed a free choice of music and texts.

These aspects of Platonic *paideia* have attracted much hostile comment, and rightly so. It is undeniable that the views on art expressed by Plato are profoundly unattractive in the draconian and rather sinister restrictions on artistic freedom that are proposed. Plato's writings on *paideia* must, of course, be understood within the context of the political views he developed in later life, which are frankly and unashamedly totalitarian. As is now widely accepted, he was anxious to resist certain new schools of thought that advocated the introduction of far-reaching social reforms of a nature that caused him the utmost concern. In particular, he wished to discredit democratic and egalitarian philosophies that threatened the existing social hierarchy. The political programme outlined in *The Republic* and *The Laws* aimed to arrest all further change and ensure by means of stringent legislation the continued preservation of a social order based on a traditional system of caste and privilege. And while Plato may have been passionately sincere about the purported benefits to society at large of the system of education he proposed, he was also aware of the possibilities it presented as a powerful means of social control and was anxious to make education subordinate to a political end.⁴

It is difficult to tell at this remove just how literally educated Greeks would have believed that music had the power to shape character, as Plato appears to do. This doctrine could well have originated as an attempted codification of magical, pre-rational beliefs. Nor does it appear to have compelled universal assent: one tantalising fragment of a text has come down to us that appears to treat this doctrine in a satirical vein.⁵ The surviving documentary evidence is, unfortunately, so sparse that it is difficult to say with certainty whether or not this scepticism was more widely shared. Perhaps some Greeks understood this doctrine in a more metaphorical manner simply as an expression of the benefits accruing from an education in the fine arts. These questions notwithstanding, Plato's views on music exerted a very considerable influence and many later writers subscribe to them at least in part.

Certain aspects of his thought in particular continued to inform

important debates about music, especially the notion that art had an important didactic function and that artists should not give expression to trivial or indecent things. In the Baroque era, for example, when many of the most heated controversies concerned music for the theatre, opera was attacked on the grounds that it was a frivolous and immoral entertainment. There were, admittedly, reasonable grounds for such attacks, given the fact that the all too prevalent exhibitionism of star singers, aided and abetted by composers and impresarios anxious to please the crowds and ensure a financial success, resulted in a sacrifice of dramatic and artistic integrity in order to provide suitable opportunities for vocal display and cheap theatrical effects.⁶ Criticisms of this nature were not without effect, and some composers and theorists were anxious to rebut charges that opera was intrinsically immoral and of little artistic value. Johann Mattheson, a German contemporary of Handel, insisted that opera could provide edification as well as pleasure. Opera, he asserts, could constitute a 'musical university', which would be of educational and moral benefit and deserved to be ranked highest amongst the arts on this account. Similarly, the *Sturm und Drang* writer Wilhelm Heinse contended that opera could serve to foment a love of virtue.⁷

Arguments about the allegedly deleterious effect of certain kinds of music on morality have continued to rage right up to the present.⁸ All of Adorno's writings on music take an assumption comparable to Plato's as their starting point. It is easy to understand how opera and vocal music in particular have attracted moral censure on account of their texts. It is obviously far less easy to level charges of immorality at abstract instrumental music, but that is not to say that it has not been attempted.⁹ A number of modern schools of musicology (influenced decisively by Adorno) claim to be able to detect the influence of ideological stances in various types of music or musical works, which they then often proceed to condemn. In doing so, they continue a tradition that originates with Damon and Plato, except that the vocabulary of disapproval is now couched in sociological and political terms.¹⁰

Criticism of this kind tends to attribute covert intentions and motivations to composers in a kind of musicological deconstructionism. Its claims to authority, however, are decidedly dubious, since it is impossible to offer convincing proofs of what music supposedly means or of the worldview it is alleged to embody. It is surprising that this question has yet to receive an adequate philosophical treatment, because the assumption that one can in fact discern ideological standpoints in a medium such as music, which is non-verbal, non-conceptual, and completely abstract in its representations, seems an unquestioned premise

of modern musicology and has engendered a large body of academic work that is intellectually undisciplined and of questionable value.¹¹ This is another fascinating question with which a republican theory of culture could usefully engage in the attempt to evolve a critical and rational musical hermeneutics: at what point does discourse about music of this nature become of questionable value?

This is a matter of no small importance, when one remembers the consequences such judgements have had in the past. At their least harmful, moral condemnations of works of art have simply been occasions for the display of an ignorant and unimaginative philistinism. The opprobrium attached to Verdi's opera *La traviata* by contemporary critics on the grounds that the title character was a courtesan is a good instance in point. However, incidents such as these, while unpleasant, are trivial in comparison with the consequences of trumped-up accusations of immorality levelled at composers living under totalitarian regimes. In Soviet Russia, criticism from party hacks or denunciation by a vindictive colleague could result in deportation to a labour camp or death.¹²

Critics like these may also couch their disapproval in another guise, adopting the vocabulary of Hegelian historicism. In the view of a commentator like Adorno, our present cultural circumstances demand responses of a particular nature from composers.¹³ He claimed that the historical events that culminated in the unspeakable horrors of Hitler's death camps constituted a crucial turning point in European history, one that forced a change in response from all creative artists. In one famous pronouncement, he even questioned the possibility of any lyric poetry at all being written after Auschwitz.¹⁴ In music, also, he came to regard traditional modes of expression as no longer viable and perhaps even morally suspect. For Adorno, the anguished, tortured music of the modernist composer Arnold Schoenberg seems to have represented a touchstone of artistic and moral integrity, since it refused any easy access for listeners. The work of composers that he regarded as falling short of this ideal he rejected decisively, in terms that are often more reminiscent of oracular theological pronouncement than genuinely argued criticism.

I do not wish to call into question the sincerity of his views, for there can be no doubt that Adorno was passionately concerned about the role of the artist in society and regarded this matter with the utmost seriousness. His writings on music, however, raise a great number of problematic issues, many of which arise from his underlying historicist premises and his assumption that musical artefacts can support the kind of ideological analysis he attempts. His manner of expressing himself also tends towards the authoritarian. Similar tendencies pervade much writing

on music after the Second World War, however. Many figures associated with the post-World War II avant-garde were much given to condemnation of music and musicians on ideological grounds. Some of these polemics are as aggressive and authoritarian in tone as to make decidedly unpleasant reading.

The famous French theoretician and composition teacher René Leibowitz, an early partisan of the Schoenberg school, speaks of the compositions of Schoenberg and his students in terms that are explicitly reminiscent of theology. In a passage at the very end of his book *Schoenberg et son école*, he expresses a pious hope that the younger generation of composers will be saved from error if they meditate on the Truth—the capitalisation is his—embodied in the work produced by the Schoenberg school.¹⁵ Compositional study thus becomes a quest for artistic salvation understood in quasi-religious terms. The French composer Pierre Boulez expressed himself in even more extreme manner. In a celebrated dismissal of those who did not adopt the compositional methods of the avant-garde, he described them in print as ‘USELESS’. Boulez also subscribes to an explicit historicism; in a recent interview, he delivered himself of the opinion: ‘History is much like the guillotine. If a composer is not moving in the right direction he will be killed, historically speaking’. One can only hope that Boulez has intuited the demands of history with sufficient accuracy to escape such a fate himself. Views such as these were widely influential, and it has been argued with some cogency that musicians such as Boulez were responsible for creating a climate of doctrinaire and dogmatic intolerance, in which the work of composers who did not compose in the manner of the prevailing orthodoxy was unlikely to be granted a sympathetic hearing by critics and would often be passed over for performances.¹⁶

Historicism now enjoys little philosophical credibility as a doctrine, largely on account of Karl Popper’s *The Poverty of Historicism* and Isaiah Berlin’s celebrated critique of philosophies of historical inevitability. Sub-Hegelian doctrines like these have dominated twentieth-century aesthetics and criticism. They have also had a profound impact on the writing of histories of twentieth-century music, which typically emphasise the work of composers who are considered to have been ‘progressive’, ‘experimental’, or ‘innovative’, while music by composers who have been content to work within more traditional modes of musical expression is usually passed over quickly and often discussed with thinly concealed condescension.¹⁷ This prevailing critical orthodoxy has resulted in a superficial and facile appraisal of many musical works.¹⁸ A thorough reappraisal of this doctrine would therefore be particularly welcome on

several counts, along with a reasoned reconsideration of the problematic confluence of music and morality.

These issues should also be of paramount concern to any civic republican general theory of culture. Like all political philosophies, republicanism offers a vision of the manner in which human beings should live together and of the responsibilities they should assume. It is also a political philosophy that attempts to rehabilitate that much maligned word 'virtue' and restore it to a place of respect in our political vocabulary. Obviously, republican theories of culture might see the arts as potential vehicles for social or political thought. If so, the question arises whether or not artists should be encouraged to promote a particular vision of the common good, especially if their work is funded by the state. In the last section of this essay, I hope to show that this question should be answered decisively in the negative.

Even the most perfunctory study of music history shows that attempts on the part of creative artists to propagate a particular ideology through their work are seldom successful from an artistic point of view. That is not to say that artists cannot make such a powerful contribution to the general intellectual climate of a culture and that their art cannot act as a catalyst for social change, for it is undeniable that artistic creations can affect us in a way that permanently alters our view of ourselves and of the society in which we live. In reading Dostoyevski or Balzac, for example, one becomes sensitised to the intensely destructive and brutalising effects of social injustice and of certain exploitative modes of human interaction. The lithographs of an artist such as Käthe Kollwitz are almost unbearable in their intensely distressing representation of the dehumanising effects of poverty. But must art be considered unworthy if it does not seek to promulgate any social or political message? Are not purely aesthetic values also important? The philosopher R. G. Collingwood makes the point forcefully that much politicised art fails completely as art, no matter how earnestly the political beliefs in question are held. An achieved work of art is, after all, something of a different order to a political tract. In a passage in his book *The Principles of Art*, he draws a contrast between certain modern artworks, where the ideological subject matter is all important, and art of the past, where the subject matter, while obviously not unimportant in itself, was chosen principally for the opportunities it afforded as raw material for an imaginative creation in which technical address and beauty of form were the principal considerations. Any doctrine that elevates the ideological content of a work of art into the decisive criterion that determines its value he regards as impoverishing and sterile:

To the aesthete trained in a nineteenth-century school, these are words of horror. To take them seriously would mean looking forward to an age of artistic decadence and barbarism: an age when the infinitely difficult quest of artistic perfection will be shelved in favour of an easy propaganda; when artists will be judged not on their artistic merits but on their conformity with the political and economic and moral dogmas accepted by the society to which they belong; when the hard-won freedoms of modern art will be thrown away and obscurantism will reign supreme.¹⁹

These words apply with particular force to the various attempts to press music into the service of a particular ideology. Music can communicate emotional states, but is completely inappropriate as a vehicle for ideas or concepts. The composer who wishes to make an explicitly political statement must therefore resort to employing texts or else rely on an extra-musical element of some other kind, such as dance. (Instrumental compositions generally are of interest to the ideologue only when they provide an atmospheric adjunct to public events: marches written for military displays on grandiose state occasions, for example.) In the last analysis, works like these are of questionable value, not least because they seek the attainment of a political end by emotional manipulation rather than by reasoned argument.

When composers have applied themselves to the promulgation of a political ideology through their work, the results have invariably been disappointing. The 1960s saw a spate of earnest Marxist and Maoist compositions, many of which are grotesque examples of creative and imaginative nullity. I am thinking particularly of works such as those composed by Christian Wolff (b. 1934), one of whose compositions is for a singing pianist who is to personate a veterinary surgeon and a midwife discussing the application of Maoist thought to everyday life.²⁰ The musical element of works like these was often simplified to the point of utter banality in the hope of enhancing their populist appeal.²¹ And even when a composer resists such a simplification of his idiom, his work can still manifest signs of strain in his attempts to make it serve an extra-musical end. The operas of the English composer Michael Tippett are a good case in point. While Tippett's music could not by any stretch of the imagination be described as simplistic, the libretti for these operas, which were written by Tippett himself and reflect his social views (many of them wholly admirable), are certainly problematic, and Tippett's attempts to set them often seem unconvincing. Britten's opera *Owen Wingrave*, self-consciously a vehicle for his own pacifist convictions, is arguably his least interesting work for the stage.

Of course, it is one thing for composers to appoint themselves the spokesmen for one ideology or another, of their own free choice and in the absence of any political compulsion. It is quite another matter when such a role is thrust on them forcibly by the state. The circumstances of musical life in the USSR, as mentioned earlier, demanded precisely that.²² Under Stalin, composers were expected to write music that would be readily accessible to the proletariat. Much music of the past was dismissed as irrelevant and ideologically suspect. Songs were deemed the most appropriate means of communication with the masses, and thousands of them were duly composed, most of them by hack musicians. Since all publishing houses, recording companies and performing groups were state controlled, it was impossible for work that met with official disapproval to gain a hearing. Composers were further subject to the ordinances of a variety of unions and other bodies concerned with cultural activities. When official suspicion of instrumental composition relaxed in the 1930s, composers were still expected to produce work that celebrated the achievements of communism. Ballets, operas and symphonies were penned that presented idealised portraits of life on a collective farm or in a factory. The composer Kastalsky wrote an 'Agricultural' symphony, while Myaskovsky wrote one subtitled 'The Collective Farm'. Shostakovich produced hackwork such as the oratorio *The Song of the Forests*, written in praise of Stalin's reforestation programme. Needless to say, composers often accepted commissions of this nature simply for the money or because they feared the consequences of turning them down, rather than because of any internal creative impulse.

Such efforts on the part of a state to foster an official art were not without precedent. The republican governments of post-revolutionary France attempted for a period to enlist artists to the cause of promoting civic virtue and glorifying the new state that had come into being.²³ Several of the Enlightenment *philosophes* had influenced such a development. Diderot contended that, by the very nature of his enterprise, the artist was committed to moral comment and that the function of his work was a didactic one. Art should educate the masses to virtue and should not be used to depict vice and moral degeneracy, lest they corrupt society. He expressed revulsion for the open eroticism and what he saw as the triviality of visual artists such as Boucher, who enjoyed royal favour. In an argument reminiscent of Adorno, Diderot claimed that the decadence of contemporary art mirrored a morally corrupt environment, and he was led to suggest a variety of themes of a more suitably edifying nature for artistic treatment. These included representations of patriotism and of the blessings of peace, as well as celebrations of bourgeois values

and family life. 'When it cost no sacrifice to art', he asked rhetorically, 'is it not worthier to represent virtue rather than vice?'²⁴

Such views were by no means considered eccentric: they typified an enlightenment concern that art should promote rational ends for the betterment of society. As one of the contributors to the *Encyclopédie* put it: 'Of all works of art, the most important and useful are undoubtedly those that seek to fix indelibly in our minds appropriate knowledge, truths, maxims and sentiments that will make us more perfect, and that form our characters in such a way that we could not conceive of ourselves as true men or citizens without believing in their worth'.²⁵ D'Alembert expresses disdain for art that seemed to serve no practical social purpose—such as much rococo art, for example. Above all, he contended, art should not encourage vice and luxury. Hence his opposition to too much artistic freedom of expression for musicians: such freedom presupposed freedom of feeling and action, which he claimed would lead the state to ruin if not checked. Thus, many of the *philosophes* advocated bringing art under state control and redeeming its apparent lack of serious social purpose by making it the handmaiden of philosophy.²⁶ Art, they argued, could embody eternal moral truths in a form that could be easily assimilated by the masses. Artists should be recalled to their proper task through the introduction of suitable legislation. This new art would make men more humane and benevolent, and it could present idealised images of civic virtue, such as self-sacrifice, patriotism, and respect for the law.

In post-revolutionary France, various attempts were made to put these ideas into practice. The art critic Quatremère de Quincy, a prominent figure in the early years of the new regime, wrote extensively about the possibility of using art for propagandistic ends. Purified by the new government, the arts would stimulate a love of liberty and virtue. The politician Pierre Verneaux assured the Assembly that this art would embolden the people to undertake great deeds and contribute to the happiness of the human race. Proposals were made for commemorating heroes of the revolution, who would provide lofty images of virtue that would incite emulation. One of the most potent influences on these discussions of virtue was, of course, Rousseau, whose writings on education discuss how the individual may be best raised to a state of virtue and whose political writings provide a description of how this virtue could in turn animate social intercourse in his ideal state.²⁷ Hence Robespierre, in an explicit echo of these writings, could recommend not alone the glorification of political and civic virtues but also such personal virtues as conjugal fidelity, frugality, concern for the well-being of one's kin, and even agricultural labour.²⁸ Bienaimé urged that the arts be used to

help restore man to a state of dignity by teaching moral lessons to the people. A republican people, he proclaimed, should ‘find instruction even in activities carried out for pleasure’ (*trouver des leçons jusque dans ses plaisirs*). Accordingly, he suggested that virtuous and heroic actions should be on display everywhere in all public places, so that the people would be exposed constantly to moral instruction.

Without doubt, many of these discussions were conducted in a highly idealistic spirit. Attempts were made to hold festivals with tableaux, pageants, and music all around the country, in the hope of fostering a general public love of such virtues as the republican regime sought to promote.²⁹ Many eminent composers of the period, Cherubini, Lesueur, Gossec, and Méhul amongst them, wrote works for these public events.³⁰ These pieces fall into two categories: the smaller of these comprises instrumental music designed to accompany military displays or provide an appropriate atmosphere of solemnity at crucial points during the ceremonies; the other consists of works for orchestra, vocal soloists and choirs—sometimes very large choirs indeed—that are settings of texts celebrating the revolution, the republic, republican heroes, recent historical events, and the various virtues. The commissioned composers penned Hymns to Liberty, Hymns to Reason, Hymns in Honour of Old Age, and even Hymns to Agriculture. If ever there was a forceful argument to demonstrate the sterilising effect on artistic creativity of views that would place art in thrall to political ideology or that conceive its primary function to be the promotion of morality, these compositions furnish it in their tedious assemblages of pretentious banalities and bombastic clichés.³¹

These examples should cause theorists of civic republicanism to pause for thought. Certainly, if creative artists are to contribute to the common good, it will not be by producing work such as this. One shudders to think what contemporary virtues might be deemed possible subjects for artistic embodiment: choral works promoting fair trade practices in the Third World, perhaps, or song cycles about nuclear disarmament. No matter how worthy the causes may be, from an artistic point of view the results are likely to be grotesque and probably risibly so. Is there any contribution, then, that a republican theory of culture could make to an understanding of the composer’s role in society? In my opinion, this lies in a critical examination of the state of contemporary composition, which would, in turn, involve a dispassionate reconsideration of the various received opinions and dogmas concerning the act of composition that we have inherited, some of which I have attempted to explore in this essay.

I have already indicated how fraught the climate of criticism in which

composers worked became after the Second World War, when certain styles of composition were anathematised in a sweepingly dismissive fashion. There were further crises, the effects of which have still not been fully assimilated: I am thinking in particular of the impact of John Cage, who refused to make any distinction between music (in the general understanding of the word) and random noise. In much of Cage's work, traditional notions of technique, craft and expression are completely nullified. It is not an exaggeration to say that no technical knowledge of music whatsoever would be required to write—and indeed to perform—some of this music. Cage is, in fact, largely responsible for the chaotic relativism that paralysed attempts at a measured and critical evaluation of much contemporary music. Where does genuine creativity end and charlatanism begin? How do we judge artistic incompetence or ineptitude? This impasse also renders the teaching of composition virtually impossible in the absence of any generally agreed criteria of excellence.³²

Meanwhile, the gulf that separates audiences from most contemporary music is as wide as ever. Many music lovers, even educated ones, simply find the music too difficult to access, too unrewarding, or simply too boring. It would be arrogant to attempt to discredit such reactions as wholesale philistinism.³³ There is no reason whatsoever to assume that every contemporary composer who puts pen to paper is writing immortal masterpieces. Such assumptions are part of the legacy of the romantics: the cliché of the beleaguered artist who must present his work to a hostile and uncomprehending world that has no use for it. Of course, this is not to say that creative artists cannot meet with hostile dismissal or ignorant criticism, though this does not explain the failure of work to find an audience in every case.

Other figures amongst the generation of composers who came to prominence after the Second World War made a fetish of 'originality' at all costs. In accordance with their historicist premises and their ideology of 'progress', they felt compelled to eliminate any elements from their work that might remind a listener of the music of the past. This attitude had never existed before in the history of music, since composers in past ages were quite happy to work within a received set of conventions and traditions, modifying them as they needed to. These conventions and traditions, moreover, provided criteria for judgement of craft and competence, as well as ensuring comprehensibility. The rejection of tradition and of the musical heritage of the past by twentieth-century composers is so strange a phenomenon that I am persuaded it can only be accounted for in psychological rather than logical terms. The act of composing became surrounded by an extraordinary number of anxieties

that rendered unselfconscious creation almost impossible and that, one suspects, inhibited spontaneous creativity in many cases. Some composers were obviously concerned at all costs to be perceived as keeping abreast of the latest fashions. Others seemed anxious to project an artistic persona that was self-consciously intellectual and produced works of a forbidding complexity accompanied by extensive programme notes, which were often more obscure than the works they had supposedly been written to explain. In a climate like this, there seemed no place for music which simply sought to enchant or delight, or even to offer a simple and uncomplicated pleasure.

Republican cultural theorists could perform a valuable service by subjecting all of these positions to critical scrutiny. They could seek to bridge the gap between the contemporary composers and their audiences, not only by seeking to educate the audiences but also by reminding composers that there are other ideas concerning the role of the composer in society that have tended to receive scant emphasis in histories of modern music. Composers such as Kodály, Hindemith, and Vaughan Williams were deeply concerned to make a valuable social contribution. They would have felt little sympathy for dismissive or contemptuous attitudes towards the general listening public. All of them were deeply concerned with music education and were anxious to make good music as widely accessible as possible to the public, and all of them tried to write rewarding and interesting music for children and amateurs. But it is important to note that they would have regarded the transmission of certain formal skills as vital to the maintenance of a healthy musical culture. Lack of knowledge and lack of skill can only perpetuate low standards, doom generations of students to incompetence, and sentence audiences to dissatisfaction and boredom. None of these composers encumbered their art with ideological concerns: they simply composed as it came naturally to compose and did not strive for a self-conscious profundity. As teachers, performers, and polemicists, they fought passionately for the recognition of the importance of music in the cultural life of their respective countries and to maintain artistic standards. The work of these composers, and of others like them, surely provides a rich paradigm for civic republican theorists who wish to promote a realistic vision of how creative artists can contribute to the common good and enrich the lives of the members of the community of which they are a part.

Notes

¹ For example, Plato thought that solo instrumental playing on the *kithara* and the *aulos* aimed merely at providing pleasure and was thus unsuitable for young people.

² He was of the opinion that freedom of expression should only be permitted to those who had attained maturity of years and, ideally, were elderly.

³ In the *Gorgias*, Plato surveyed the state of contemporary music as it was known to him and arrived at a distinctly negative evaluation of it.

⁴ This led Karl Popper to write of Platonic *paideia* with sweeping derision in his famous book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, where it is dismissed as little more than a cynical attempt at wholesale indoctrination. See Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge 1999), vol. I, pp. 52–54, 126–132, and 228–230. However, Popper's hostile account of Platonic *paideia* is rather superficial and crude. For a far more sensitive and sophisticated appraisal, it is worth consulting Werner Jaeger's magnificent three volume study *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (trans. Gilbert Highet), (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1944). As far as Plato's proposed restrictions on artist freedom are concerned, Jaeger points out (in the context of a discussion on Greek drama) that 'the men of the age never felt that the nature and influence of tragedy were purely and simply aesthetic. Its power over them was so vast that they held it responsible for the spirit of the whole state; ... the Athenians held [poets] to be their spiritual leaders, with a responsibility far greater and graver than the constitutional authority of successive political leaders. Only by keeping that in mind can we understand the attacks made on the freedom of poetry in Plato's *Republic*—attacks which seem so inexplicable and repulsive to a liberal mind', (vol. I, p. 247).

⁵ The so-called Hibeh papyrus, which was probably composed around 390 BC.

⁶ Charles de Saint-Evremond, a seventeenth-century French critic, rated opera as morally and intellectually inferior to tragedy. The Arcadian literary historian Lodovico Antonio Muratori, in his treatise *Della perfetta poesia italiana* (1706), goes even further: in his view, opera has had a calamitous effect on the Italian theatre. Not only does he consider it an absurdity as an art form, but he alleges that, as music, it is effeminate and unwholesome, serving to corrupt the minds of the spectators rather than improve and purge them as ancient drama did. Some composers for the stage during this period, important figures such as Gluck amongst them, viewed contemporary opera with dismay and were anxious for reform. The Italian composer Benedetto Marcello penned a blistering satire, *Il teatro alla moda* (1720), that one suspects was born out of a deep sense of frustration with the genre, and in which he ridicules the antics of singers, composers, and theatre mangers alike.

⁷ The charges of immorality that were frequently levelled against opera were undoubtedly coloured by the common prejudice that the mores of singers and theatre folk tended to be rather questionable. In his memoirs, the nineteenth-century composer Hector Berlioz described the moral opprobrium that surrounded the theatre. To embark on a career connected with the theatre was in the eyes of many, he says, to tread 'the broad road that leads to disgrace in this world and damnation in the next'. A concern with the allegedly deleterious effects of opera on general mores was, of course, an important factor in the rise of the sacred oratorio during the Counter-Reformation. See his account in: Hector Berlioz, *The memoirs of Hector Berlioz: member of the French Institute, including his travels in Italy, Germany, Russia and England 1803–1865* (3rd ed.) (London: Cardinal 1990).

⁸ As I write, a number of court cases are in progress in the United States, taken by parents against rock groups whose music they claim influenced their children to commit anti-social or violent acts.

⁹ Interestingly, Plato was aware of this very difficulty and expressed himself with considerable circumspection and caution on the possibility of passing ethical judgements on pieces of instrumental music, despite the fact that he regarded instrumental music with suspicion. Plato acknowledged that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain what such music 'meant' or to determine whether or not it imitated any 'worthy object'. Tolstoy is an interesting example of a modern writer

who seems to attribute morally deleterious powers to instrumental music—a violin sonata by Beethoven, nicknamed the ‘Kreutzer’ Sonata, seems to precipitate the violent crime of passion that forms the climax to Tolstoy’s tale of murderous jealousy of the same name.

¹⁰ For a provocative and stimulating discussion of criticisms of art works on ideological grounds, see Nick Zangwill, ‘Against the Sociology of Art’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 32, no. 2, (June 2002).

¹¹ This problem has been with us since musicology came into being as a discipline. The nineteenth-century musicologist Hermann Kretzschmar attempted to ‘explain’ musical compositions by means of biographical data from composers’ lives. In the early part of the twentieth century, Arnold Schering offered similar interpretations of works by Beethoven, drawing on literary texts that he claimed must have been the source of Beethoven’s inspiration.

¹² One of the most infamous examples is, of course, Stalin’s condemnation of Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*. For a succinct account of this affair, see Ian MacDonald, *The New Shostakovich* (London: Fourth Estate 1990).

¹³ Adorno’s views are often couched in explicitly Hegelian terms. In Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (New York & London: Continuum Publishing Group 1970), for example, he compares the work of contemporary composers unfavourably with the work of Schoenberg, whose creative talent, he asserts, ‘was one with the World Spirit’.

¹⁴ This notorious pronouncement caused considerable distress to Paul Celan: see John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1995), pp. 139, 188–9, 225, 232. Adorno later partially retracted it, however.

¹⁵ See René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and His School: The Contemporary Stage of the Language of Music* (trans. Dika Newlin), (New York: Da Capo Press 1985), p. 290.

¹⁶ See, for example, the autobiography of the Polish composer Andrzej Panufnik, *Composing Myself* (London: Methuen 1987), in which he discusses how the work of many composers was ignored by the BBC during the period when William Glock was Controller of Music, because of his partisanship of the Schoenbergian school.

¹⁷ The English writer Paul Griffith’s book *Modern Music* (Thames and Hudson 1994), which is a standard university textbook, is a good case in point. Ample space is devoted to the work of Stockhausen, Boulez and Cage, while composers such as Britten, Shostakovich and Tippett receive perfunctory treatment. The very word ‘modern’ is evidently not a neutral temporal description—some ‘modern’ composers are evidently more ‘modern’ than others. A similar situation has arisen concerning the use of the word ‘contemporary’ in the description ‘contemporary music’.

¹⁸ Boulez and Adorno are by no means alone in subscribing to a belief in the existence of historical laws of stylistic ‘progress’ and ‘development’ that enable the critic to make judgements of a universal and objective character. The French composer André Hodeir in his book *Since Debussy: A View of Contemporary Music* (trans. Noel Burch), (New York: Grove Press Inc. 1961), claims that ‘there is an ill-defined yet implacable law governing the relationships between art and history: it is always possible to determine the date, exact to within a few years, of any given work, provided it is truly representative of its period, because the work holds a unique position in a process of historical connections’ (p. 10). This process is described as ‘immutable’. The question of how we are to determine what is ‘truly representative of a period’ is, of course, never explored. Hodier’s book is a perfect example of the dogmatic and oracular style of criticism I have described above, being full of sweeping dismissals of composers’ work on the basis of historicist doctrines of this kind. In a similar vein, the distinguished English critic Donald Mitchell, in his book *The Language of Modern Music* (London: Faber, 1993), writes of the ‘morality’ of the stand that modernist composers such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg took in repudiating certain stylistic

traits of nineteenth-century music. He tells us that this stance ‘rested in the realisation that *the language into which they were born no longer held ‘true’*; and indeed, if we survey the musical scene at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, we may be astonished to discover how many talents, even quite substantial talents, still hopefully and even authoritatively created in styles and forms that seemed to have life only because life had so long inhabited them ... To reject [works] of this kind, which may well seem to be beautiful in the old style, can be a painful experience for the critic, conscious as he is of the past. But he must, in his own small way, *make his stand and say No to the lie that is implicit in the use, however masterful, of a language that has lost the power of meaningful speech*’, (p. 66–67). [Emphases added].

¹⁹ R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), p. 71.

²⁰ For a general discussion of the work of composers influenced by Maoist thought, see Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (London 1974).

²¹ The work of Cornelius Cardew, for example, exemplifies this trend.

²² For an informative general discussion of the circumstances of musical life in the Soviet Union in the period, see Boris Schwartz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917–1970*, (London: Barrie and Jenkins 1972).

²³ Louis XIV had also attempted to control artistic activity by eliminating private patronage and seeking to make all artists dependent on the state for employment and the awarding of prestigious commissions.

²⁴ ‘*Quand il n’en coûte aucun sacrifice à l’art, ne vaut-il pas mieux mettre la vertu que le vice en scène?*’: Assézat and Tourneux (eds.), *Oeuvres complètes de Diderot* (Paris 1875–77), vol. x, p. 336.

²⁵ ‘*De tous les ouvrages de l’art, ceux-là ont, sans contredit, l’utilité la plus importante, qui gravent dans notre esprit des notions, des vérités, des maximes, des sentimens propres à nous rendre plus parfaits, et à former en nous les caractères dont nous ne saurions manquer sans perdre de notre prix soit en qualité d’hommes, soit en qualité de citoyens*’. *Encyclopédie*, vol. III, p. 500.

²⁶ For a fascinating discussion of this, see James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France 1750–1799* (University of Toronto Press 1965).

²⁷ See Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1986).

²⁸ As his English biographer J. C. Carr has pointed out, Robespierre’s identification with Rousseau was remarkable. We find him apostrophising Rousseau as ‘divine’, and indeed, so marked and so much in evidence was Rousseau’s influence on him generally that the German poet Heinrich Heine, in his *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, was led to describe Robespierre as ‘merely the hand of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’.

²⁹ For an account of these, see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1991).

³⁰ Almost all of the music for these festivals and ceremonies is collected in C. Pierre, *Musique des fêtes et des cérémonies de la Révolution* (Paris: Imp. nat. 1899).

³¹ The texts of these pieces are, if anything, worse than the music. I quote at random from *Hymne à la Victoire* by one Lacombe, which gives a good flavour of the work of the many poetasters who are represented in Pierre’s collection, op. cit.:

*O Français, dans tous nos concerts
Entends les chants de la victoire;
Oui, du vengeur de l’univers,*

*Chantons les faits, chantons la gloire.
 Les monts renversés par ton bras,
 Le globe étonné sous tes pas,
 En trouvant ses voûtes brisées,
 Et l'Anglais trouvant le trépas
 Au sein des mers ensanglantées!*

O people of France, in all our concerts
 Let us hear songs of victory;
 Yes, let us sing of the deeds and the glory
 Of the avenger of the universe.
 The mountains overtopped by your arm,
 The globe lying stunned under your tread
 On finding its vaults shattered,
 And the English meeting death
 On the bosom of the blood-drenched seas!

³² One of the few writers to tackle these questions honestly is, in my opinion, Hans Keller, who was evidently deeply troubled by them. See the long essay on contemporary music in his *Music, Closed Societies and Football* (London: Toccata Press 1986) and the essay on composition teaching, 'Principles of Composition', in Peter Wintle (ed.), *Essays on Music* (Cambridge University Press 1994). See also Robin Holloway, 'Modernism and After', in Peter Davison (ed.), *Reviving the Muse: Essays on Music After Modernism* (Claridge Press 2001).

³³ For an interesting and provocative discussion of a parallel situation in the visual arts, see Suzi Gablik, *Has Modernism Failed?* (London: Thames and Hudson 1984). See also Julian Spalding, *The Eclipse of Art: Tackling the Crisis of Today*, (Munich & London: Prestel Verlag 2003).

Debate

Culture, Politics and Civil Society: the Role of the Critical Journal

ROY JOHNSTON

I WAS STIMULATED by a critical reading of Rayner Lysaght's paper in issue three of *The Republic* to think about how arguments such as this in a critical journal can interact constructively with civil society. The train of thought led on to the exploration of the role of the critical journal and an attempt at analysis of *The Republic's* contribution to date.

Let me try to construct something in a mode that I have been trying to develop over many years, as a spin-off from the culture of scientific problem-solving in real-world situations. This mode consists of a phase of analysis of the background to the problem, followed by a statement of the problem itself, suitably structured. One then attempts to assemble the factors necessary for the solution of the problem and develops a vision for their deployment, perhaps apparently utopian, though touching reality at enough points to enable an immediate next step to be identified, such that readers of the paper will be stimulated to go and make it happen.

It is, in this context, perhaps useful to go over the papers in the first three issues of *The Republic* to see how they relate to this structure. This might be seen, at the meta-level, as an analysis entitled 'Problems of a Critical Periodical'.

The central problem, at this level, is how to develop an active bridge between those who contribute practically to the development of policies at the political level and those whose job it is currently to study, analyse and evaluate national experience and relate it to global experience, in other words, the intellectual elite, who influence the educational system from which the people who become our political leaders emerge. The problem is that most of the people who are in the political lead picked up their background education decades ago and have mostly been unable to keep up with what has happened since.

The role of the critical periodical is therefore to act as the interface between contemporary decision-makers and the results of contemporary research, distilled into contemporary critical thought. It should therefore *not* be primarily a repository for academic research papers, contributing to

the promotion process within the various specialist academic communities. A key factor is its frequency. Another is its format. The frequency should be high enough so that issues do not get forgotten or mislaid, and the format should be such that it stays vertically on the bookshelf and can be referenced. *The Republic* qualifies under the latter but not the former criterion.

Another factor is editorial policy. Strict guidelines to authors are required for treatment of issues so as to maximise the impact of their conclusions on the practical thinking of decision-makers. This implies an active role for an editorial committee, composed of members each of whom has a specialist role in invoking material in a defined sector of cultural life. *The Republic* falls short of these requirements, though it has visibly made the effort to span a broad cultural spectrum.

It is also necessary to ensure that the critical journal is read by thinking policy-making people in that part of the political spectrum dedicated to democratic reform and social change. This suggests a need for some sort of organic link, probably at a personal level, with the relevant elements in the political spectrum. There are hints of such a link in the composition of the existing group, though the scope is somewhat narrow. The role of such link-activists would be to see that each issue got sold to appropriate people in the politically active organisations and lobby-groups. The narrowness of the existing political scope implies some residual elements of the old 'republican exclusiveness'.

Consider some prior and contemporary models. *The Bell*, edited by Peadar O'Donnell, was one; it flourished in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and was influential in its time. A more contemporary one is *Planet*, in Wales.¹ This is bi-monthly, in book-like format, and covers a broad spectrum politically and culturally, nationally and internationally; it has a strong review section, and publishes short stories and poems.

There is also *Feasta* in Ireland, which concentrates on the economics of sustainability, and addresses the energy question, which will be upon us shortly in crisis mode.² It tends to publish event-based 'Proceedings'. Also, the Desmond Greaves Summer School has on occasion contributed material to a *Reconsiderations* series published by Daltún Ó Ceallaigh. *Saothar* is published by the Irish Labour History Society and has an editorial board loaded with Irish Studies specialists from abroad.³ The *Journal of Music in Ireland*, edited by Toner Quinn, is fulfilling a critical role across the spectrum of all music, from traditional to contemporary, via jazz, classical, etc.; this comes out every second month, but is glossy and in throw-away format.⁴

The analysis of the 'useful critical performance' of these other

periodicals is another day's work, but it could, perhaps, be on the agenda of *The Republic*, as part of the broad-spectrum critical role. Let me begin with *The Republic* itself, casting an eye over the three issues to date to see how the material relates to the suggested action-oriented model outlined above. Let us go through the papers in reverse chronological order to see which ones are in reasonable overall conformity with the model, and which of the others are primarily 'background' oriented, which are 'problem' oriented, and which if any are primarily generators of 'actions' towards a projected vision.

Primarily Background-Oriented

Let me comment first on the Rayner Lysaght paper in issue 3, given that this was my stimulus for the production of this paper. In the foregoing structured approach, Lysaght's contribution has a place primarily as background. His very first paragraph offers several rich theses worth exploring: the need for some theoretical analysis of the republican concept, the negative effect of the 'armed struggle' tradition, the 'philistine influence of the Catholic Church', and the 'reformist' influence of the Communist Party chasing 'socialism in a single country'. Each of these themes could generate a good critical paper.

Rather than attempting to develop any of them creatively, Lysaght, however, chooses to pick on some of the work of earlier contributors, exposing what he identifies as their weaknesses, and then goes on to give a creditable historical background survey of the republican tradition, hinting at the complexity of its relationship with various kinds of nationalism and at the forces for social change that can sometimes constructively lurk within it. He is thus adopting an approach which is something similar to my own, and in this analysis I am trying to develop it further.

He skates over the contemporary European dimension and briefly touches on the Northern Ireland situation. Altogether we have the makings of a reasonable background survey of left-wing politics, which touches interestingly on a problem of which I have been aware for decades, namely the analogies between the Fenian militarist tradition and that of Stalinism, and the contradictions between both and the democratic environment that is a requisite for genuine social change. But, alas, in Lysaght we do not get focused attention on a tractable structured problem, or any hint what to go and do next.

Mary Shine Thompson from Dublin City University, on 'childhood' in issue 3, casts a critical eye on the early quasi-philanthropic initiative of Maud Gonne and Inghinidhe na hÉireann, and on the conflation of 'child'

with 'citizen' in the Proclamation. She goes on to consider issues relating to the family and the 1937 Constitution, giving a rich set of references. This is primarily an academic-style background paper, though it does suggest emergent problems, rooted in family law and custom and in the educational system, though she fails to structure these in such a way as to focus attention, let alone give guidelines towards a solution.

In issue 2, the editorial emphasis was on the 'Common Good' as theme, so it is not surprising that most of the contributions were primarily in the 'background' category. We have Iseult Honahan (University College Dublin) on the citizenship concept in republican theory. After an extended historical introduction covering Aristotle, Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington, Rousseau, and Madison, she overviews republican ideas today, primarily as they have been re-developed in the '1990s global realignment'. She reminds us that 'liberal concern for interference fails to take account of serious threats to freedom which do not always come from the State', and that 'the right to private property has been politically constructed and does not constitute an absolute right to unlimited accumulation'. There emerges a diffuse sense of problem-definition: 'if politics is about addressing common concerns, the question 'common to whom' becomes crucial'; interdependence, and ethnic and linguistic questions are touched upon. Some elements of an action plan emerge, in the form of active citizenship, promotion of civic virtue, and participation, but this remains diffuse. One can detect a cautious nod in the direction of the democratic Marxist tradition and the 'class' concept.

In issue 2, Tomás Ó Fiaich (former President of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth) analyses the pre-history of Irish republicanism in the seventeenth century in an attempt to give early authenticity to the concept of the Catholic Republic, which emerged, in concept, in the period after the 'Flight of the Earls' when Spanish intervention was on the agenda, and the problem of who would be king of the emergent Catholic nation was rendered problematic by inter-earl rivalry. This concept of a republic remained a paper plan, and in the papers in the Madrid archive the words 'Kingdom' and 'Republic' are juxtaposed, so that to trace the origins of the Republic to the power politics of the Catholic monarchies in their struggle against England and the Reformation States, I find somewhat unconvincing. More credible is the influence of the English Republic, at one level via the contacts between Owen Roe O'Neill and Cromwell's generals (Monk, Coote), and at another level via the rank and file of Cromwell's army, many of whom would have been Levellers, under the influence of Lilburn, rejecting Cromwell's proto-Stalinism. These were paid in title to land, which they of course were unable to develop, lacking

capital, so they sold up to 'adventurers' (i.e. capitalists) and became the foundations of Dublin's radical artisanate, who later contributed to the republicanism of the United Irishmen. Ó Fiaich does not develop this theme, which remains somewhat apocryphal, but he does blame 'bitter memories of Cromwell and their first republican experience' for the subsequent Irish 'ill-fated devotion to the Stuarts'.

To my mind, it is a mistake to link the English Republic with Cromwell, who in effect suppressed it after it had tried to emerge as a democratic force with Lilburn and the Levellers, as exhibited in the Putney Debates. Cromwell established, in effect, a dictatorship, which became a model for subsequent post-revolutionary dictators like Napoleon and Stalin. How to achieve a genuine revolutionary objective without this type of pathological process ending up dominating the scene remains on the political agenda of the Left.

There are hints as to how this might have been done in the history of the Quakers, many of whom were Cromwellian soldiers, who came round to rejecting the role of the sword and developing internal political procedures based on democratic consensus and inclusive citizenship. This latter concept had a brief flowering in the early eighteenth century with William Penn's colonial constitution of Pennsylvania, which gave rights to the Native Americans. I have attempted to interest academic historians of the seventeenth century in the need to analyse proto-republican processes and the role of the Quakers as pioneers of democratic organisational procedure, so far without success, despite the possibility of generating some public interest via the fact that the current year, 2004, is the 350th anniversary of the foundation of the first Quaker meeting in Ireland (at Lisburn in 1654).

My suggestion above of the existence of an intellectual link between the English republic and the United Irishmen gets some support in a passing mention by Thomas Bartlett (University College Dublin), who in his evaluation Wolfe Tone, also published in issue 2, refers to 'a republican coterie in the mid-eighteenth century which was vital in communicating commonwealthman ideas to a new generation'. This paper is far from being a hagiography: it touches on Wolfe Tone's South Seas colonial adventurer concept, his patronising attitude to Catholics, his cultural philistinism, and delight in French militarism. He is however supportive of Hubert Butler's net positive evaluation, and his pragmatic development of the earlier colonial ideas of Swift and Molyneux towards a consistent republican position, in the spirit of Tom Paine.

It is worth remarking that Hubert Butler's essay was based on his paper in the Dublin Mansion House lecture series devoted to the Wolfe Tone

Bicentenary. These were organised by the Wolfe Tone Directory set up by Cathal Goulding in 1963, from which the Wolfe Tone Society subsequently emerged, contributing to the initiation in November 1966, with the Belfast War Memorial Hall meeting, of the steps that led to the organised movement for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland. I have treated this in some detail in my book *Century of Endeavour*.⁵

James Livesey, who lectures in French history in Trinity College Dublin, gives an account in issue 2 of this history of republicanism in the French context. He takes Marx and his attitude to the 1871 Commune as his starting-point; Marx initially held that the bourgeois Third Republic was all that was achievable and premature working-class action was to be avoided. He then became lost in admiration of the heroism of the Commune, seeing in it a model of the future socialist republic, though his initial concern was in the end proved right when it was drowned in blood. Livesey goes on to list the successes of French institutions in the persistent republican framework, claiming it as the main intellectual alternative, since the 1990 events, to Anglo-American ‘liberalism’ (quotes added). He contrasts the resilience of the French republican culture in its post-imperial transitional situation with the identity problems that have plagued the English. He approves of the ongoing radical tradition of French republicans, as manifested in the failure to find a jury to convict José Bové, who thrashed a MacDonalld’s, and of its inclusiveness, as manifested in its 1998 World Cup team.

The paper is, on the whole, somewhat of a panegyric, which invites critical comment at many points, and in this sense is good background raw material for discourse. There is no focus, however, on specific problems relevant to the Irish context, nor any specific action-orientation.

Priscilla Metscher has been teaching Irish Studies students in Germany and has written extensively on labour history. In issue 2, she gives a concise overview of the development of republican separatist concepts over the nineteenth century. Bypassing O’Connell, dismissed as a conservative monarchist—‘one king, two legislatures’—she sets up the classic left-wing ‘apostolic succession’ from the United Irishmen, via Thomas Davis, John Mitchell, and Fintan Lalor, to the Fenians, and on to Connolly. Davis’s republic was inclusive of the Protestant tradition, but he was anti-industrial and favoured the ‘peasant proprietorship’.

Davis attended the Cork meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1843, which was a festival of the emergent Irish pre-Famine industrial capitalist class, who were enthusing about the latest productive technologies. As I wrote in my *Crane Bag* paper: ‘he gave it six column inches in the August 26 issue, hidden among pages and

pages of after-dinner speeches by Daniel O'Connell and his supporters: the 'verbal republic'. He named the principal local notabilities and ignored the scientists, except one Robert Hunt, of the Cornwall Polytechnic Institution, who described an embryonic photographic process, which, given development, might eventually have lent itself to newspaper reproduction. Davis must have been somewhat out of his depth, but he was smart enough to pick up what might have been of use to his main weapon'.⁶

Because he did not appreciate the essentially social nature of the production process, increasingly so as technology advanced, he fell for the 'peasant proprietorship' myth, which, however, was rejected by Fintan Lalor, who wanted the land as a whole to be owned by the people as a whole, thus opening up the feasibility of co-operative production for getting scale economies, as was then in evidence in the Owenite community at Ralahine, County Clare, as described by Connolly in his *Reconquest of Ireland*.

The Fenians were basically working people under the leadership of lower-middle-class intellectuals. There were continental influences via James Stephens, who after 1848 went to Paris, where he met Auguste Blanqui. He later met with Gustave Cluseret, who subsequently commanded in the Commune; he offered him the command of the Fenian forces in Ireland in the lead up to 1867. The Fenians, under Blanquist influence, alienated potential English working-class support with their Clerkenwell bomb, which episode was much criticised by Marx and Engels, who subsequently, however, campaigned for the release of the Fenian prisoners. Connolly credited the Fenians with having a broad political base, and in his Ralahine chapter attempted to pick up the Lalor legacy.

This survey of the nineteenth century had the potential for 'stating a problem' and 'outlining an approach to a solution', which Metscher does not take up; it being not on this occasion in the editorial guidelines. It is the problem of the 'peasant proprietorship' and the outcome of the Land League campaigns, which was to generate a mass vested interest in land ownership by a group who in modern times have inherited a severely flawed and locally overspecialised agricultural system and a vested interest in the corrupt politics of land rezoning. These arguments need to be developed elsewhere, but ask yourself, what industrial social reformer would break up a productive factory into small individual workshops? Michael Davitt was right to take up the Lalor vision, but at that time the British State was involved, and, of course, they adapted their basically feudal concept of land ownership in the restructuring. We have inherited

this situation, and it is at the root of most political corruption. The Metscher survey also gives insights into the terrorism problem that is currently with us, the role of the Fenians in England being classic in this mode. There are lessons here for the current Palestine-Israel problem, as well as for Northern Ireland.

Dorothy Thompson writes refreshingly in issue 2 on the English Republic (she teaches history in Birmingham University). She develops a substantive background to an important political problem: the lack of a focused republican political interest in England, which she differentiates from Scotland and Wales, whose national movements are basically republican in their philosophies. She distinguishes the republican tradition, which she links strongly with Tom Paine, from the occasional agitations which occurred over the centuries against specific monarchs, though these sometimes converge. She identifies the Chartists as being consciously Paineite supporters, and she develops their international links, on the home ground with Wales, and on the continent with Mazzini, though surprisingly she misses out on the Irish connections, a curious oversight in a paper for an Irish publication. This perhaps reflects a chronic deficiency in English historical scholarship, which perhaps *The Republic* and *Planet* might combine to address, along with the promotion of the idea of an English republican movement? The latter could perhaps be linked to a humanitarian movement against child abuse in what is visibly a dysfunctional family.

Patrick Maume currently teaches in Queens University Belfast and has written extensively on the Irish Parliamentary Party in its heyday and its political environment. His contribution to issue 2 is on the evolution of Irish republicanism in the period between Parnell and the Free State. This is very much a background academic-type paper, with its relationship to the current spectrum of problems somewhat remote, though sometimes they can be inferred by analogy. He comes up with interesting insights, like the basis of the GAA banning of certain games, namely those associated with the Irish upper-crust and the English lumpenproletariat, this from the standpoint of the sturdy independent peasant. He goes at length into the various separatist, nationalist, republican, constitutionalist, and insurrectionist threads in the complex mix and their relationships with establishment Whiggery. The Parnellite split, the Union of Hearts, it is all there; Davitt's attempt to find common ground with the Labour movement in Britain, Griffith's Sinn Féin and its early electoral success fuelled by Dublin-based radical issues, the tensions with the cultural nationalism of the Abbey Theatre, the emergence of republicanism as the dominant idea in post-1917 Sinn Féin, the recrudescence of 'whiggery' of the

Free State: all these get mentions, without, however, the type of analysis that could lead to a valid current problem-definition. The underlying problem implied in the treatment, perhaps, is how the aftermath of the Civil War, and indeed the earlier Parnell split, can be expurgated from contemporary politics, but this is several other days' work!

Primarily Problem-defining

Gerard Delanty, from the University of Liverpool, introduces a scholarly European sociological dimension (Habermas and others) in issue 3, rejecting as 'no longer credible' the separation of the world into discrete national cultures. He calls for a 'public culture which accepts the expression of divisiveness, differences and conflicts'. He promotes the critical function, 'sceptical values associated with intellectuals ... the autonomy of science and art from ecclesiastical and royal authority'. He ends with a note of warning: 'the public culture of the republican polity is not to be identified with the State'. He nods in the direction of the classical and Enlightenment background of republican thought, and suggests somewhat simplistically that the way forward is via recognition of 'culture as communication'. But, to my mind, his main focus, though somewhat blurred, is on the problem of how to generate a meaningful cultural analysis, in the morass of 'postmodern', communitarian, and other obfuscations.

Patrick Zuk, from the Cork School of Music, has been writing extensively in the *Journal of Music in Ireland* in a discursive and erudite style. I was tempted in this analysis to see him as primarily a 'background' writer, but in his paper in issue 3, which is dedicated to the composer Raymond Deane, while going into a good deal of background material, his main focus, for me at least, is on the problem of recognition in the national culture of the work of contemporary Irish composers. There is perhaps here an analogy with the lack of a science dimension, as adumbrated by Brian Trench (see below). He laments the contemporary lack of a musical dimension in theories of civic republicanism, and the lack of accessible published versions of the output of contemporary Irish composers, despite the pioneering efforts of Fleischmann and Boydell. 'The last general history of music in Ireland was written in 1905.' One thinks of the roles of Dvorak, Grieg, Sibelius, and others in the emergence of European nations in post-imperial situations. The author promises a sequel, presumably, we hope, action-oriented.

Brian Hanley is a TCD historian; he writes in issue 2 on republican thought since 1922. This addresses the problem of how to politicise a movement in transition from a military background, and he does so by

outlining the various attempts made to do this. He credits Liam Mellows with his analysis of the defeat of the anti-treatyites in the 1922 election in terms of their lack of social policy, thus becoming the founding father of all subsequent social-republicanism. He treats somewhat superficially the Fianna Fáil process, its relationship with the IRA, the land distribution process, and the complexities of the economic war, though the impact of the latter must have been a factor that led to the politicisation process exemplified by the Republican Congress in 1934. His evaluation of the politics of the split which killed the latter tells us nothing new, but suggests the need to go deeper. He goes on to attempt an analysis of the attempted politicisation of the 1960s, which repeats the various journalistic canards that have got into the literature ('national liberation front', 'stages theory', etc.), though he does credit the then movement with helping to initiate the civil rights movement in the North. He chronicles the post-split 'Official Republican' decline into euro-communist dogma and the shedding of its politicians to Labour, and begins to chronicle the current transition of the Provisionals in the direction of all-Ireland constitutional politics, without managing to notice how they are revisiting the politics of the 1960s prior to the split, in a situation which has been made infinitely more difficult in sectarian terms, thanks to all those decades of unnecessary mayhem.

I have also treated this in some detail in my book *Century of Endeavour*. I have classed the Hanley paper as 'problem-oriented', but one has to dig to find a succinct definition of what the problem is. May I perhaps offer one: it is in the nature of the political and constitutional relationship between the political movement and the army. The latter is 'democratic' after a fashion, being modelled on the system pioneered by the English republicans in the 1640s, with an elected Army Council, and embedded in the IRA Constitution, I think, in Peadar O'Donnell's time, and under his influence.

The trouble is that when organising an Army Convention in underground mode, it is somewhat difficult to keep track of the paperwork and engage meaningfully in the necessary political and ideological preparatory work. I observed this problem at first hand during the 1960s politicisation episode, when the objective of the then leadership (Goulding and others) was to get the Army to go political by activating the Sinn Féin organisation from within. Thus, Army Conventions tend to be top-down events. The Ard Fheis of the political movement, however, is able in principle to adopt open democratic practice.

The further trouble with this two-headed system is that, due to the influence of the 'holy grail' mythology, the 'Republic' was, and I suspect

still is, seen as having been ‘handed over’ to the Army Council by the surviving quorum of the 1918 First Dáil (who had not accepted the Treaty) at an event in Tom Maguire’s house at Cross, Co Mayo, in or about 1939. A photographic record of the group was hanging on Tom Maguire’s wall when I encountered him during the 1960s. Thus, we have in effect a military dictatorship, and the Army Council, in the mythology, is seen as having precedence over the Ard Comhairle. I remember in 1970 the Provisional Army Council felt it had to get Tom Maguire’s blessing; this received media notice at the time, and some journalist asked me for comment. I was inclined at the time to discount its significance, but let us in retrospect not discount the power of myth and tradition. This, in effect, defines the problem: how can contemporary Sinn Féin assert its priority in the acceptance of a constitutional road to a new Republic and bury the old 1918 aspirant one decently, with honour, incidentally retiring the Army Council from its role as the guardian of this ‘holy grail’, as well as from being a potential source of a Cromwell, Napoleon or Stalin?

I originally had classed Peter Linebaugh’s somewhat rambling narrative in issue 2 as historical background relating to the 1798 aftermath, but on re-reading I detected a strong implicit problem-orientation on the issue of private ownership of land. The author is a Professor of History in the University of Toledo, Ohio, and is one of the increasing number of US-based academic exponents of Marxist historical materialism. His starting-point is the execution of Col. E. M. Despard, the United Irishman, in February 1803, on which he hangs texts relating to Native Americans by Constantin Volney, a contemporary French republican scholar, and John Dunne, who published on the same theme in the Royal Irish Academy. He cross-references to Marx and Engels and to contemporary works by Kevin Whelan and others, and we also meet Babeuf and Mary Shelley. There is a great collection of anecdotal material, the general drift of which is to indicate that the democratic republican philosophy of the United Irishmen was inclusive of the Native Americans, with emigrants intermarrying with them. This was in contrast to the US political environment, dominated as it then was by Jeffersonian slave-owners. But the central message, to my mind, is the utopian-socialist economic model, with land owned communally by the ‘village republic’.

We have here a further foreshadowing of the Owenite commune at Ralahine Co Clare, as described in his memoirs by Craig, the Scottish manager of the commune, and taken up by Connolly in the *Reconquest*; it also foreshadows the ideas of Standish O’Grady when he was writing for Larkin’s paper in 1913–14. My father, Joe Johnston, when in the Seanad between 1938 and 1954, on several occasions attempted to introduce a

legislative framework to encourage this to happen to estates currently subject to division, thus preserving the scale economies of mixed-farming synergies. He encountered R. M. Burke's failed attempt to do this near Tuam in the 1940s. The key underlying problem is how to amend the laws governing land in the direction of social ownership, with leasing to co-operative enterprises. I have more to say on this in my *Century of Endeavour*.

In issue 2, Daltún Ó Ceallaigh has a critical analysis of Finbar Cullen's introductory paper in issue 1, 'Beyond Nationalism: Time to Reclaim the Republican Ideal'. In it, he attempts a set of definitions of the republic and the nation, and the ambiguities associated with their -isms. This is basically a terminological problem, and by promoting this discourse *The Republic* is helping to clarify the problem-definition. There is unfinished business here.

The editor, Finbar Cullen, sets the scene in issue 1 with the paper to which in a sense the above is an initial response, but it can also be said that it has helped to generate the totality of these ongoing discussions about problems of political forms for emergent national movements and for expressions of cultural identities.

There follows a paper in issue 1 by Theo Dorgan, poet and at that time editor of Poetry Ireland, on 'Poetry and the Possible Republic', which begins to address the problem of how poetry and poets can impinge on the national consciousness. There are, it seems, some two hundred and fifty poets with works in print, yet the overall cultural environment is decidedly philistine. There is an implied contrast with the situation leading up to 1916 and Yeats' subsequent comments.

Liam O'Dowd (from the Sociology Department at Queen's University Belfast) attempts at some length in issue 1 to address the boundary problem in the setting up of nation-states. In this context, he comes up against the problem of the meaning of the word 'republican'. He inveighs against the insularity of Irish thinking on these matters and attempts to open up the European dimension on the question of national boundaries. He contrasts the national objective of making nation and state congruent with the republican focus on citizenship and territory. 'Transnational governance is here to stay ... the Good Friday Agreement ... promises to replace the zero-sum territorial claims with the politics of transborder functional governance and associated forms of participatory and deliberative democracy.'

Colm Rapple, a journalist writing on economic topics in the business pages of the media, has some critical things to say in issue 1 about the trend towards privatisation of natural resources, as well as about the

quantitative measures like GNP and GDP that are in use. He highlights the problem of land ownership, as it emerged from the Land League struggles, for which the British solution to the problem gave rise to a stagnant agriculture; a new, basically reactionary, landowning class; and a declining working population on the land. He has identified the same problem as I have done, when commenting above on the Metscher and Hanley papers. He brings up the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil in contrast, and references Galbraith's *Culture of Contentment* as descriptive of contemporary Irish socio-economics. He argues strongly against the privatisation of Coillte, on the basis of a critical evaluation of the Telecom privatisation debacle.

Primarily Action-oriented

Here, the material published to date is concentrated in the first issue and consists of short background papers from leading people in NGOs with activist objectives. Some papers in subsequent issues, as listed below, suggest action after background analysis and problem definition, in rough conformity with the model structure. It is true that one would expect any emergent action-oriented material to find its way into the weekly, monthly, and occasional papers and newsletters read by the activists. This assumes a philosophy of top-down activism.

There is scope, however, in a critical journal for the critical analysis of bottom-up activism, working backwards to the analysis of the theoretical basis which underlies it. Are they on the right track? Is it flawed? If so, how?

Current issues generating activism include the conflict between motorway development and our historical heritage, one-off rural housing, the so-called 'decentralising' of the Civil Service, the impact of Common Agricultural Policy reform on Irish farmers, public transport in Dublin, access to housing, renewable energy, Sellafield, asylum-seekers, etc.—the list is endless. There is a need for papers addressing current issues of public concern, and tracing their roots in various flawed aspects of the legislative environments which have evolved within the framework of both states, or have been inherited from, or imposed by, the British. Such analysis would be helpful in the process of developing the required approach to an inclusive all-Ireland democratic republic, providing a framework within which an inclusive, culturally rich nation can evolve.

In issue 1, towards the end, there is an editorial introduction to a section in which leading people in various non-governmental organisations are invited to outline what they are actively doing towards the achievement of their objectives. This is taken as a conscious step

towards decoupling the concept of ‘republicanism’ from that of ‘armed nationalism’, and reinvigorating its radical political potential. Jerome Connolly outlines, in what is basically a background paper, the position of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace on socio-economic rights. Gráinne Healy, Chair of the National Women’s Council of Ireland, outlines the background position on women’s rights. Siobhán Ní Chúlacháin, Vice-Chair of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, has things to say about the European Convention on Human Rights and on various Human Rights Commissions. Colm Walsh makes a case for the Traveller Movement, and Eamonn Waters for the National Youth Council. Philip Watt, Director of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, outlines the refugee situation.

The foregoing are all short background outlines, and are not related to in-depth background analysis or problem definition, though these no doubt in all cases occur elsewhere.

Tending to conform to the ‘Background-Problem-Action’ Model

Brian Trench, from Dublin City University, in issue 3, makes a creditable attempt to draw attention to the role of science as part of the culture, referencing some contributions from J. W. Foster, Nick Whyte, and the present writer, which attempt to analyse the role of science in the colonial to post-colonial transition. He correctly credits de Valera with his role in providing a haven for Schrödinger and others, but misses out on the analysis of the fragility of the model he adopted, which might have explained the failure of Kiberd to recognise the significance of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies in his analysis of Flann O’Brien’s work and in the cultural scene generally. The width of the culture gap is exemplified in the absence of science from the Field Day anthologies. His referencing of contemporary material, however, indicates the beginnings of an accessible critical treatment of the current science-culture issues. Thus, he presents some outline background to the problem, which he goes on to define in terms of the existence of the cultural barrier between science and the humanities, and suggests how it may be addressed in terms of the provision of access to courses in science, technology, and society at third level, in such a way as to be available to humanities and business students, showing how this has been done elsewhere, including the serious treatment of science fiction.

Alan Titley, from Dublin City University, *as Gaeilge* in issue 3, develops the link between the culture of the republic and the problems of the world, with the aid of the late Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Ernst Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and others less familiar to

me. He treats the emergence of nations in post-imperial situations, underlining its complexity, and contrasts the civic approach to nation-definition to the ethnic, with the latter generating mini-imperial superiority attitudes, most if not all emergent nation-states having ethnic minorities and incipient border disputes. He rightly criticises the absence of understanding of the national question from what is usually perceived as the Marxist canon, due to its having evolved under centralist-imperial influence. He calls for the incorporation of human rights laws into national legislation.

This paper incidentally raises the question of the role of the language and the need for those concerned with contributing to the critical debate to be familiar with it at the necessary technical working level. In the Wolfe Tone Society in the 1960s, we began to address this problem and ran into difficulties once we realised its depth. I had the same feeling when recently I encountered Finbarr Ó Brocháin at a seminar run by *an Roth*, the Engineers' Irish-language forum. There is unfinished business here, worthy of a paper in its own right.

Philip Pettit, from Princeton University, makes the link in issue 3 with classical Enlightenment republicanism via Wolfe Tone, leaning on the Roche-Cronin 1960s Wolfe Tone Society pamphleteering publication, *Freedom the Wolfe Tone Way*, as well as on his own scholarly work. After defining an agenda for an emergent cultural system within the democratic republican political framework, he suggests, under the heading 'motivational effects', various cultural pathologies that can emerge, e.g. excessive religious domination. He concludes by coming up with practical policy proposals for encouraging a healthy cultural environment in civil society.

In issue 3, Ivana Bacik, from Trinity College Dublin, on free speech and civil rights, gives a useful paper on the legal and constitutional background, going on to adumbrate the many issues arising from state security legislation, and stating the problem in terms of definitions of the 'common good'. She concludes that we need a system in which free speech does not protect Nazis, Klansmen, and pornographers, while doing nothing for their victims.

Paul Delaney, also from Trinity College Dublin, gives us some insight in issue 3 into the complexities of the Traveller culture, attempting to rescue them from the status of romantic relics of the past and to suggest a positive emergent modern role. Although all the elements of the model are there in the text, it is closely woven; it would benefit by being edited in such a way as to bring out the structure. I should perhaps add that I have had thoughts along these lines myself, when occupying space on holiday

camp-sites. Would Travellers not provide a steady year-round revenue, a base-load for the camp-site service industry?

Fergus O’Ferrall, who is a medical doctor associated with the Adelaide Hospital, in issue 2 goes into the question of ‘Civic-Republican Citizenship and Voluntary Action’, in a mode which approximates to what I am suggesting should be the norm. He gives a scholarly historical background, covering the Greeks, Italians, English and French—in the English context giving due credit to John Milton. In his advocacy of voluntary organisation as the basis of a way forward for politics in a vibrant civil society, he leans on Hannah Arendt. The underlying problem is, of course, the pressures of the economic system on the individual under modern conditions. He gives a useful appendix with the classic texts of the civic republican tradition.

The foregoing conforms approximately to the basic structure, though the problem-definition phase is ill-focused. Overall, it is, however, at a somewhat abstracted level; one might have expected a concrete example, in the form of an approach to how the current problems in healthcare might be addressed [Editor’s note: Fergus O’Ferrall’s article was an edited version of a much longer paper, which may account for this discrepancy].

In issue 1, Kevin McCorry makes an integrated case for all-Ireland democratic renewal, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement. He goes into the historical background, in Ireland, Britain, and the EU, and homes in on the problem of how to get the Agreement to work. He comes up with a set of immediate demands, which he considers the Dublin government should be able to achieve. He concludes with a call for an alternative government, based on a political alliance across a broad democratic spectrum.

The McCorry model deserves development in detail and in depth, both in scholarly and activist mode, in its various suggested aspects. It is a pity more effort was not put into following the trails suggested in this concise overview in subsequent issues of *The Republic*.

Conclusions

Before going in to the substantive concluding section, I feel I need to make a minor but significant critical point about current publishing technology. To write the above, I have had to work with the three successive issues of *The Republic* open on the desk beside me. Due to the nature of the binding, it will not stay open at the pages on which I am interested in commenting. So, I would add to the specification of the ideal critical journal: as well as being ‘vertical in the bookshelf’ and ‘frequent

enough not to be forgotten between issues', it needs to be bound in such a way as to easily lie flat on the table pending the absorption of its message by activists into other writings having wider circulation. I am putting this forward as a serious contribution to the definition of a standard 'critical journal format'.

How to comment on the foregoing, additionally to what I have done interstitially? I think the interesting thing is the developmental sequence: the initial emphasis on problem-definition and the slightly hesitant though real aspiration to relate to action; then, there followed a concentration on scholarly historical background, perhaps even some degree of 'academic respectability'. Finally, in issue 3, there began to emerge the makings of an integrated approach, with analysis, problem-definition, and suggestions for action in various niches, though the overall content retained mostly a somewhat eclectic and scholarly flavour. There is clearly a learning process going on, though the frequency of appearance militates against this being effective.

I suggest that there is a need for a more pro-active editorial policy, with flexible adaptation of the suggested integrated model: scholarly analysis, clear problem-structuring, outline solution (even if visionary), and action towards the first steps to achieve the vision. This could be in the form of guidelines to authors, and the selection of authors needs perhaps to be pro-actively related to support the need for detailed analysis of the problems that underlie current activism. There is also a role for self-selected authors who have done the analysis, who have seen the problem with insights not yet publicly widespread, and who need to generate activism where none yet exists. I am thinking here of the coming energy crisis, as the oil supply dries up, and its ramifications into diverse areas like food production, transport, urban planning, etc. Awareness of this needs to be spread wider than among those whose priority concern is the environment.

There is perhaps a role for *The Republic* as an accepted and sought-after critical reviewer of all niche-oriented journals, analysing and activating their implied, and perhaps not perceived, political dimensions, for example the politics of the Arts Council in the contexts described by the Journal of Music in Ireland, or the politics of the various science-related agencies in the contexts described by *Spin*⁷ or *Technology Ireland*⁸, a domain which Brian Trench has begun to outline in *The Republic*, and which I have been actively attempting to influence for decades. These requirements, I suggest, indicate a need for an active editorial support group, each member of which should have some standing in some niche sector of the cultural spectrum and be in a position

to relate it to the political environment.

Notes

1 *Planet* is published in Aberystwyth by Berw Cyf bi-monthly at £3.25 and edited by James Barrie who is contactable by e-mail at planet-enquiries@planetmagazine.org.uk.

2 *Feasta* is addressing problems of economics of sustainability, providing theoretical ammunition for the Green movement. It is edited by Richard Douthwaite and John Jopling, and published from 159 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin 6. It is contactable at feasta@anu.ie and distributed by Green Books Ltd. in Devon, e-mail: john@greenbooks.co.uk.

3 *Saothar* is published annually by the Irish Labour History Society at Beggars Bush; it is edited by Fintan Lane and Emmett O'Connor; it is contactable at ilhs@ilhsonline.org.

4 The *Journal of Music in Ireland* is published bi-monthly at €3.75 and is edited by Toner Quinn, who is contactable at editor@thejmi.com.

5 Roy H. W. Johnston, *Century of Endeavour; A Father and Son Overview of the 20th Century*, (Washington: Academica/Maunsel 2004). At the time of writing, arrangements for ordering and distribution on this side of the Atlantic are under development, but the author is contactable at rjtechne@iol.ie.

6 *Crane Bag*, Forum Issue, vol. 7, no. 2, (1983).

7 *Spin* comes out quarterly at €4.50 and is edited by Tom Kennedy and Sean Duke; it is published by them from a decentralised location in Foxford Woollen Mills; e-mail tom@sciencespin.com.

8 *Technology Ireland* is edited by Sean Duke and published monthly by Enterprise Ireland (Merrion Hall); it is essential reading for industrial management concerned with the innovation process. The e-mail contact is: technology.ireland@enterprise-ireland.com.

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Bitheolaí, scríbhneoir, aistritheoir, file agus iriseoir a bhfuil cónaí air i bPremiá de Mar, an Chatalóin, is ea TOMÁS MAC SÍOMÓIN. Iar-eagarthóir *Anois agus Comhar*. Úrscéal, *Ag Altóir an Diabhail*, foilsithe ag Coiscéim, 2003. Paimfléad, *Tuairisc ón bPluais* □ *Poblachtánachas agus Litríocht in Aois na Scáth*, agus *Na Cathracha Cailte*, cnuasach d'fhilíocht Ernesto Cardenal aistrithe ó Spáinnis go Gaeilge, foilsithe cheana féin i 2004, agus tá úrscéal eile glactha ag na foilsitheoirí.

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