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Instead of an Obituary. Brian Friel's Silent Voices. Memory and Celebration

Giovanna Tallone

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On the occasion of Brian Friel's eightieth birthday in 2009, Seamus Heaney published a slender volume called *Spelling It Out*, whose aim was to honour and celebrate the playwright and to mark a long-standing friendship.

Taking the letters of Friel's name and surname in a game with words and language, Heaney created a sort of microcosm of Friel's world. Starting with B, for Ballybeg, "the invented domain where so many of Brian's plays are set, the hub of his imagined world" (Heaney 2009, [3]), the poet moves on to I "for integrity", but also for "Ireland" and for "intimacy", thus mixing the public and the personal, "the inner self, the mysterious source and living of being" ([5]). At the same time this is a reminder of the stage directions in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964), where Gar O'Donnell is split between Public Gar and Private Gar, the latter being "the unseen man, the man within, the *alter ego*, the secret thoughts, the id" (Friel 1984, 27). Words like "no", "fiction", "experiment", "love" and "language" are likewise entered in what Heaney defines "not so much an abecedary as a befrieleri" ([1]), in an interplay of public and private levels.

The death of Brian Friel on October 2nd 2015 followed Heaney's death about two years earlier, which meant the loss of two of the deepest, most eminent and most provocative voices in Irish literature and culture, whose echoes resound in the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Both of them meant to go beyond the surface to dig deep into the soil of Ireland and the soul of man. The water-diviner that features in Friel's short story "The Diviner", first published in *The New Yorker* in 1962, is an image of the artist shared also by Heaney in a poem of the same title from his 1966 collection *Death of a Naturalist*. The diviner's "forked hazel stick" (Heaney 1980, 24) is a co-referent of the spade used in his celebrated poem "Digging", and the juxtaposition of digging and writing, of digging with a pen, highlights the role of the artist as archaeologist (De Petris 1996, 41). Friel dedicated his 1975 play *Volunteers* to Seamus Heaney, a play of public address that "seeks to dig deep through the rubble, to excavate pieces of the Irish past and examine how they fit with the Irish present" (Lojek 2004, 183).

Looking back in retrospection Brian Friel was probably the most renowned and celebrated Irish playwright, whose reticence to give himself away in inter-

views and public events seems to be in sharp contrast with his open involvement in the life of his country. He participated in civil rights demonstrations in Derry in 1968, he served in the Seanad Éireann, the Irish Senate, from 1987 to 1989 and in 2006 he was elected Saoi, literally 'the wise one', in the Aosdána. Yet, he preferred privacy and discretion. For example, in the 2000 volume *Reading the Future. Irish Writers in Conversation*, Brian Friel's voice is absent and is replaced by critic Fintan O'Toole, theatre director Peter Mason and University College Dublin Professor Declan Kiberd who speak for him.

The conflict and/or reconciliation of private or inner voices with public speaking are evident in his 1973 play *The Freedom of the City*. Occasioned by the events remembered as Bloody Sunday, the play commemorates a tragic public event, intertwining it with very private and intimate features. The three characters on stage – who are actually dead – belong to the poor Catholic population of Derry, and each of them takes part in the public domain of a civil right march also for intimate and private reasons. When they take shelter in the Guildhall, Lily, in particular, the housewife living “with eleven children and a sick husband in two rooms that aren't fit for animals” (Friel 1984, 154), expresses the double level of her private reasons. On one hand she marches for her disabled son Declan: “He's a mongol ... And it's for him I go on all the civil rights marches. Isn't that stupid?” (155). On the other hand, at the beginning of Act Two, recalling the moment of her death, Lily manages to put into words the most intimate and private feelings of inadequacy and disappointment, an epiphany of some sorts: “And in the silence before my body disintegrated in a purple convulsion, I thought I glimpsed a tiny truth: that *life had eluded me* because never once in my forty-three years had an experience, an event, even a small unimportant happening been isolated, and assessed, and *articulated*. And the fact that this, my last experience, was defined by this perception, this was the culmination of sorrow. In a way I died of grief” (150, emphasis added). The lack of “articulation” and the need to “articulate” highlight Friel's use of drama to give voice to what remains unexpressed. In the convention of the play the three characters are dead when the play opens, so Friel carries the voice of ghosts and the voice of those who have no voice onto the stage. Such expressionistic device recurs in *Living Quarters* (1977), a play bearing the format of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), in that it is the “rehearsal in a theatre in which the characters play themselves in a play of their own lives” (Dantanus 1988, 142). Also in this case dead characters come alive on stage, and in one of his last plays, *Performances* (2003), “the long-dead Jánáček ... recalls his feelings when alive” (Bertha 2006, 66) while the living character of Anezka interacts with the dead musician in a total disruption of realistic efficacy.

One of Friel's most memorable plays, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), intertwines the presence of the narrating voice of Michael with the voices of dead characters on stage, who come alive through his words. In this memory

play, Brian Friel sheds light on the private past that is reenacted on the stage, in which the public, historical context of the deprivation and economic restrictions merges with the private memories of the summer of 1936: "When I cast my mind to that summer of 1936 different kinds of memories offer themselves to me" (Friel 1990, 1).

Ghosts are also the vital force of one of his most controversial, most experimental and most successful plays, *Faith Healer* (1979). In an innovative and provocative stage enactment, two of the three characters on stage are already dead when the play opens, and the voices from beyond the boundaries of space and time tell contrasting and contradictory stories whose details often clash with one another's version. Truth about facts is elusive and maybe unimportant – is Grace Frank's mistress or wife? Is she "a Yorkshire woman" (Friel 1984, 335) or is she from Scarborough, Knaresborough, Kerry, London, or Belfast? Was her surname "Dodsmith or Elliot or O'Connell or McPherson"? (345). Was Frank there when her child was born or did he run away? (363). Only the magic of narration remains, counteracted by the mesmerism of the list of placenames opening the play and repeatedly interspersed in the three acts: "Aberarder, Aberayron, / Llangranog, Llangurig, / Abergorlech, Abergynolwyn, / Llandefeilog, Llanerchymedd, / Aberhosan, Aberporth ..." (331-332). Brian Friel's choice of having a play made entirely of monologues of characters that are never on stage at the same time disrupts traditional and conventional issues of dramaturgy, merging playacting with straightforward narration. The legacy of traditional storytelling returns in the later play *Molly Sweeney* (1996), once again featuring three monologists on stage, each recounting his own story while never meeting.

Drama and storytelling are constantly present in Friel's production. Having started his career with short-story writing, which led to a contract with the *New Yorker* in the 1950s and the publication of two collections, *The Saucer of Larks* and *The Gold in the Sea* in 1962 and 1966 respectively, Friel never abandoned his voice as a storyteller, a twentieth-century century *seanachie*. Rather than being statements, his plays turn into questions, focusing on fiction as fact, a way of making the harshness and disappointments an acceptable fiction. Several characters are in fact fabulists and storytellers who can survive only transforming fact into fiction. In *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1967), the protagonist changes the fifty-two years of her precarious life as an *émigré* in New York into a golden dream. Following the example of Trilbe and Ingram, her fellows residents at Eden House, in Act Three Cass learns to "rhapsodize", providing herself with a private, imaginative and alternative version of her story.

Truth is thus elusive. In *Crystal and Fox* (1968) the protagonist admits he has used words as a creative matter of invention: "It's a lie, Crystal, all a lie ... I made it all up" (Friel 1970, 73). His lies have a destructive and a creative power, as his attempt to restore the dream of past happiness will lead to the utter destruction of the world of his travelling show.

In *The Gentle Island* (1970), the controversial and ambiguous patriarch Manus Sweeney introduces himself as a storyteller, the depository of links between places, place-names, and stories: "There's a name for every stone about here ... and a story too" (Friel 1993 [1973], 32). He is, however, an unreliable narrator: "There's ways and ways of telling every story. Every story has seven faces" (57).

None of his stories is to be believed, in the same way as Casimir's impossible tales of family lore in *Aristocrats* (1979) are just "phoney fiction" (Friel 1984, 278). In a similar way telling stories and making History underlies Friel's play of the Great O'Neill in *Making History* (1988), where the authoritative written word of the book set centre stage draws the attention to the difficulty or impossibility of writing History without writing stories: "Isn't that what history is, a kind of story-telling? ... Imposing a pattern on events that were mostly casual and haphazard and shaping them into a narrative that is logical and interesting" (Friel 1989, 8), says Bishop Lombard entrusted with writing the biography of the Great O'Neill.

Several of Friel's plays feature characters of writers and artists, from *Faith Healer* and *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1999), to *Performances* (2003). In others, such as *Aristocrats*, a historian as an allomorph for an artist, is entangled in the labyrinths of truths and stories, and therefore of playing with language. As a playwright and artist Friel himself plays with language, in particular he addresses the issue of language from different perspectives in the first play produced for Field Day in 1980, *Translations*.

In the "Sporadic Diary" Friel kept while working on *Translations*, the playwright wrote that "the play has to do with language and only language" (Friel 1983, 58) and in this way it gives voice to a language that is going to be silenced. In the assumption that two languages are spoken, Irish Gaelic and English, *Translations* is maybe the climax of Friel's plays of language. The ritual of naming, of translating Gaelic names into English ones is an act of creation or re-creation that also tells a story of dispossession and conquest: "We name a thing and – bang – it leaps into existence!" (Friel 1984, 422). Place names themselves are storytellers, the story of Brian's well remains in Tobair Vree; the voice of a story nearly forgotten is kept alive on a map: "... there used to be a well here ... And an old man called Brian, whose face was disfigured by an enormous growth, got it into his head that the water was blessed; and every day for seven months he went there and bathed his face in it ... And ever since that crossroads is known as Tobair Vree" (429). The play is a milestone not only in twentieth century Irish drama, but also a significant step in Brian Friel's development. It is both a public and a private play, mingling public History and private stories and highlighting some of the major themes in the development of Irish drama at large: the centrality of the house, History, identity, the ambiguity of language.

His plays are based on careful research and on a knowing intertextuality (Kiberd 1996, 618), having made use of written texts as diverse as John

Andrew's *A Paper Landscape* (1975) and George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975) in *Translations*, Ervin Goffman's *Forms of Talk* (1981) in *The Communication Cord* (1982), Sean O'Faolain's *The Great O'Neill* (1942) in *Making History*, Oliver Sacks's case history *To See and Not See* (1993) in *Molly Sweeney* (Pine 1999, 9). The juxtaposition of public voices, because published books, and intimate and private articulation of silent voices recurs throughout his writing career as Friel continuously pursues his digging into soil and soul.

If Brian Friel should have wanted to identify himself with a Shakespearian play and a few Shakespearean quotations, probably he might have chosen *Hamlet*, Act Two, Scene Two. Here Hamlet's exchange with Polonius: "What do you read my lord? / Words, words, words" (*Hamlet* II, ii, vv. 191-192) is a catalyst for Friel's playwriting, whose raw material is words and whose engagement with language is in theory and practice at the core of his plays. Later on in the same scene Hamlet explains: "The play's the thing / wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king" (vv. 605-606). The play-within-the play, *The Murder of Gonzalo*, meant to elicit visible truth of his uncle's guilt of his father's murder, highlights Friel's engagement with similar metadramatic experiments, in *Lovers*, in *The Loves of Cass McGuire*, in *Living Quarters*, in *Performances*, in the innovative format of *Faith Healer* and *Molly Sweeney*. If Hamlet mixed a public show with a private insight, thus becoming in a way a playwright, Friel used words to provide insight into privacies in the public context of the Ireland of his time.

Brian Friel's position and significance was celebrated worldwide during his lifetime in the numberless articles and scholarly essays, in books – both monographs and essay collections – and in official occasions and festivals, and it is somehow a paradox that such a private man should have had such public recognition. The Lughnasa International Friel Festival was held at the end of August 2015, not long before the playwright's death a few months later.

These few pages are meant to remember and pay homage to Brian Friel, who helped *Studi irlandesi* to find its voice. He strenuously supported *Studi irlandesi* since its first tentative steps with enthusiasm, respect and appreciation. His presence in the advisory board has meant a lot for all those involved in the Journal, for whom he was a true fellow traveller in the adventure of promoting Irish studies in Italy. In his silent voice that had so much to say, Brian Friel possessed the quintessential quality of the faith healer that features in his play, described in the play as: "this gift, this craft, this talent, this art, this magic" (Friel 1984, 349).

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Italia mia: Transnational Ireland
in the Nineteenth Century

edited by

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Italia Mia: Irish-European Entanglements in the Nineteenth Century

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How entangled was Ireland with Europe in the nineteenth century? What dialogues existed between Ireland and the Continent? What was the movement of people and ideas between countries? The transnational dimension of the Irish story is an important element in the history of the country and it is an aspect which has garnered much attention in recent years. The current collection of essays seeks to advance this dialogue by exploring Ireland's relationship with Italy in the nineteenth century. The contributions chart this relationship by examining the experiences in Italy of a wide cross-section of Irish men and women such as John Hogan, Charles Lever, Albert de la Hoyde, Michael Balfe, Lady Morgan and Paul Cullen. The essays pay attention to the different modes of exchange between the two countries and the linguistic, cultural, social, political and religious entanglements that followed.

Italia Mia highlights the importance of recognising alternative dimensions to the lives of important figures of the nineteenth century and promotes an understanding of the transnational world inhabited by many Irish people in this period. The mobility of Irish men and women in Anglophone worlds has been the study of much attention recently but interactions with non-Anglophone countries have received considerably less consideration. This volume focuses on the lives and activities of some of the Irish visitors to Italy and thus concentrates on micro-history, in other words on the study of the undertakings and lifestyles of single individuals rather than on generalizations about the two nations and the ties between them. The individual experience is examined in detail while locating such an experience in the overall context of the Irish community abroad. For many of the individuals discussed in this collection, their Italian experience has often been relegated to a few lines in biographical notes: "the individual spent x amount of time in Italy and then returned". By investigating in more detail their Italian stay, and furthermore, by placing a variety of these experiences side by side, the research highlights the importance of the Italian sojourn in their lives and also places it in the context of similar activities by contemporaries. The main focus of this collection is therefore to look at a selection of transnational

lives in the nineteenth century and to examine how movement across borders created transcultural communities, histories and discourses.

By bringing together the many stories and interactions with Italy, the collection will show how these were not isolated adventurers but rather people who formed part of an extensive network of a transnational Ireland. Some of those discussed in these articles are indeed exceptional figures but nonetheless for each person chosen, there were others who could have taken their place. For certain idiosyncratic figures such as Charles Lever and Francis Mahony, this might seem a challenge, but nonetheless, when placed side-by-side with contemporaries who also spent time in Italy, they can be seen to be part of a cosmopolitan Irishness which was hybrid and open to influence. Indeed, the lives of the Irish people discussed in this issue of *Studi irlandesi* provide an insight into transnational lives in this period and how many people found themselves caught between countries. For example, as discussed by John McCourt in this collection, Charles Lever was a composite figure who spent much of his adult life “dislocated” in Europe, always negotiating between “home” and “away”, between “here” (mostly Dublin) and a sprawling, variegated European “elsewhere”. These figures challenge our discussions of ‘Irishness’, particularly at a time of growing nationalism throughout Europe. Francis Mahony is a similarly elusive character whose ‘doubleness’ in most aspects of his life subverts discussion of nationality, religion and authorship. The interaction of Lever and Mahony with Europe underlines the value of examining Ireland’s entanglement with the continent and of looking at their work not merely through an Irish, but also through a European lens. These articles are not intended as an advertisement for the value of travel to broaden one’s mind, nor do they intend to contrast the cosmopolitan traveller with the insular native. Indeed, as some of these essays illustrate, travel to Italy did not necessarily improve the individual’s fortunes, indeed some, after many years spent abroad, found themselves in an in-between state. Rather than chart a narrative of improvement through travel, these essays note the impact of travel to Italy on individual lives, on how people changed as a result of their time spent in Italy.

This collection of articles is entitled *Italia Mia* [*My Italy*] thus drawing attention to the individual experience of Italy which forms the focus of each essay. However, when we speak about ‘Italia Mia’, we could, for a variety of reasons, also use the plural form, ‘My Italies’. In the first instance, the plural form is appropriate because for most of the nineteenth century, Italy was a divided country, made up of many states. The Italian peninsula experienced huge upheavals between 1800 and 1880 as the forces of Italian nationalism struggled against the established strongholds of the Papal States, Austrian domination and entrenched royalties. Various uprisings throughout the century, but particularly in 1821, 1830, 1848 and 1859/1860 sent shockwaves throughout Europe as revolutionary ideas became reality in Italy. Irish people were present in Italy during these times, both as participants and as observers

and were influenced by their experiences in Italy. Some were forever turned against revolutionary nationalism, others were encouraged and motivated by the Italian example. Ireland's interaction with Italy in this period was complex as many reactions were mediated by Catholicism which viewed Italian unification as an attack on the position of the Catholic Church (Barr, Finelli, and O'Connor 2014; Carter 2015). A second reason why the plural form 'My Italies' could be contextually correct is that for Irish travellers, their experiences of Italy and subsequent reactions were very diverse. As mentioned above, many had different reactions to Italian nationalism and the area of religion divided some of the individuals discussed in the articles. Paul Cullen despised Francis Mahony; Francis Mahony regularly attacked the work of Lady Morgan; Lady Morgan's view of the Vatican was diametrically opposed to that of Paul Cullen. There is no homogeneous Irish view of Italy that emerges in these pages. There are however many areas of overlap and connections between the individuals mentioned: they range from the relationship of influence between Paul Cullen and John Hogan; to the mutual devotion to Roman Catholicism in De La Hoyde and John Hogan; to the spirit of artistic adventure and discovery in Michael Balfe and Richard Rothwell.

Studies of travel writing have contributed much in recent time to our understanding of cultural encounters. However, such studies, by necessity, only capture that portion of travellers who put pen to paper to record their experiences. This collection aims to take a broad conception of travel which includes travel writing but also encompasses travellers who did not go to Italy for tourism and who did not publish travel accounts. Articles therefore range from the published impressions of Italy by Lady Morgan to unpublished correspondence by Paul Cullen to travellers such as Richard Rothwell who left no written traces of their time in Italy. Research in Irish travel literature has been dominated by travel *to* Ireland and apart from some ground-breaking studies by scholars such as Joachim Fischer on German travel (Fischer 2000), Irish interactions with Europe and the cultural encounters which such connections generated have largely been ignored. Therefore, although the importance of travel *into* Ireland and the impact of such intercultural interactions have been examined (Hooper 2005), it is indeed surprising how little attention has been paid to Irish travellers going in the opposite direction. Recently, a rising interest in transnational Irish studies has increased the scholarly attention to Irish connections with other countries (Whelehan 2015) but this development has been dominated by considerations of Anglophone links. The dominance of Anglophone countries in the studies of Irish travel needs to be counterbalanced with an understanding of the impact of key European countries such as Italy in fundamental periods of Irish identity formation. Studies of European entanglements break the English-Irish binary which has so dominated Irish discourse. The special issue on Irish travel writing in the journal *Studies in Travel Writing* (2016); the forthcoming book *Irish Cultures of Travel: Writing on the*

Continent, 1829-1914 by Raphaël Ingelbien (2016), and the current collection of articles all serve to rebalance this dialogue and to emphasise the importance of travel to Europe in the Irish national story.

Although we cannot talk about an Irish diaspora in Italy, over the span of the long century there was a varied, productive and at times well-integrated presence of Irish people on the peninsula, reflecting the various dimensions of Italy through their activities and ways of life. This led to a flow of ideas, connections and influences between the two countries and by focusing on individuals in this collection, we can see the agency of this transfer and how the movement of people was crucial to the movement of ideas. The length of stays in Italy varied greatly in the people discussed in these articles, from a few months to almost thirty years. The time spent in Italy allowed for the formation of social, political and pictorial impressions of the country, even on the basis of relatively short stays. Long-time Irish residents were, as Barbara Schaff says of exiles and émigrés in general, “capable of surveying society from a broader perspective” (Schaff 2010, 10). Although suffering from “dislocation [...] fragmentation of identity [...] linguistic hybridity” (Schaff 2010, 9), Irish expatriates were able to integrate into Italian society, participate in historic events and become familiar with the Italian language, culture and institutions. It is important however, that all of the people at one stage returned to Ireland and so brought their experiences back with them. In contrast to studies of Irish emigration in the nineteenth century, where the emigrant to, say America or Australia, rarely returned to Ireland, the travellers to Italy were mobile individuals who moved between countries and were agents of transnational cultures. These intermediaries can often have a particularly valuable contribution to make to research which seeks to engage with transnational perspectives, addressing questions of cultural interaction, communication, and exchange across national boundaries. The condition of the displaced person is a special one which can lead to a particular dynamic and creative power which is in turn linked to the critical perspective of the outsider.

Across the articles, some important trends in Irish travel to Italy emerge. Firstly, the centrality of the Catholic Church in mediating the Irish experience of the country cannot be underestimated. Italy was at the centre of the Roman Catholic world and religion was often the motivating reason for travel (O'Connor 2016). Colin Barr's article on Paul Cullen charts the experiences of the young Irish priest who was to become the most influential figure in Irish Catholicism in the nineteenth century. The article shows how Cullen's time in Rome shaped his ideas about theology, politics, church organisation and devotional practice. It gave him a global outlook, skills and connections which allowed him to forge transnational links that would serve him well in later life when he returned to Ireland. Probably the largest number of Irish expatriates in Italy was constituted by members of the clergy, principally based in Rome whether at the Irish Colleges or as part of the Vatican entourage. Colin Barr's article emphasizes the overall influence of Cullen's long stay in Italy on his

theological views, on his distrust of secular education and on his strong opposition to nationalism.

The significance of Italy to Ireland as the centre of Roman Catholicism, especially when Rome was threatened in the nineteenth century by the forces of Italian unification, is highlighted in Florry O'Driscoll's article on the soldier Albert De La Hoyde. O'Driscoll's contribution documents how the Pope's Irish Battalion brought ordinary Irishmen to Italy to become participants in some of the most momentous developments in Europe in the nineteenth century. Italy was seen as the focal point for Irish Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church was the fulcrum of Irish attention whether it provided education, career or was in need of protection. Through the hitherto unpublished letters of one of the soldiers of the Papal Battalion of St. Patrick, Florry O'Driscoll's article documents the career of a die-hard Papal supporter but he also gives an interesting account of how the Irish viewed Italians thus contributing to the transnational perspective *Italia Mia* intends to offer.

In the nineteenth century the arts continued to attract resident painters, sculptors and architects to Italy especially in the first half of the century when the neoclassical revival that had been stimulated by the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum, was consolidated by the genius of Antonio Canova. Irish artists, like their British and American counterparts, travelled to Italy so they could visit galleries and museums and learn from the new and old Masters. A period of work in one of the Academies or in the studios of Italian painters or sculptors was still considered essential for the development of an artist. Several Irish artists had made their careers in Italy, because, as Lady Morgan comments about an engraver, "in Ireland, even talents like his might perish in oblivion, or wither in neglect: for hapless Ireland, however she may originate talent for foreign markets, has no home consumption for its produce" (Morgan 1862, II, 58). The trend, however, was reversed as many artists did return and influenced the aesthetic tastes of the public and of their Irish patrons. John Turpin's article illustrates the positive influence Italy had on John Hogan's art and, through him, on the development of the arts in Ireland. A well-established sculptor in Rome, under the influence of Canova, Thorvaldsen and the neo-classical school, Hogan obtained most of his commissions from Ireland, producing statues, reliefs, memorials and busts which applied, as Turpin argues, a severe but sensitive style, inspired by neoclassical ideals of purity and simplicity to subjects relating to contemporary religious and political ideals. Nationalism as well as religion were inspiring forces as may be witnessed in his heroic image of O'Connell and in many sculptures representing the idealised female figure of Hibernia or Erin. In his article, John Turpin explores how John Hogan was able to happily combine his artistry and his religious beliefs to mutual benefit in Rome and how through Hogan, Irish religious sculpture bore the imprint of Italian art.

Another Irish artist who visited Rome and now rests in the so-called 'Protestant' Cemetery in that city was the painter Richard Rothwell who sojourned

in Italy three times, in the nineteenth century. While Italy was probably the reason for Hogan's success (his career, in fact, declined after his return to Ireland), in the case of Rothwell it appears from Catherine O'Brien's analysis that the style he elaborated during his relatively short stays in Italy did not encounter the applause his earlier portraits had earned him in Dublin and London. Historical romanticism and sentimentalised domestic scenes dominated Italian painting around the mid-century and O'Brien suggests that Rothwell's pictures of peasants or beggars recalling scenes which he might have seen in Italy were not appreciated by the Royal Academy. Persisting with Italianate themes which were unpopular at home and in which he did not excel was to be his artistic ruin but demonstrates how important it was felt for Irish artists to study art in Italy at all costs.

The flourishing of musical arts and, especially of the opera and the *bel canto*, attracted several Irish musicians to Italy who hoped to make their fortune either as composers or performers of classical music. Michael W. Balfe and Catherine Hayes are two prominent examples of musicians who were stars in Italy and brought back an Italianate fashion to Ireland. The great Romantic burst of operatic music dominated by Verdi and with such iconic figures as Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini and, later in the century, Puccini, made a stay in Italy compulsory for composers and singers alike. Basil Walsh's article on Michael Balfe traces the fortunes of the young Irishman in Italy as he negotiated a musical career both as a performer and as a composer in a pivotal moment for the development of opera not only in Italy but internationally.

Many Irish literary figures spent a considerable amount of time in Italy and, from Thomas Moore to Oscar Wilde, the country featured in and influenced Irish literary works throughout the nineteenth century. This collection of articles features the writings of the diplomat and author, Charles Lever, who lived in several Italian cities for over twenty years until his death in 1872, acting as British vice-consul in La Spezia and consul in Trieste. As John McCourt argues in his article on this hitherto neglected aspect of Lever's writings, it is essential to look at Lever's work through a European lens, to see Ireland side by side with other countries, and also to break the English-Irish binary. Even in his late works where Italy rather than Ireland features prominently, the events he observes and describes (Garibaldi's feats, Cavour's "wily" political action, brigandage), induce him to foresee "change for [Ireland] on a par with the big changes he had witnessed throughout a lifetime in Italy". McCourt in this article highlights the literary works by Lever which are rich with continental connections and parallels and which emphasize the necessity for a transnational approach to Lever's writing.

A further Irish literary figure who had a prolonged relationship with Italy was Francis Sylvester Mahony who, in his literary career, crossed between countries and cultures and adopted a variety of identities (for example Father Prout and Don Savonarola). Fergus Dunne traces an intriguing portrait of the

idiosyncratic personality of the Cork-born writer, indeed an eccentric, who mixed bona-fide journalism with satire, parody, mock scholarship and a celebration of the riches of Italian song. His off-centre stance is apparent both in his reporting on Italian and, especially, Roman events, and in the way his commentaries on Italian affairs allowed him to view contemporary Ireland from a new perspective. By tracing the development of Mahony's thoughts on Catholic identity and nationalist politics in his Italian writings, Fergus Dunne highlights the "doubleness" of the Irish writer. Mahony's publication of *Facts and Figures from Italy* (1847), despite the seemingly empirical title, gave a very personal and subjective account of the momentous developments on the Italian Peninsula and this writing allows Dunne to examine Mahony's provocative and seemingly opposed viewpoints.

Mahony regularly delighted in attacking the work of another Irish writer featured in this collection, Lady Morgan, although the extent of the attacks on the Irish woman's work is a testament to the high profile her writing enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Donatella Abbate Badin looks at Lady Morgan as an example of a 'professional traveller', someone who came to Italy with the purpose of writing a topographical, antiquarian or artistic account of the country in order to instruct, amuse or influence an audience. This approach is captured in Lady Morgan's *Italy* (1821) her account of a year-long stay which did not have leisure and sight-seeing as its only aim. She argues that Lady Morgan (née Sydney Owenson) was a reporter whose purpose was to raise her readers' consciousness about present political and economic injustice and foster support for the national cause in Italy whose first stirrings she witnessed. Lady Morgan's nationalist orientation, her contacts with the Italian intelligentsia at the dawn of the upheavals that would bring about the unification of Italy, and her drawing parallels between the Italian and Irish situations made her book instrumental in influencing political thought at home and in England and forwarding the understanding of the Italian cause.

From the music of Michael William Balfe and Catherine Hayes to the art of John Hogan and Richard Fagan, to the literature of Thomas Moore and Charles Lever, to the political and religious manoeuvring of Paul Cullen and Daniel O'Connell, to the travels of Countess Blessington and Lady Morgan, the nineteenth-century Irish experience of Italy was wide and varied. It extended from volunteers in the Pontifical Army to aristocratic travellers, from religious novices to flamboyant aesthetes. Research into the Italian stay of these people covers a wide cross-section of Irish society and places their lives and their experiences in a European context. While this collection of essays looks at a wide cross-section of Irish society and examines transnational lives in a variety of arenas, it is not, of course, exhaustive in its scope. Irish travellers may have been in the minority compared to other nationalities, but nonetheless travel in the nineteenth century was becoming increasingly part of Irish people's experience. In the words of Raphael Ingelbien, the nineteenth century saw "the rise

of a powerful and economically resilient [Irish] middle class who could afford to travel” (2010, 102). The personalities considered in *Italia Mia* thus represent a fraction of the Irish diasporic community in Italy in the nineteenth century, modest though it was and tangled with the British. Much research remains to be done on the more obscure Irish people who were also living or circulating in Italy in those days but whose traces are not so obvious in published works: tradesmen, businessmen, scholars, sailors, priests, nuns, governesses and so forth. Wherever Irish people rubbed elbow with Italians was a workshop in transnational living. Besides focusing on what the visitors brought back to Ireland, whether a sketch book, a different artistic style or a better understanding of the political situation in Italy, more investigation is needed to discover also what of Ireland was brought to Italy and remained permanently there; the presence of a foreigner, whether a traveller, a migrant or an émigré, always represents an occasion of cross-fertilization and exchange. In conclusion, the travellers to Italy in the nineteenth century were cultural mediators, agents of change moving between the two cultures, fostering the circulation of ideas. Relocation throughout Europe in the nineteenth century and the transnational legacies of the travelling distort the national story, and the accounts of Irish travellers to Italy in the collection of essays *Italia Mia* contribute to our understanding of the nature and extent of Ireland’s entanglement with Europe in this period.

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“An Italian of the Vatican Type”: The Roman Formation of Cardinal Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin

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Abstract:

Paul Cullen was the most influential figure in Ireland between the death of Daniel O’Connell in 1847 and the rise of Charles Stewart Parnell in the late 1870s. As Archbishop of Armagh (1849-52) and then Dublin (1852-78) and Ireland’s first Roman Catholic cardinal (1866), he exercised an unprecedented influence in both Ireland’s dominant Roman Catholic Church and in Irish society. What is less known is the nearly 30 years he spent in Rome, first as a student at the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide and then as rector of the Irish College in the city. His immersion in the multilingual environment of papal Rome was crucial in the shaping of his later career in Ireland. This essay traces the first ten or so years of Cullen’s time in Rome, focusing on the important lessons, experiences, and networks that he developed there. Most importantly, attention is given to Cullen’s relationship with Mauro Cappellari, from 1831 Pope Gregory XVI. Cullen’s academic success drew him into the small network of Cappellari’s protégés and informed the whole of his life, including in Ireland.

Keywords: Gregory XVI, Irish Catholicism, Irish College Rome, Irish Nationalism, Paul Cullen

Paul Cullen, archbishop of Armagh (1849-1852) and archbishop of Dublin (1852-78, cardinal archbishop from 1866), was the most powerful man in Ireland for a period of nearly thirty years, between the death of Daniel O’Connell in 1847 and the rise of Charles Stewart Parnell at the end of the 1870s. His influence stretched far beyond the Roman Catholic Church, in which he was unquestionably ‘supreme’, to the political and social life of

Ireland and its global diaspora (Norman 1965, 5). *The Times* of London (25 October 1878) declared that “no man in the kingdom has exercised a greater personal influence, or wielded more absolute power”, while the *New York Herald* (1870) called him “virtually the Pope of the Western Church”¹. Yet contemporaries were acutely aware that Cullen had spent the formative years of his life in Rome: even the liberal Swedish-language *Helsingfors Dagblad*, not noted for its coverage of either Ireland or Catholicism, began its obituary by reminding its readers that Cullen “left Dublin and went in his youth to Rome to study” (2 November 1878) and live for 30 years. He remained in many ways as much an Italian as an Irishman, preferring the language, devotions, and architecture of Italy to those of his native land. He worked hard to make the Irish Catholic Church more Roman, and consistently understood Irish politics through an Italian prism. Both did much to shape the development of modern Ireland and the worlds the Irish settled.

Contemporaries and historians alike have emphasised Cullen’s profound Romanità. The lord lieutenant of Ireland, for example, decried the appointment of “an Italian monk” sent by Rome to “Italianize Ireland”². This became a recurring theme of British critics: more than twenty years later, the Scottish doctor James Macaulay informed his readers that Cullen was “a trusty agent of the Vatican, who had lived many years in Rome, and is far more an Italian than an Irishman in spirit” (Macaulay 1873, vii). His Irish opponents took the same tack. Charles Gavan Duffy, who had clashed with the archbishop in the early 1850s, recalled that Cullen had undermined Irish nationalists such as himself because he was “unacquainted with Ireland”. In turn, Duffy continued, his opponents considered him “more of an Italian than an Irishman” (Duffy 1898, II, 82-83). The nationalist journalist and politician A.M. Sullivan flatly declared that Cullen’s “principles ... were formed in an atmosphere quite unlike that of Ireland” (Sullivan 1878 [1877], 226). This portrait spread abroad to countries such as Australia, where Cullen exercised an enormous indirect influence³. In 1850, for example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* observed that Cullen “in all but his patrimonial name was an Italian monk” (quoted in Molony 1969, 21).

The Conservative and Protestant *Dublin Evening Mail* declared him a “Roman of the Romans” (25 October 1878), while *The Times* of London summed up the prevailing view in its obituary, remarking that “there can be

¹ An undated clipping from the *Herald* sent to Cullen by Martin J. Spalding, the archbishop of Baltimore, on 22 December 1870, Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), Cullen Papers (CP), 321/7/2/56.

² Lord Clarendon to Lord John Russell, 8 December, 11 October 1850, Bodleian Library, Ms Clarendon dep. Irish vol.

³ For the scale of Cullen’s global ambition, see Barr 2008b.

no doubt that his ideas were deeply tinged by the impressions derived from foreign experience" (25 October 1878). For Cullen, the paper added, "Rome was everything" (quoted in Bowen 1983, 283).

Historians have followed this lead. In 1983, Cullen's first (and to date, only) biographer argued that the key to understanding the cardinal's character was to accept that he was not in any material way an Irishman. The secret, Desmond Bowen argued, lay in recalling Cullen's "total oblation to the militant mission of the popes that he served" (Bowen 1983, vii). Although Bowen's portrait was unremittingly hostile and widely criticized, his identification of Cullen as fundamentally Roman and Italian raised few eyebrows. This was certainly true of Australia, where John N. Molony's influential if tendentious thesis that Cullen was responsible for creating a "Roman mould" for Australian Catholicism had first been advanced in the late 1960s. Even before that, T.L. Suttor had described a transition in Australia to what he called a "Cullen Catholicism" led by Irish protégés who were "Romans first, Dubliners second" (Sutton 1965, 5). This became the fixed view in Australia: as T. P. Boland succinctly put it some years later, Cullen was "Roman in all things" (Boland 1997, 105). Recent scholarship both in Ireland and abroad has developed and complicated this picture, but not substantially altered it⁴.

Despite this, Cullen's Roman career has not received sustained attention. As *The Times* (25 October 1878) put it in an otherwise well informed obituary, "little is known" about Cullen's life before he became prominent in the political and ecclesiastical conflicts of the 1840s, and the situation has not significantly improved since 1878. In part this is a consequence of the failure of the Irish historical profession to provide a satisfactory biography. (That of Desmond Bowen, quoted above, was almost universally considered a failure) (Barr 2011, 428-429). But it is also a result of the fact that Cullen came to public prominence only after his appointment to Armagh in late 1849. There are exceptions: Cullen plays a major role in Donal Kerr's magisterial *Peel, Priests, and Politics: Sir Robert Peel's Administration in Ireland, 1841-46* (1982), while Anne O'Connor has examined the centrality of the Italian language in Cullen's career, Christopher Korten has written on his relationship with Mauro Cappellari, later Gregory XVI, and the present author has delineated Cullen's involvement in the ecclesiastical affairs of America, India, South Africa, and British North America in the 1830s and 1840s (Barr 2008c; Korten 2011; O'Connor 2014). Other studies mention his Roman career, but largely in passing⁵. Yet Rome was central to Cul-

⁴ For example, see the essays in Keogh, McDonnell 2011. For Australia, see Dowd 2008.

⁵ See, for example, three studies concerned with Britain's quest to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See: Buschkühl 1983; Flint 2003; Matsumoto-Best 2003.

len's life, thought, and later actions. This essay tells the story of his first and formative decade there.

Paul Cullen was born in Prospect, Co. Kildare, in 1803, and named after an uncle who had been shot by Crown forces in the wake of the bloody rising of 1798. His own father had been spared only by the intercession of local Quakers, who testified to his political loyalty (Bowen 1983, 3). Partly as a consequence, the young Paul was sent to the Quaker boarding school at Ballitore, which had once educated a young Edmund Burke. In 1816, already intended for the priesthood, he entered Carlow College in the diocese of Kildare & Leighlin. In 1820, it was decided to send him not to the national seminary at Maynooth, where his academic gifts might have been expected to earn him a free place, but to the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. There were likely three reasons for this decision, although only two are well attested in the surviving sources. First and likely foremost, his maternal uncle, James Maher, had been trained in Rome. It is likely that Maher recommended that his nephew follow a similar course, and he ultimately introduced him to the Propaganda. It is also likely that Italy represented a financial savings for the Cullen family, despite the significant costs of travel to Rome. As Paul pointed out to his father on his first letter home, the pension of 8 Roman Crowns a month (some £20 a year) included books and clothes, whereas even with a scholarship the living costs at an Irish seminary would be substantially more. Although the Cullens were prosperous farmers, Paul was quick to reassure his father that there was every chance he would be awarded a free place once several older Irish students returned home⁶. Finally, there is a perfectly plausible but unsubstantiated tradition that Hugh Cullen was unwilling to send his son to Maynooth on account of the oath of loyalty required of all entrants.

Whatever the reasons, since its reopening in 1814 the Urban College had become an established choice for ambitious Irish families with clever sons. When Cullen's uncle James was there, four of the college's 12 students were Irish, and the authorities began to consider capping Irish numbers⁷. Another pioneer was Francis Patrick Kenrick, who had arrived in the Urban College from Dublin in 1815 together with another young Irishman. After six years in Rome, he went as a missionary to Kentucky in the United States and eventually became bishop of Philadelphia and then archbishop of Baltimore, the leading American see. When Cullen arrived, Kenrick was one of five Irish-

⁶ Cullen to Hugh Cullen, 12 January 1821 (DDA/CP).

⁷ Diary of Patrick Francis Moran, 21 June 1871, Archives of the Archdiocese of Sydney (AAS). Moran was Cullen's half-nephew and took a close interest in his family's history with a view to eventually writing a biography of Cullen, which never appeared. He seems to have regularly questioned Cullen about his youth.

men in residence out of a student body of only twenty⁸. The Irish presence remained a constant throughout Cullen's time in the Urban College, usually hovering between 10 and 20 per cent of the *resident* student population (Korten 2011, 38). Unlike the English and Scots, the Irish had no national college in which to reside. There had been an Irish College in Rome – it was founded in 1628 – but it had passed through various vicissitudes before being closed during the French occupation, when it also lost its buildings. It would not reopen until 1826. Thus while the Propaganda's English and Scottish students lived in their own ancient establishments, the Irish resided in Bernini's splendid Palazzo di Propaganda Fide in the Piazza di Spagna.

This physical proximity to the daily workings of the congregation would prove to be the key to Cullen's personal and spiritual development. It would also provide the context for his own rise in the ecclesiastical politics of Rome, and later Ireland. He remained a Propaganda man until his dying day. Founded in 1622, the congregation's task was to inculcate and oversee the Catholic Church in those territories where the Holy See lacked official standing, and where Catholicism was persecuted, prohibited, or only grudgingly tolerated. By the early nineteenth century, these included not only traditional mission fields such as China, the Ottoman lands or the United Kingdom, but also Britain's growing empire and the United States of America. The Propaganda's control was total: under the Pope, it had complete, immediate, and direct authority over the church in a given mission territory; appointed bishops, and sometimes removed them; and reviewed, approved, refused, or altered all formal acts and decisions. As a result, the congregation received a constant stream of correspondence, visitors, petitioners, and students from all corners of the globe. From almost his first day in Rome, Cullen was at the very centre of what has been rightly referred to as the colonial office of the Holy See.

The co-location of the college with the congregation and the small number of students ensured an intimacy with both the low-level *minutanti* who staffed the Propaganda (and in time would lead it) as well as the more senior officials who oversaw it. The students mixed with them on a daily basis, seeing at first hand how the church administered its far-flung domains. They also had the opportunity to forge important relationships with both fellow students and potential patrons. For a young clerical student, study at the Propaganda offered unprecedented access to one of the church's most important power centres and its most influential personnel. No other Roman seminary was so integrated into a major congregation, nor offered such access to the papal bureaucracy. Perhaps just as importantly, it also offered a daily lesson in the universality and global reach of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁸ Cullen to Hugh Cullen, 12 January 1821 (DDA/CP).

Paul Cullen arrived in Rome on 25 November 1820 after a journey lasting nearly two months and, he calculated, “almost 2000 miles”. It had originally been intended that he should travel from London with a party making its way to the English College in Rome, but he was delayed on the Irish Sea and they left without him. He made his own way to Paris, where the rector of the Irish College there introduced him to an Italian doctor with a little English with whom he could continue his journey to Rome⁹. He enjoyed France, despite regretting his inability to converse or ask questions, and was impressed with the beauty of Lake Geneva – although he did feel it necessary to make a disapproving remark about the city’s history as the favourite residence of “Calvin & afterwards of the impious Rousseau”¹⁰. Cullen’s first sight of Italy was marred by the sudden death of the Italian, who collapsed at the top of the Alpine pass. The party was then obliged to stop “in this cold & dreary place” until the man could be buried. He was much more impressed with “the beautiful plains of Lombardy”, telling his father that “this part of Italy surpasses every thing you can imagine”. They continued through Milan, admiring the “beautiful cathedral” and visiting the tomb of Charles Borromeo. They entered the Papal States near Bologna – “a fine large town” – before passing into Tuscany, where Florence with “its most magnificent church” unsurprisingly impressed the young man¹¹. Although his first impressions of Rome itself are unfortunately unrecorded, this trip marked the beginning of Cullen’s love affair with an Italy where he would live with only short interruptions for the next thirty years, and continue to visit until just a few months before his own death nearly sixty years later.

Somewhat boldly, it seems that Cullen’s family had not secured his place in the Propaganda before he left Ireland. Instead, he relied on a letter of introduction from Archbishop John Thomas Troy of Dublin and the support of his uncle James. It was enough, and ‘a few days’ after his arrival Cullen was admitted as a ‘pensioner’ (that is, a fee paying student) in the Urban College. He was immediately impressed, even allowing for the somewhat formal nature of a first letter home. Every student had their own well-furnished room, he told his father, “and a servant to step in every morning and clean it up”. The food was plentiful, with each student enjoying at lunch “a bottle of good wine, soup, [and] two or three sorts of meat”. He was especially impressed with what he called the ‘raw bacon’ that was served on Sundays and holidays. It was, he assured his family, as easy to eat “raw as the Irish bacon boiled”. Cullen now dressed in the distinctive uniform of the Urban College, a soutane “made of black serge, trimmed all down the front with

⁹ Diary of Patrick Francis Moran, 26 August 1861 (AAS).

¹⁰ Cullen to Hugh Cullen, 12 January 1821 (DDA/CP).

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

red, buttoned across the breast with red buttons, & a red sash tied round the waist". Inside the palazzo, the students wore what Cullen referred to as "head caps like those at Carlow", while outside the uniform specified "a large three cocked hat". Rome enthralled the young Irishman, although his lifetime habit of epistolary restraint was already in evidence in his early letters home. Even so, he could not conceal his excitement when describing Carnival for his sister not long after he arrived. All along the Corso ("the finest street in Rome"), he told her, "all the inhabitants & strangers assemble the greater part of them masked". There they promenaded until just before nightfall, when a canon shot cleared the street before another signalled the launch of a herd of horses down the street. "You will wonder to hear", Cullen wrote, "the horses have no riders, but to make them go fast they carry leaden balls covered with spikes which serve in the place of spurs". "There is nothing", he concluded, "but amusement in the city till Shrove tuesday evening when they are obliged to lay aside all their sports"¹².

Rome had become and would remain Cullen's template for best practice in every aspect of ecclesiastical life, from theology to architecture. As he remarked on returning from his first visit home to Ireland in 1834, it was always with "pleasure [that] a traveller must enter this city, where every thing is quiet, and tranquil, where you cannot but be edified by the calm sober and religious conduct of the people, and where the mind is raised above human things and instructed by observing the said ceremonies, and by the greatness of every thing connected with the worship of the Almighty". Ireland paled in comparison, "I have never entered a church since my return to Rome, but the recollection of the poor miserable buildings destined to the purposes of Catholic worship in Ireland forced itself on my mind". One "could not avoid", Cullen somewhat undiplomatically told the archbishop of Dublin, "drawing a contrast between them and the sumptuous churches which adorn almost every town on this side of the Alps, and one is always forced to regret that we have nothing like them in our native country"¹³. He also admired the "perfect peace" consequent on the absence of Protestants, which he contrasted unfavourably to the unrest caused by Ireland's 'biblemen' who sought to "disturb the people's minds, or to persecute them for their religious opinions"¹⁴.

But what struck him most in Rome was the incredible diversity of the Propaganda, which in addition to the six Irishmen contained students from "every part of Asia and Africa". "Some of them", Cullen wrote home, "are Turks, some Armenians, Persians, Caldeans [*sic*], Greeks, Egyptians, and

¹² Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 5 April 1821 (DDA/CP).

¹³ Cullen to Daniel Murray, 13 April 1835 (DDA), Murray Papers (MP), 34/9.

¹⁴ Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 17 January 1828 (DDA/CP).

Arabians". When each spoke his own language, he marvelled, "one would be led to imagine that he was in the town of Babylon & not in a Roman college". This linguistic assemblage was exotic even by Roman standards, and became something of a tourist attraction for the "Romans and foreigners who are always here in great numbers". To gratify their curiosity, the Propaganda organised an "academy of the languages" not long after Cullen arrived. In it, the twenty students spoke in "no less than 20 different languages" for an audience that included cardinals, "the prince of Bavaria, the prince and princess of Denmark, and all the respectable Irishmen and Englishmen in the city"¹⁵. A similar 'academy' in 1828 saw the students publicly read a "short composition in his own language in praise of the holy Magi". At least 27 languages were represented¹⁶. It must have all felt a very long way from Prospect.

The mastery of foreign languages was central to the Urban College experience. The Propaganda's global reach meant that linguistic facility was highly prized by the congregation, and that was unsurprisingly reflected in its college. Cullen obviously needed to master Italian to function, but he was both a diligent student and a gifted linguist. Within six months, his uncle James Maher noted that he had already acquired "a good knowledge of Italian" and had set to work on Greek and Hebrew. (He would have had Latin from his schooling at Carlow, and perhaps Ballitore). At Maher's request, the college authorities allowed him to spend his entire first year on languages, delaying the start of his formal seminary training¹⁷. The significance of Cullen's fluency in Italian has been noted by a number of scholars, and in particular by the late Emmet Larkin¹⁸. But this has usually been in the context of his later career, when he used the language as a means of maintaining influence at the Propaganda after his departure for Ireland. More recently, the present author has traced how Cullen used his language skills in the 1830s and 1840s to facilitate his dual (and often conflicting) role as Irish agent to the Propaganda and the Propaganda's expert on English-language affairs (Barr 2008b). But to date only Anne O'Connor has specifically examined the importance of Cullen's immersion in what she called the "multilingual environment" of Rome (O'Connor 2014, 451).

Although O'Connor was primarily concerned with Cullen's use of Italian, her phrase catches a crucial point: Cullen was exposed to a bewildering cacophony of tongues, and not simply Italian and ecclesiastical Latin. This exposure was more than passive. Within a year of Cullen's arrival in Rome, James Maher boasted that Paul "will be the master of over eight languages

¹⁵ Cullen to Hugh Cullen, 12 January 1821 (DDA/CP).

¹⁶ Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 17 January 1828 (DDA/CP).

¹⁷ Maher to Margaret Cullen, 5 April 1821 (DDA/CP).

¹⁸ See, for example, Larkin 1980.

before he returns, for he has got an excellent memory for what he reads”¹⁹. In 1822, Cullen set himself to remedying the lack of French he had felt on his first journey to Rome²⁰. In 1826, he finished top of his class overall and won gold medals in several subjects, including Greek and Hebrew. He also began learning Syriac and Chaldean, and asked his uncle James to forward “a new Syriac Testament, which has been lately printed in London by the bible society”. It would be useful in his studies, he wrote, as the Propaganda’s version was “badly printed with confused characters” while the London text “though being printed by such a diabolical set of men” was reportedly “very correct” and beautifully printed²¹.

This multiplicity and diversity of languages became central to Cullen’s understanding of his faith. As he explained to his brother Thomas in 1828, it was a “fine proof of our Church” to see so many languages spoken in Rome by men “all professing the same creed”. “What we believe in Ireland is believed by inhabitants of Persia, of Chaldea, of Atheopia [*sic*] of Aegypt [*sic*], there is no difference at all between us”²². The Propaganda was at the centre of this unity in diversity, hosting students and visitors, housing in its library “books of all these different nations”, and printing scriptural and theological texts in as many languages as possible. Cullen was fascinated by the congregation’s linguistic and geographic reach. He boasted of the Propaganda’s long-standing interest in China, for example, telling Thomas of the “immense collection of Chinese books” and “the types for printing in this language” consisting of some “9000 Chinese letters”²³. Nor was Chinese the most exotic language Cullen encountered in the Propaganda. In 1845, for example, he helped facilitate the congregation’s publication of the Irish priest John Brady’s descriptive vocabularies of several western Australian languages (Brady 1845).

Cullen’s conflation of linguistic skill and piety was palpable in his description of the arrival in Rome of the famous polyglot Giuseppe Mezzofanti. “He speaks”, he told his sister Margaret, “no less than 35 or 40 languages, and speaks each language as well as the natives of every country” – or, in the case of Irish, much better than the natives. But what impressed him as ‘wonderful’ was that Mezzofanti united linguistic facility to “a great deal of erudition, and what is still better a great fund of Christian piety, and such a profound degree of humility, that he looks upon himself as if he were the last of men”²⁴. He was delighted when Mezzofanti took up residence in the

¹⁹ Maher to Margaret Cullen, 17 July 1821 (DDA/CP).

²⁰ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 10 August 1822 (DDA/CP).

²¹ Cullen to Maher, 4 March 1826 (DDA/CP).

²² Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 17 January 1828 (DDA/CP).

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 12 November 1831 (DDA/CP).

Propaganda and then charge of the Vatican Library. The experience of the Propaganda both encouraged Cullen's talents and taught him to value them as spiritually important.

But Cullen was not simply a gifted linguist. He also excelled academically, although in the Propaganda linguistic and academic achievement were often indistinguishable. While Cullen's letters are largely silent on the detail of his studies, the course appears to have been the standard one for the Roman seminaries. His near contemporary at the Urban College, Francis Patrick Kenrick, who was also clever and linguistically inclined, began his own studies with a course that ranged from rhetoric to formal logic and on to algebra before turning to sacred scripture and patristics. In his later years in the Urban College, Kenrick studied church history and moral theology in the morning and Hebrew and dogma in the afternoon. There was a heavy emphasis on Latin composition, and Kenrick seems to have learned Greek, French, and a working knowledge of Hebrew in addition to Italian (Nolan 1948, 19-27). The training in Latin was particularly effective: Kenrick became a noted Latinist and wrote both private correspondence and lengthy theological works in the language, while many years later Cullen gave two long and widely admired Latin speeches at the First Vatican Council.

If the details of Cullen's studies are obscure, the scale of his success is not. As early as April 1821, his superiors were "well pleased with him"; soon they assessed him as possessing a "superior talent"²⁵. His four gold medals in 1826 confirmed their opinion. In 1828, in front of an audience that included Pope Leo XII and two future popes (Gregory XVI and Leo XIII), Cullen concluded his academic career with a doctoral defence of 224 theses drawn from the whole of theology and ecclesiastical history. Leo's presence was a signal honour: as he told his father, "few Italians, less of any other nation, can boast of the Pope's presence on such an occasion; I believe no Irishman was ever honoured in this way". "You may then", he concluded, "boast that your son was the first among Irishmen who attempted to show his skill in theology in the presence of the Vicar of Christ"²⁶. At end of the defence the Pope not only congratulated the young man, but confided in him the details of the latest iteration of the British government's long-standing attempt to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See. As Desmond Bowen pointed out, the encounter marked the beginning of Cullen's career as the Vatican's expert on Irish affairs (Bowen 1983, 9).

The performance also cemented Cullen's reputation as the outstanding student of his generation, not simply in the Urban College but in Rome as a whole. As a fellow student noted, "Paul is the object of praise and adulation" (quoted in Korten 2011, 41). The Propaganda published his text and appointed

²⁵ Maher to Margaret Cullen, 5 April 1821 (DDA/CP); Korten 2011, 40.

²⁶ Cullen to Hugh Cullen, 25 January 1829 (DDA/CP).

him professor of Oriental Languages (Cullen 1828). More importantly, Cullen's piety, linguistic facility, and academic brilliance attracted the attention of Mauro Cappellari, since 1826 the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda. Cappellari himself had come to prominence in 1799 with the publication of *Il trionfo della Santa Sede* (The Triumph of the Holy See), an influential work notable for its ultramontanist and hostility to Jansenism. He became the protégé of Cardinal Francesco Fontana, from 1818 the cardinal prefect of the Propaganda. From 1820, Cappellari was a consultor to the congregation in which capacity Cullen seems to have known him reasonably well (Korten 2011, 37). His subsequent appointment as cardinal prefect gave him direct authority over the Urban College and put him into daily contact with Cullen, its top student. In 1829, Cappellari had been among the leading contenders in the conclave that elected the short-lived Pius VIII before emerging as the compromise choice in the extended conclave of 1830-31 (Reinerman 1979, 4-9).

From the late 1810s, and as Fontana had done before him, Cappellari began to deliberately gather a small group of talented protégés. Never more than a handful, they included Antonio Rosmini, who gained prominence as a controversial theologian and founded the Institute of Charity, and the Englishman Nicholas Wiseman, a future cardinal archbishop of Westminster. From at least 1828, Cullen became one of their number. What these men had in common was a combination of personal piety, intellectual precocity, and linguistic facility (Korten 2011). Cappellari was particularly attracted to the last trait, a pattern that continued after he was elected Pope. He patronized the learned Angelo Mai, for example, appointing him secretary to the Propaganda in 1833, and was close to Mezzofanti, elevating the somewhat unworldly linguist to the cardinalate along with Mai in 1838 (Korten 2011, 38-40).

Cullen's elevation from talented student to personal protégé of a rising cardinal had immediate consequences. As he explained to his uncle James Maher in 1829, his Irish bishop, James Doyle, wanted Cullen to come home to take up a chair in Carlow College. Doyle had taught the young man there a decade earlier and had kept the vacancy open awaiting Cullen's return. Cappellari was having none of it, and produced a range of reasons why Cullen could not possibly leave. These included the lateness of the season (it was October), the Irish weather, and Cullen's health. Even Cullen thought that some of his reasons were "not of great weight". More plausibly, Cappellari insisted that the Irishman was necessary to the successful completion of the Propaganda's projected Hebrew Bible. Cullen hoped that Doyle would understand that "the fault if there be any" fell entirely "on the shoulders of the Cardinal prefect of Propaganda"²⁷. As Christopher Korten has pointed out, Cappellari's willingness to interfere to keep Cullen in Rome was out

²⁷ Cullen to Maher, 10 October 1829.

of character; he could identify only one other instance of such favouritism (Korten 2011, 43). The admiration and affection was fully reciprocated. As Cullen told his uncle James Maher after Cappellari's election, the new Pope was "most affable, kind and obliging", while also "very learned, remarkable for his piety", "full of zeal for religion and indefatigable in his labours for the good of the church". Always kind before his elevation, he did not change after it and continued to treat his protégés "with as much humility as if he were one of his own lowest subjects"²⁸.

Cappellari's election also marked the apotheosis of the Propaganda within the Vatican bureaucracy. This was signalled by the choice of Gregory as his regnal name – the last Gregory had founded the Propaganda Fide in 1622. Although Gregory XVI was by most (but not all) measures a theological conservative, and certainly a political one, under him the Catholic Church began again to turn its attention to the extra-European world. Within the curia, that change was reflected in a re-balancing of power among the various congregations. Although the secretariat of state remained preminent, the Propaganda could and did resist encroachments, not least because so many of its officials and former students had direct access to the Pope. After a decade in Rome and not long after his ordination, Paul Cullen found himself at the centre of ecclesiastical power. He would remain there for the 15 years of Gregory's reign, an intimate of the Pope and trusted advisor on Irish affairs. By the time Gregory died in 1846, Cullen was embedded in the latter role.

In 1832, Gregory formalized his protégé's position in Rome by 'suggesting' that the Irish bishops appoint him as rector of the revived Irish College, which had tentatively reopened in 1826. Although he had watched its progress, Cullen had had relatively little to do with the College and had been relieved when it was agreed that those Irish students already at the Propaganda would not be compelled to transfer to it. He knew he was "better off" in the Urban College²⁹. After Gregory's elevation he took a closer interest, although he continued to see himself as a 'Propagandist' even after his appointment. The Irish College was a means of gratifying his patron and guaranteeing his residence in Rome. As he told his sister, "I was obliged to become Rector of the Irish College some months ago – but still I continue to teach a class of Scripture in Propaganda"³⁰. In time he would remake it into something very like the Urban College.

Cullen's first decade in Rome proved formative in several ways. His relationship with Cappellari obviously secured his position both in the curia and within the Irish Church: without that patronage, he would have re-

²⁸ Cullen to Maher, 30 April 1831 (DDA/CP).

²⁹ Cullen to Maher, 4 March 1826 (DDA/CP).

³⁰ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 20 September 1832 (DDA/CP).

turned to Ireland and a career at Carlow College. Cullen knew this and was properly grateful, remarking in 1831 that he had a “thousand reasons to be obliged to him for his kindnesses towards me”³¹. Cullen also made a wider and enduring network of friends and patrons in the Propaganda; taciturn in Ireland, he had a gift for friendship with Italians. One of Cappellari’s successors as cardinal prefect, Giacomo Fransoni, bequeathed Cullen his episcopal ring; another, Alessandro Barnabò, was so committed to Cullen that he threatened resignation to secure his translation to Dublin in 1852³². But the Propaganda’s influence on Cullen was more than simply practical. It shaped his ideas about theology, churchmanship, and politics, while giving him a love of Italian, a global outlook, and a model against which to measure everything from architecture to devotional practice. All of these continued to deepen or develop in the remaining 20 years he spent in Rome, but they were largely fixed by the time he left the Urban College.

That Cullen was shaped by the theology of papal Rome is obvious, but it has been little remarked on. He is not often credited with theological views, only administrative or devotional ones. This is not surprising: Cullen rarely reflected on explicitly theological issues, and his only known theological work was his doctoral defence. But his education was a theological one, and it remained with him to the end of his life. His mentor’s own views set the tone. This occurred directly through increasing contact with Cappellari himself, and indirectly through Placido Zurla, the prefect of studies at the Urban College from 1821 (Korten 2011, 38). Zurla and Cappellari had trained together as Camaldolese monks and remained life-long friends, and Zurla oversaw Cullen’s studies from almost his arrival in Rome. Christopher Korten has pointed out that elements of Cullen’s doctoral defence drew on similar sources and lines of argument as those used by Cappellari to attack liberal doctrines, especially on the scope and nature of Papal Authority (Korten 2011, 42). To Cappellari and those around him (including, in the 1820s, the Frenchman Félicité Lammenais), the papacy was the indispensable source and site of Christian unity and authority.

The importance of the papal office was central to the formation of students at the Urban College. In 1823, for example, Cullen’s near-contemporary Francis Patrick Kenrick clashed with his Dublin-based clerical uncle over a “theological treatise” in which he had rehearsed the arguments in favour of the “infallibility of the Pontiff *ex Cathedra*, and the plenitude of his Spiritual power”. In seeking to make peace, Kenrick reminded his uncle that he had been educated at the Irish national seminary at Maynooth “under French preceptors; I at Rome, whence we might not be expected perfectly to agree in opinions at issue between

³¹ Cullen to Maher, 30 April 1831 (DDA/CP).

³² See Larkin 2011, 20 and Diary of Patrick Francis Moran (AAS).

France and Italy”³³. In 1837, Kenrick published *The Primacy of the Apostolic See Vindicated*, which subsequently went through numerous editions and translations. Of the seven presentation copies, one went to Gregory XVI, another to the current cardinal prefect of Propaganda, Giacomo Fransoni, two to the scholarly cardinals Mezzofanti and Mai, one to Cullen’s contemporary Nicholas Wiseman, and one to Cullen himself. Only the future Cardinal Acton (the uncle of the historian Lord Acton) was outside the small circle that had formed around Cappellari and the Propaganda in the late 1820s (Nolan 1948, 230).

Kenrick soon expanded on his defence of the papal supremacy in a more formal Latin work, the *Theologia Dogmatica*, which began publication in 1838. Both Cullen and Angelo Mai were closely involved in its drafting, and Cullen reported regularly on its good reception in Rome. He was keen that the book be “introduced into Ireland” in order to counteract the more Gallican texts in use there³⁴. In 1870, it fell to Cullen to realise the ambitions of his Roman circle by drafting the definition of papal infallibility that was promulgated by the First Vatican Council. According to Christopher Korten, elements of Cullen’s great speech defending the doctrine “resonated with the ideas found in” Mauro Cappellari’s *Il trionfo della Santa Sede* published more than 70 years before (Korten 2011, 44).

Papal infallibility was not the only theology Cullen learned in Rome. He also absorbed Cappellari’s disdain for Jansenism and the moral rigourism associated with it. Cappellari and his circle were influenced by the moral theology of Alphonsus Liguori, an eighteenth century Italian theologian whose teachings rejected the puritanism of the Jansenists without quite embracing the flexibility of the Jesuits. As Gregory XVI, he canonized the Italian in 1839. Liguori’s influence can also be seen among the products of the Urban College, including Kenrick and Cullen. Long before he had completed his *Dogmatica*, Kenrick had turned his attention to a manual of moral philosophy. Published in three volumes in Philadelphia to 1843, Kenrick’s *Theologia Moralis* was distinctively Liguorian. It was also striking for its enthusiastic endorsement of sexual love: as Peter Gardella put it, Kenrick was the “first American writer to prescribe orgasm” and to insist on a woman’s right to sexual pleasure and a man’s duty to provide it (Gardella 1985, 9). This could not be found in Liguori, but Cullen thought the work “most useful”, urged its “general circulation”, and gave it to the Pope³⁵.

³³ Kenrick to Richard Kenrick, 3 March 1823, The American Catholic Research Center and University Archive (ACRCUA), The Catholic University of America, Francis Patrick Kenrick Collection.

³⁴ Cullen to Kenrick, 28 October 1839, Associated Archives St. Mary’s Seminary and University (AASMSU), Kenrick Papers (KP), 28 R13.

³⁵ Cullen to Kenrick, 18 January 1845 (AASMSU/KP, 28 S4).

A less surprising Roman lesson was a terror of revolution and a distrust of nationalism. Gregory XVI of course famously denounced freedom of conscience, the press, “bad books”, separation of church and state, sedition, revolution, secret societies, and anything else advanced by “shameless lovers of liberty” in *Mirari Vos*, his thundering encyclical of 1832³⁶. Gregory has consequently been seen as an unreflecting reactionary, which in many ways he was. But the encyclical was informed by the Pope’s experience of the unrest that plagued the Papal States in the late 1820s and early 1830s, and these were the same forces that shaped Cullen’s own life-long distrust of violent nationalism.

From the moment he arrived in the Italian peninsula, Cullen was acutely aware of its complicated and often violent politics – on his way to Rome in 1820, his travelling party fell in with Austrian troops marching to Naples³⁷. In 1821, he went with friends to look at a “German” army encamped outside Rome. He was impressed, telling his sister that the men seemed “well suited for war, of a fine stature, well made, but ugly black looking countenances”. He thought they would make short work of Piedmont, as “the Italians are such poor soldiers”³⁸. But what really agitated him were the secret societies that sought the unity of Italy and the overthrow of the temporal power of the papacy. In 1826, he described for his uncle James the execution of two “of those whom they call carbonari”. The men had murdered an informer and then met their own judicial deaths “in the most frightful manner possible”, being “so imbibed with the most horrible principles respecting natural and revealed religion that they disputed the whole morning before their execution against the truth of the Christian religion and the immortality of the soul”. Cullen – who seems to have watched – reported that one of the condemned refused to repent even as the blade fell³⁹.

The French revolution in July 1830 and its aftermath in Belgium, Poland, and elsewhere unsettled the Italian peninsula, while the premature death of Pius VIII in November made the Papal States especially vulnerable to rebellion. As Cullen reported home in December, “a few foreigners” had formed a conspiracy “shortly after the pope’s death” to seize Rome, “create consuls, and turn out the cardinals” who ran the government⁴⁰. Although the conspiracy was discovered in time, the delay in electing a new Pope left a power vacuum that ultimately precipitated (or at least facilitated) the revolution that began in Bologna on 4 February, just two days after Cappellari

³⁶ *Mirari Vos, On Liberalism and Religious indifferentism*, Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI, 15 August 1832, at <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>> (02/2016).

³⁷ Diary of Patrick Francis Moran, 18 December 1871 (AAS).

³⁸ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 5 April 1821 (DDA/CP).

³⁹ Cullen to Maher, 4 March 1826 (DDA/CP).

⁴⁰ Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 29 December 1830 (DDA/CP). The planned coup, in which several members of the Bonaparte family were implicated, was scheduled for 10 December.

was elected but before the news could reach the city (Reinerman 1979, 10). Unrest quickly spread, and within days most of the Papal States had been lost bar the territory around Rome itself. An attempted rebellion in the city was suppressed, but with difficulty. The papal government was everywhere in chaos, and Gregory himself faced utter ruin within days of his election. As Cullen put it, “Every thing in short was very alarming” until Austria’s intervention temporarily restored order. His family appears to have urged flight, but he was determined not to leave Rome “as long as I can be of any assistance to the Propaganda, or as long as I can render the least service to the Pope”⁴¹.

Cullen was not alone in thinking all this might have been avoided if internal rivalries had been put aside and Gregory elected earlier (Reinerman 1979, 10)⁴². But he reserved his real animus for those he called ‘liberals’ and the secret societies that he believed they had formed across Italy in the wake of the French revolution. “The maxims of these societies”, he wrote, “are of the worst description”: “Irreligion in its broadest sphere, the vilest hatred against the Catholic religion, and especially its supreme head the Pope, a desire to overturn all established authorities and to destroy all order seem to have been inculcated by them”⁴³. He thought that their members were mostly “hungry lawyers, half starved Physicians and surgeons and lazy, ignorant, broken down gentlemen”, who might “pretend to be lovers of liberty” but were in reality were “only thirsting after the posts which are occupied by others better than themselves”. If these “Italian liberals” ever secured power, they would “become the greatest tyrants upon the face of the earth”⁴⁴.

Cullen’s letters home could have been a first draft for *Mirari Vos*, where Gregory complained of both “the terrible conspiracy of impious men” and the “the insolent and factious men who endeavoured to raise the standard of treason”. Gregory cautioned the faithful against “certain societies and assemblages” that made common cause “with the followers of every false religion and cult”. “They feign piety for religion; but they are driven by a passion for promoting novelties and sedition everywhere. They preach liberty of every sort; they stir up disturbances in sacred and civil affairs, and pluck authority to pieces”. He noted the “destruction of public order” and “the fall of principalities” and predicted a coming “overturning of all legitimate power”. This “great mass of calamities”, Gregory wrote, “had its inception in the heretical societies and sects in which all that is sacrilegious, infamous, and blasphemous has gathered as bilge water in a ship’s hold, a congealed mass of all filth”. To Gregory, the only remedy was to fight against license of all kinds,

⁴¹ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 15 April 1831 (DDA/CP).

⁴² See Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 3 March 1831 (DDA/CP).

⁴³ Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 3 March 1831 (DDA/CP).

⁴⁴ Cullen to Margaret Cullen, 11 October 1830 (DDA/CP).

and to insist that “divine and human laws cry out against those who strive by treason and sedition to drive the people from confidence in their princes and force them from their government”⁴⁵.

Writing in 1964, Edward Norman claimed that Cullen had “no political theories, only religious and ecclesiastical ones” (Norman 1964, 10). In fact, Cullen’s most enduring political beliefs can be found in *Mirari Vos* and several other of Gregory’s early encyclicals: an understanding of nationalism as essentially irreligious, the product of secret societies bent on the destruction of the church; a concomitant belief that violent resistance to legitimate authority was illicit, no matter the pretext; a horror of the human consequences of war, which he believed no cause could justify; and a distrust of secular education and its consequences, which both he and Gregory labelled “indifferentism” and which they thought was the root cause of irreligion, treason, and rebellion. Both men agreed on the necessity of keeping priests from complicity in nationalist rebellion: in *Cum Primum*, Gregory rebuked the Polish clergy for their involvement in the 1831 “November Uprising” against tsarist Russia, a decision Eamon Duffy labelled a “great papal failure”; Cullen strove to prevent Ireland’s priests from supporting the Independent Irish Party and later the fenians, a campaign which saw him labelled an anti-national “Castle Bishop” and mocked by James Joyce (Joyce 2004, 33; Barr 2011, 418-20; Korten 2011, 182).

For the rest of his life, Cullen understood events in Ireland in the light of his experiences of 1830-31, and later 1848-1849. As he put it to his brother Thomas in March 1831, “I hope every thing is going quietly in Ireland. It is a dreadful thing to be in the middle of eternal alarms – and any thing should be preferred to a civil war. I hope therefore [Daniel] O’Connell will not drive his agitation too far, though I am anxious that he should obtain the repeal of the union”⁴⁶. In this Cullen never wavered: he was an Irish patriot, but not at any price. The trauma of 1831 was amplified by the experience of the revolution of 1848-49. As I have argued at length elsewhere, Cullen was shocked by the deposition of Pope Pius IX and the behaviour of those who caused it (Barr 2008; 2014). He detected the same forces behind it, blaming murderous, irreligious secret societies for the mayhem, although he also now saw England and Protestantism more generally as being complicit (Barr 2014, 136-137). He also extrapolated from events in Italy to events in Ireland, seeing the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini in the Young Ireland movement and in Irish nationalists such as Charles Gavan Duffy. As he wrote in 1853, the “young Irelanders desire to destroy all the power of the priests – they seem to act just as the Mazzinians did in Italy – Evviva Pio Nono just

⁴⁵ *Mirari Vos, On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism*, Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI, 15 August 1832, at <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>> (02/2016).

⁴⁶ Cullen to Thomas Cullen, 3 March 1831 (DDA/CP).

as they are going to crucify him"⁴⁷. Cullen's erroneous conflation of Young Ireland, Duffy, and the Independent Irish Party with Italy and Mazzini had profound consequences for Irish political development.

When the Fenians – a genuine secret society – emerged in the early 1860s, Cullen again saw Italy and acted accordingly. In terms that often echoed *Mirari Vos*, he denounced the fenians for both treason and irreligion. They were a secret society; their leaders were 'infidels', and mostly educated in Protestant or godless colleges; they were murderous, "alla Mazziniana"; and because they had no hope of victory, they could only bring death and destruction to Ireland (Barr 2014, 148-149). Pope Gregory would have agreed with Cullen's solution: clerical denunciation and state censorship. Comparing a free press to a 'poison', Gregory had written in 1832 that "Care must be taken lest the people, being deceived, are led away from the straight path"⁴⁸. In the 1860s, the fenians were systematically anathematized and Cullen privately urged the British prime minister, William Gladstone, to suppress "seditious" Fenian newspapers "which preach up treason and sedition from one end of the year to the other". Their "poison", he continued, "is brought home to poor unsuspecting people, and it would be strange if the evils produced were not widely spread". He pleaded with the prime minister to preserve Ireland from "the ravages of an infidel and revolutionary press"⁴⁹.

The extent to which Cullen's views remained those of Gregory XVI and *Mirari Vos* has not often been remarked on. This is for a good reason: Gregory's hysterical denunciations of 'liberals' and 'liberalism', which the young Cullen echoed, sit uneasily with Cullen's mature support for the British Liberal party and his habitually positive use of the term 'liberal' to describe government concessions and 'illiberal' to denounce government intransigence. But the disjunction is more apparent than real: Cullen was and remained a constitutionalist. He was "anxious" to see the repeal of the union, but only by legal means; in 1848, he hoped Sicily would be awarded its own parliament along the lines O'Connell had sought in Ireland (Barr 2014, 136); in Ireland, he worked to secure concessions through the political and legislative process.

Cullen also learned that there was a significant difference between a British and an Italian liberal, and British and Italian liberalism. Where he once would have said liberal, he came to say "Mazzinian", fenian, or "young Irishman" instead. In time Cullen also realised that the Catholic Church fared better in Protestant Britain or secular America than in many formally Catholic states. Many

⁴⁷ Cullen to Bernard Smith, 18 December 1853, quoted in Larkin 1980, 220.

⁴⁸ *Mirari Vos, On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism*, Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI, 15 August 1832, at <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>> (02/2016).

⁴⁹ Cullen to Gladstone, 12 March 1870, British Library, Gladstone Papers, Add. Ms 44,425, f. 243.

other Irish bishops did as well, including Francis Patrick Kenrick. Cullen never fully articulated this view, which would no doubt have been as incomprehensible to Gregory XVI as it was to Pius IX. But it is unlikely that he would have seen it as being inconsistent with their emphasis on the rights of the church or the deference due the state. But he also never retreated from Gregory's denunciations of secret societies, sedition, secular education and indifferentism, nor from the absolute insistence on what *Mirari Vos* called "the trust and submission due to princes"⁵⁰. Cullen never stopped seeing Ireland through a Roman lens. Times changed, and Cullen became a better and subtler politician than his mentor, but the continuities are more striking than the eventual differences.

Cullen took more than politics and theology from his first decade in Rome. In particular, his experience of the national, cultural and linguistic diversity of the Propaganda taught him to think on a global scale. In practical terms, it gave him the skills and connections necessary to create what I have elsewhere described as a Hiberno-Roman spiritual empire (Barr 2008b). As Fontana had created a group of protégés that included Cappellari, and Cappellari in turn a group that had included Cullen, Cullen built a network of his former students, relatives and Dublin diocesan priests who became bishops throughout the British Empire and United States. Many were trained in Rome. Most had excelled academically. All were loyal to Cullen. It was through these men that Cullen's preferences and prejudices, shaped in the Rome of the 1820s and 1830s, were spread throughout the English-speaking world and became normative. Beyond his undoubted importance in Ireland, this was Paul Cullen's most enduring achievement. It was also the most important consequence of his 30 years of residence in Rome. As Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper explained to its readers in 1875, Cullen had been "trained since boyhood in the Propaganda at Rome, [and] he is an Italian of the Vatican type" (quoted in Molony 1969, 21). He would not have disagreed.

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⁵⁰ *Mirari Vos*, *On Liberalism and Religious Indifferentism*, Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI, 15 August 1832, at <<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16mirar.htm>> (02/2016).

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Confounding the Garibaldian Liars: The Letters of Albert Delahoyde, Irish Soldier of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick and Papal Zouave in Italy, 1860-1870

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Abstract:

Albert Delahoyde was representative of the strong sense of Irish Catholic nationalism that inspired young Irishmen to volunteer to serve Pope Pius IX in 1860. His experiences aid us in understanding how the Irish viewed Italy during the nineteenth century, especially as his lengthy stay in Italy meant that he witnessed the completion of Italian unification in 1870. In the wider picture, the relationship between Ireland and Italy at this point in the mid-nineteenth century was one of lost possibilities. Despite a number of commonalities in the respective situations of Ireland and Italy, the events of the 1860s demonstrated how the two countries negatively impacted on each other, as, due to the transnational dimension of Catholicism, their respective causes could no longer remain the same.

Keywords: Delahoyde, Irish Soldiers, Italy, Letters, Papal Battalion of St Patrick

Dublin-born Albert Delahoyde was not yet nineteen years of age when he volunteered to fight with the Papal Battalion of St Patrick in Italy in 1860. While he has been practically forgotten by Irish history, his experiences in the 1860s are representative, not only of the Irishmen of the Papal Battalion and the later Papal Zouaves, but also of the transnational links between Italy and Ireland in the middle of the nineteenth century. Delahoyde exemplified the youthful sense of adventure, Irish patriotism, and strong Catholic beliefs that motivated many young Irishmen to volunteer to serve Pope Pius IX. In the wider context, the young Irishman's Italian experiences help us understand the Irish view of Italy and of Italians at mid-nineteenth century.

The recent collective work *Nation/Nazione* (Barr, Finelli, O'Connor 2014) examined how the nineteenth century Italian and Irish national movements and peoples interacted, observed, and influenced one another, an area that has witnessed a significant amount of recent scholarship. Furthermore, in her *Risorgimento* (2009), renowned historian Lucy Riall has asserted that one of the aims of Risorgimento scholarship is to establish the political and personal motivations of ordinary men and women who were involved in Italian unification. This essay adds to that scholarship by examining an ordinary Irish man who was involved in Italian unification, albeit in opposition, and whose experience in Italy provides an interesting case study in transnational history. In this essay, I firstly relate the background to the arrival of the Irishmen in Italy in 1860, before recounting briefly the short conflict that followed. I also discuss Delahoyde's service in both the Papal Battalion of St Patrick and the Papal Zouaves. I then move on to examine the letters themselves, in order to ascertain what they tell us about Delahoyde, the Irish soldiers in Italy, and the wider Irish-Italian relations in this period.

Italy at mid-nineteenth century was a patchwork of states and territories, one of which was the Papal States. In Ireland, the notion had been growing since the late 1840s that the Papal States and the Pope were surrounded by enemies in Italy. There was some truth in this assertion, and throughout the 1850s the rift between Italian nationalism and the Catholic Church continued to deepen. The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, under Prime Minister Count Camillo Cavour, had united with Italian states and duchies such as Tuscany, Parma, Modena, and Romagna by early summer 1860, thereby unifying a significant portion of northern Italy. As Pope Pius IX's territory now bordered the enlarged Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, he feared that the Papal States and possibly Rome itself would be next to be subsumed. Pope Pius IX believed that it was a matter of conscience to preserve intact the Papal States which had been committed to him, and to hand them on to his successor. To protect what he saw as his divinely ordained right, the Pope sent out a call for help to many of the Catholic nations in Europe in January 1860. Priests in all of these countries, such as France, Belgium, Spain, and Austria, preached the Pope's request from the pulpits, encouraging young men to travel to Italy in defence of their spiritual leader.

To this end, in late 1859 and early 1860, the Catholic Church in Ireland launched a campaign, called "The Last Crusade" by some, to raise awareness and assist Pope Pius IX in his fight against the forces working to unite the Italian peninsula (Cryan 2011, 23). This campaign developed in three distinct stages. Firstly, the Catholic Church attempted to make Irish Catholics aware of the situation in which their spiritual leader had found himself. They did this by organising large gatherings at which petitions were signed in favour of Pius IX and his ownership of the Papal States, and also by emphasising the fact that, in the eyes of the Irish Catholic Church, the Pope's

spiritual authority depended on his temporal sovereignty. In other words, the Papacy needed to be politically independent to ensure its spiritual independence. Secondly, the Irish bishops began a fundraising effort that eventually raised the impressive sum of eighty thousand pounds for the Pope, most of it being channelled to the Vatican via the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. The final chapter in their campaign involved the raising of an army, which included amongst its number the individual at the centre of this story, Albert Delahoyde.

At first the Pope was not that keen on having Irish soldiers as part of the Papal Army, as he feared antagonising the British government, who forbade their subjects to serve in any foreign army under the British Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819. He soon changed his mind, however, as the threat to his territory grew. In February 1860, Count Charles McDonnell, an Austrian of Irish descent, was sent to Ireland by Pope Pius IX in the hope of recruiting volunteers for the Papal Army that would attempt to defend the Papal States. McDonnell presented himself to the bishops of Cork, Dublin and Waterford, seeking their approval for his recruitment campaign. Many of the local clergy throughout the country became unofficial recruiting officers, preaching a message from the pulpits about the need for young Irish Catholic men to volunteer to support the Papacy in the upcoming struggle. A wave of patriotic articles, pamphlets and poems also appeared in the national press. In the end, about 1,300 Irishmen were recruited for the Papal Army, to be formed into a unit known as the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. Many more volunteered, but Papal Authorities were unwilling to accept more recruits than they believed they could equip and train in time. The men, travelling in groups of twenty or thirty, began to arrive in Rome from May 1860. On reaching Italy, they officially enlisted in the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. As well as the Irish, the Papal Army included nine other nationalities, all of which were under the overall command of a Frenchman, General Louis Christophe de Lamoricière (O'Carroll 2014, 73-95).

By July of 1860, the Italian nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi, and a force composed mainly of young men known as "The Thousand", had travelled from Genoa down the west coast of Italy, and taken the island of Sicily. Crossing over to mainland Italy, they fought their way up the peninsula, overwhelming the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies by September. Garibaldi then declared his intention to march on Rome, which was defended by French soldiers, an act that could have triggered a wider European war. On September 11, troops of the northern Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia invaded the Papal States in an effort to pre-empt Garibaldi before he could launch his own attack on the Pope's territories. The Piedmontese also aimed to take control of the south of Italy, thereby uniting the peninsula. The Papal Army volunteers' first engagement with the Piedmontese enemy occurred two days later at Perugia. The Papal Army, including about one hundred and fifty Irishmen under the com-

mand of Captain James Blackney, were vastly outnumbered, with the opposition comprising around twelve thousand men. Some of the city's residents opened one of the gates to let the Piedmontese soldiers in, thereby revealing their support for Italian unification. According to Patrick Keyes O'Clery, one of the first historians to write about these events, the Irish soldiers "true to their national character [...] did what they could to secure a continuance of the defence, but it was in vain. Sixteen of them cut their way out, rather than surrender" (O'Clery 1892, 192). The rest of the garrison was forced to capitulate, and the Papal troops were taken prisoner.

Four days later, the Papal Army, including three hundred and fifty Irishmen under Major Myles O'Reilly, fought against two and a half thousand Piedmontese troops at Spoleto. The soldiers withstood repeated attacks for fourteen hours, but were eventually forced to surrender. The most important engagement of this brief conflict took place at Castelfidardo on 18 September. The Papal Army was attempting to reach its base at Ancona, but was intercepted and subsequently defeated by seventeen thousand Piedmontese troops under the command of General Enrico Cialdini (Doyle 2010). Overall success in the battle for possession of the Papal States was assured for the Piedmontese army after their victory at Castelfidardo, as they "crushed the little Papal Army by mere brute strength and force of numbers" (O'Clery 1892, 219). After the siege of Ancona, the entire Papal Army surrendered. At this point, the Piedmontese marched south, avoiding Rome and its French contingent. Garibaldi yielded the territories that he had conquered to King Victor Emanuel II in October at Teano near Naples, and quietly went into temporary retirement.

As regards the Irish soldiers, the majority of them were marched to Genoa and held there as prisoners. A committee was formed in Ireland in September 1860 with the intention of gathering donations in order to repatriate the men back to Ireland. Meetings were held throughout the country in an attempt to raise subscriptions to this end. On 20 October, a Papal owned ship, the *Byzantine*, began to transfer the men from Genoa to Marseilles. From here, they made their way to Paris and on to Le Havre, where eventually a ship was located to take them back to Ireland. Most of the men of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick eventually arrived back to Ireland through Queenstown in Cork (modern day Cobh). On their return, they received a hero's welcome. Alexander Martin Sullivan of *The Nation* felt that "had those men been victors on a hundred fields they could not have been welcomed with more flattering demonstrations" (1878, 285). Trains took the men from Cork City to their various parts of Ireland. At every stop along the way, large groups of people turned out to see them. In the eyes of George Berkeley "they had made sacrifices not only for the Papal cause, but also for the cause of nationality in Ireland" (1929, 220). Albert Delahoyde however, was not amongst them, as he had remained behind in Rome.

Delahoyde had arrived on the Italian mainland in the early summer of 1860 as part of a group intent on enlisting with the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. He had been born in Dublin in 1841 to Robert and Frances Delahoyde and was christened in St Paul's Church in early October that same year. Little is known of his early life until he volunteered to serve in the Papal Battalion. He was educated at Clongowes Wood College near Clane in County Kildare. According to Irish Fenian John Devoy's *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, the Delahoyde family owned a pharmacy on Queen's Street in the Smithfield area of Dublin (1929, 264). On his way to Rome, he spent some time in Belgium, putting his linguistic skills to good use as an interpreter for many of the recruits gathering there from the various Catholic countries. Delahoyde was garrisoned in Ancona throughout the brief conflict between the Papal Army and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, spending his nineteenth birthday under heavy fire, which was his first experience of battle. After the fall of Ancona in late September, Delahoyde was captured with his comrades and later transferred from Genoa to Marseilles in anticipation of a return to Ireland. He chose, however, to return to Rome for the foreseeable future, along with approximately forty other Irish soldiers.

Delahoyde continued his military career in the service of the Papacy in Italy, joining the newly formed Papal Zouaves, and eventually becoming a Second Lieutenant in October 1862. The Zouaves had evolved from the Papal Army, remaining under the leadership of General Louis Christophe de Lamoricière, as part of the ongoing defence of the remnants of the Papal States. Delahoyde became a commissioned officer in 1864 and, as a result, he had a front row seat for the remaining milestones in Italian unification. He fought at the Battle of Mentana in November 1867 as part of the victorious Franco-Papal forces, which included roughly 200 new volunteers from Ireland, against Italian soldiers under Giuseppe Garibaldi who were making an attempt to take Rome. At this battle, he was slightly wounded and was later made a Captain in acknowledgement of his bravery. Delahoyde was also one of the leading individuals involved in the defence of the Porta Pia gate in Rome in 1870, commanding a company in the battle where the Italian Army finally took full possession of the city.

Delahoyde was a prolific letter writer during the ten years he lived in Italy. A number of these letters have survived, and are held at the National Library of Ireland in Dublin. The majority were written in 1860, but there are also letters from the remainder of the decade. Writing to George Berkeley in 1911, 6 years after Albert's death, his brother Dr John Delahoyde stated that Albert had intended his letters as a record of events in order to "confound the Garibaldian liars" (NLI Mss 13,280-13,287). In other words, he wanted to counteract what he saw as propaganda by various sources, mainly Italian and British, which had attempted to discredit the Irishmen who fought in Italy, both at the time and in the ensuing years. Delahoyde's communications are liberally sprinkled

with quotes in foreign languages, a longing for Ireland, religious references, and observations, usually negative and often quite prejudiced, about Italians. I now turn to these letters in order to assess what they tell us about the identity of Albert Delahoyde, what they reveal about the wider contexts of both the Papal Battalion of St Patrick and the Papal Zouaves, and about the contacts between Ireland and Italy in the mid-nineteenth century.

One of the most interesting aspects of Delahoyde's letters is how they showcase his ability with languages. Even at the tender age of eighteen, it was clear that he was already multilingual. In his first letter to his mother on 14 July 1860, he claimed that he spoke both German and French, the former a little more fluently. He also wasted no time in acquiring a knowledge of the Italian language on arrival at his ultimate destination. In July 1860, he spoke of the fact that "I have had no time to learn Italian but my ear is becoming familiarised" (NLI Ms 13,280). Only a couple of months later, in a letter on 12 September 1860 to a friend named Ned, he wrote that "the time for study is small; I'm afraid t'will be some time till I get a command of it" (NLI Ms 13,280). At this point, however, he had already started the habit of adding random Italian phrases to his letters, and this became more common as the 1860s progressed. Throughout the decade, he received letters in other languages, not just in Italian, but also in Spanish and French.

Clearly, Albert Delahoyde was an intelligent young man, with a natural ear for languages. In his linguistic ability, Delahoyde seemed, however, to have been more the exception than the rule. There were at least nine nationalities involved in the Papal Army, including Belgians, French, Austrians, Swiss, Poles and of course Italians. Delahoyde was acutely aware of the problems caused by the fact that the different nationalities could not communicate with each other, or at least struggled to do so. He told his mother that "with the Swiss we agree well but the men cannot talk the language" (NLI Ms 13,280). Unsurprisingly, apart from one or two individuals such as Myles O' Reilly, who spoke French and Italian, the majority of the Irishmen who travelled to Italy in the summer of 1860 could only speak English or Irish. This exacerbated the difficulties that the Irish had in understanding the other ethnicities with which they came in contact, both those they fought against and those they fought with. The ordinary citizens of the Papal States had similar issues understanding the Irish in their midst. There are a number of examples contained in the letters of Delahoyde and others of the astonishment and puzzlement of Papal State residents, both at the Irish taking the side of the Pope, and also at Irish culture and behaviour. This was to lead to a mutual antagonism between both groupings.

Another young Irish soldier, Martin Bulger, found himself based in the town of Macerata in the Marche. This individual wrote to Rector Tobias Kirby of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome in May of 1860. After angry complaints about the lack of supplies and accommodation for the Irish in

the town, he added that the problem was exacerbated by the fact that there was, perhaps unsurprisingly, only one local man in the town who spoke English. To add to Bulger's anger, he stated that "there is not one priest here that understands English" (Cryan 2011, 39). The difficulties in communication were so strong that Canon Lawrence Forde, mediator between the Irish of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick and the Roman hierarchy, produced an eleven page pamphlet in Italian. As Mary Jane Cryan informs us, "the pamphlet was meant to inform the Italian speaking authorities in the Papal government and Italian officers of the best way to treat the new arrivals" (Cryan 2011, 46-47).

Delahoyde was extremely interested in travelling and learning about other parts of the world. In a 24 July 1860 letter to his mother, he was disappointed to admit that he had seen very little of the Italian countryside. He further claimed that "one can live here almost as cheap as Belgium" (NLI Ms 13,280). It is obvious from his other writings that he was interested in learning more about the places he visited. Despite Delahoyde's multilingualism and interest in travel, however, his attitude towards many of the people with whom he came in contact in Italy was overwhelmingly negative, even allowing for nineteenth century racial attitudes. In the copious notes that he compiled during the writing of his work *The Irish Battalion in the Papal Army* (1929), George Berkeley was almost apologetic to the reader on behalf of some of the statements made by Delahoyde, partly excusing him due to his youthfulness and immaturity. In *Nation/Nazione*, Anne O'Connor has stated that there was a lack of understanding and empathy between the two countries of Ireland and Italy in 1860 (O'Connor 2014, 96-109). Delahoyde's attitude often supported this assertion.

An intense dislike of the Italians who lived in the Papal States is apparent from the first letters that Delahoyde sent home in July 1860. Delahoyde wrote that "the people are dirty looking and lazy, the lower class cheat you if they can, indeed I think that there is a great want of principle amongst the Italians comparatively with other countries, and Ireland in particular" (NLI Ms 13,280). In a rather bizarre statement, he further claimed that "the Italians are generally of a dark yellow hue like an old hen's leg" (NLI Ms 13,280). In many of his letters, especially those written in 1860, his first year in Italy, Delahoyde continuously compared Ireland and the Irish people with Italy and the Italians. Again, he was presumably speaking of those who lived in the territories controlled by the Pope, as it was here that Delahoyde spent the majority of his time whilst in Italy. He stated that he did not find Italian women attractive, and instead missed the complexion of Irish girls. Writing to his friend Ned in September 1860, Delahoyde elaborated on this theme, asserting that "our native Coleens they have genuine hearts but here there seems to exist a treacherous undercurrent" (NLI Ms 13,280). Another Dubliner in the Papal Battalion of St Patrick, Richard A. O'Carroll, propagated similar prejudiced sentiments, claiming that:

[...] you may imagine Rome is a grand place but I can tell you Ireland is far in preference to it. There is not a town I have ever seen yet equal to Ireland. The only thing I see is that this is a fine country for growing fruit, clear sky, very warm, and magnificent chapels [...] as for the people they are of a slovenly, lazy race, scarcely ever work. (NLI Ms 21,522)

Delahoyde and O'Carroll's attitudes were partly caused by the effects of living in a state of conflict, and by bitterness towards the perceived enemies of the Pope. Delahoyde described his regiment having rotten fruit thrown at them by the locals and claimed that "we are anything but liked by the lower class" (NLI Ms 13,280). For Delahoyde and O'Carroll, as indeed for other young Irishmen of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick, the unwelcoming reception that they received in Italy seems to have come as a shock. This was apparently exacerbated by the fact that it was the Italian people of the Papal States who were expressing this belligerence. In the eyes of Delahoyde and many other Irish soldiers, they had come to protect these people from the invading Piedmontese, but the citizens of the Papal States seemed to feel differently.

Relations between the Irish and the residents of the Papal States continued to be difficult, not simply because the Irish were in the region in the first place, but also due to the behaviour of some of them while they were there. A particularly troublesome bunch seem to have been a group of young men from County Kerry, known rather unimaginatively as "the Kerry Boys", who had, claimed George Berkeley, "been sent out of their parish by their priest because he wanted to be rid of them" (1929, 21). Another veteran, A.J. Abraham, also asserted that the Kerry Boys had been sent out to Italy because their local bishop wanted to be rid of them. He further claimed that these men were "so ignorant that when they had serviettes on the dinner table asked what the towels were for, and when helped to salad said that they didn't eat raw cabbage" (Cullen Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives [DDA], 274/12/II/7)! This individual also stated that "some of the Kerry men sold their old clothes and got drunk and we had a lot to do to keep them quiet". Delahoyde himself briefly addressed the issue of Irish-Italian interaction as he described an afternoon spent in a Roman square in 1861. According to him, this consisted of "Paddy amusing himself in the Piazza Santa Maria beside the Cathedral at his favourite football [...] [the people of the Papal States] could not understand our kicking a football under a sun which kept them indoors" (NLI Ms 13,280). It appears that the Irish soldiers were unaware both of the dangers of sunstroke and the benefits of an afternoon siesta!

There is minimal evidence of more positive Italian attitudes towards the Irish soldiers during their stay in Italy. Delahoyde spoke of leaflets which had been scattered all around the barracks at Ancona where many of the Irish soldiers were based during the brief conflict. He was angry that the individual who had distributed these must have somehow managed to make his or her

way into the barracks, as they were clearly not spread by a supporter of Pope Pius IX. The letter, which was written in poor English, attempted to make common cause with the Irish against the Papacy. It was addressed from “the Italians to their Brothers of Ireland”, and asserted that the Irish had been misled by those who had sent them to Italy. It urged the Irish to unite with them against the Pope who was “usurping a temporal power that God did not appoint”. The letter ended with the words “Viva Italy – Viva Ireland – Viva the union of the true followers of Christ” (Cryan 2011, 51-52). The letter was not well received amongst the Irish but it is interesting, as it is indicative of the potential for an alliance between the Irish and at least some Italians. This, however, was the exception rather than the rule.

Clearly, there was both a lack of mutual understanding and strained relations between the Italians of the Papal States and the Irish in this period, as well as the Irish and their enemy the Piedmontese. This was apparent both in the Papal Battalion of St Patrick and later the Papal Zouaves, but also in the wider nineteenth century world. The mutual contempt between the Irish and Italians, specifically those from the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia and the Papal States, comes through clearly from the letters of Delahoyde and his colleagues. Clearly, the wider cultural differences between the Irish and these Italians, and in the broader view the citizens of Ireland and Italy, were exacerbated by the bitterness of a military campaign. Anne O’Connor has stated that this animosity was not just ideological, but was a result of the Irishmen’s experience in Italy. This was true on both sides. The Papal province of Romagna had already voted for annexation to Piedmont-Sardinia, and the remaining citizens of the Papal States had made clear their opposition to Papal rule, dependent as it was on the presence of a French garrison. The Irish were part of a force that stood in the way of the incorporation of the Papal States into a united Italy, therefore discontent with the Papal Army and its Irish soldiers was understandable. In part perhaps to counter this animosity, a growing sense of Irish patriotism and national pride was developing amongst many of the men of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. Anne O’Connor has written of how the Papal Battalion was viewed as an outlet for Irish nationalism, and a training ground for future military ventures in Ireland (O’Connor 2014, 96-109). This was another topic on which Delahoyde had much to say.

Delahoyde spoke in glowing terms of the Irish soldiers in the Papal Battalion of St Patrick on numerous occasions. In a letter to his mother on 14 July 1860, he claimed that “when properly organised we hope to march on Rome, and I hope we will show, if necessary to Garibaldi and Co. that his chasseurs are no match for Erin’s hardy sinews” (NLI Ms 13,280). Delahoyde stated that General Louis Christophe de Lamoricière took a special interest in the progress of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. According to him, the General “seems to expect a scrimmage soon. He must take great interest in us, as he has

reviewed us four times already, a thing he never does with the other troops” (Ms 13,280). In early August, Delahoyde asserted that “upwards of a hundred have got arms and turn out every day for target practice. They are very willing, and often drill in their room without orders . . . We are in first-rate order” (Berkeley 1929, 74). He further stated that the Irish soldiers had received much praise from the Papal Army leaders for their performance in the battle at Perugia, which was the first encounter between Piedmontese forces and the Papal Army. In a letter to his mother on 19 September, which was published in the nationalist newspaper *The Nation* the following month, Delahoyde informed her that “the General regrets extremely the want of Irishmen, he was astonished at their conduct yesterday [. . .] he has even said he’d give all his Swiss and natives for 5,000 Irish” (NLI Ms 13,280). He further elaborated by claiming that the Italians and Swiss of the Papal Army refused the order to charge the enemy, and that instead it was left up to the Irish and the Franco-Belgians, as he terms them. Even two years after the end of the brief conflict, writing to his brother Joe from Rome in January 1862, Delahoyde made the claim that “the King of Naples I believe is resolved to have Irish troops if ever he gets his states again” (NLI Ms 13,280). The young Dubliner was clearly proud of the Irishmen in the Papal Army and the later Papal Zouaves, and especially of the positive image that they bestowed upon the country.

Participation in the war generated by the Italian movement for national unification fostered a level of Irish national pride for many Irish soldiers, at least on some level, as it allowed briefly the establishment of a de facto, though limited, Irish army. This is a claim supported by others, such as Captain Frank Russell, who commanded the Irish soldiers in Ancona and revelled in their immense bravery when he asserted that the “sons of St Patrick had retired only when all further advance was impossible” (Berkeley 1929, 198). A.J. Abraham wrote that “you can scarcely imagine the sensation of joy I felt as we followed the band, proud of being with the first to be sworn in for the defence of the Holy See. On every side you looked you saw happy faces” (Cullen Papers, DDA, 274/12/II/7). The events of 1860 in Italy were an expression of this national sentiment and identity, not just for the Irish soldiers who fought in Italy, but also for many of the Irish people at home in Ireland. This would be further exemplified by the fact that a small number of the Irish soldiers who had fought for the Papal Battalion of St Patrick later became members of the Fenian movement on their return to Ireland, as also, in much greater numbers, did some Irish veterans of the American Civil War. This sense of Irish national pride was also very apparent in the letters of Delahoyde through his use of language, his expressions of patriotism and pride in his fellow soldiers, but most of all, his Catholic faith. His strong religious beliefs were shared not only by a large portion of his fellow Irish soldiers, but also by those left at home in Ireland who had supported the endeavour from the outset.

Of all the topics that were discussed in the letters of the men of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick, by far the most prevalent was, unsurprisingly, religion. Delahoyde's writings provided ample proof of his strong Catholic faith. They were littered with religious references, and he spoke often of praying for himself and other members of his family. In a letter written to his mother from Ancona, he enclosed a set of rosary beads which he had been using himself. He also informed her that he had received, from an unknown source, "a coral rosary blessed by the Holy Father, with a cross having attached a plenary indulgence if kissed at the hour of death" (NLI Ms 13,280). Delahoyde regularly attended Mass during his time in Rome, on one occasion in 1861 to commemorate the first anniversary of the battle of Castelfidardo. Writing to his brother Joe from Rome in January 1862, Delahoyde told him that "I will try for the piece of the true cross and I am almost certain of getting it" (NLI Ms 13,280). As there was no further mention of this relic in his letters, we must conclude that he was unsuccessful in his quest.

Delahoyde's tone remained religious throughout the 1860s, but became increasingly more fatalistic as the battles and the decade progressed. In 1860, he stated that he was fearful for his safety "however God's will be done [...] may God bless you and all at home". His tone unsurprisingly became more despondent as the battles progressed, and writing again to his mother in September, he stated that "I fear few of us will live to tell the tale" (NLI Ms 13,280). In a document that George Berkeley named the Mentana Letter, Delahoyde wrote again to his mother on November 8, 1867. He described the scene in a church in Rome which had been ravaged by the Italian Army – "everything plundered, the altar furniture, crucifixes too, smashed and burned, a scene which brought tears to all our eyes [...] God send us happier times for indeed his hand has been heavy on us". Writing to his sister Mary from Monte Rotondo in 1868, he stated simply that "Death is busy everywhere" (NLI Ms 13,280). Before the final battle for Rome in 1870, Delahoyde's tone had become extremely depressed, and it appears that he felt that he would not survive. Again writing to his mother, he stated that:

I cannot say if Divine Providence will spare me in this my third campaign but I am quite resigned to accept death, if such be the Divine Will [...] even should I be called I shall be happier above than here, and God knows we have not much reason to regret this world which for us has not been one of pleasure. (NLI Ms 13,280)

The positive and upbeat young man of 1860 had been replaced with one cognizant of his own mortality and sensing his impending doom after ten years of intermittent warfare.

Contemporaries of Delahoyde also exhibited a strong religious tone in their communications. Richard O'Carroll spoke of a scene in Spoleto where the local priest said mass for the soldiers. He described a shrine "and in it was

a splendid figure of the Blessed Virgin interceding for all sinners to heaven, it is a splendid sight". He visited only Catholic sites during his time in Rome, and proudly described seeing Pope Pius IX in person on a number of occasions. O'Carroll was confident that "God will bless our undertaking with success" (NLI Ms 21,522). Aloysius Howlin, who fought at Perugia, stated that "we had tried as well as we could to defend the rights of the Church, in one word we had fought for the Pope and for Catholic Ireland, that was enough" (NLI Ms 13,282). In a letter reprinted in *The Nation* in October 1860, another soldier, Patrick Clooney, claimed that "by the help of God all we have gone through for Pius the Ninth will yet be told you". Writing about the Papal Battalion of St Patrick over half a century later, another veteran, Michael Smith, was very defensive of the cause for which he had fought. In a letter to George Berkeley, he stated that "I regret to learn at this late date that any reflection should be cast on any of the Papal Brigade who fought for God and right [...] I was fighting to defend my faith and to uphold the temporal power of Pope Pius IX". He described the Papal Battalion of St Patrick as "that noble band of men who fought for their religion and expected no recompense for their services on this side of the grave" (NLI Mss 13,280-13,287). Other writings by men of the Papal Battalion expressed similar sentiments to these.

Clearly, Irish Catholic identity was one of the main reasons why Irishmen such as Albert Delahoyde travelled to Italy in 1860 to join the Papal Battalion of St Patrick. It was also an important reason why a number of Irish soldiers, including Delahoyde, subsequently spent many years in the service of Pope Pius IX as part of the Papal Zouaves. Yet, obviously it was not the only reason. Faith did not rule out other motivations for enlisting. The aid given by the same Pope to the starving Irish during the Great Famine of the 1840s left many of them grateful and feeling that they owed him their lives. The fact that the Irish had a long and proud tradition of fighting on foreign fields was another reason for volunteering. Anger towards Britain also played its part, exacerbated by anti-Catholicism and anti-Papal sentiments in the British press, along with the British support for Garibaldi. There is a possibility that Delahoyde included the British in his list of 'Garibaldian liars'. Some British newspapers, such as *The Times*, saw those in the Papal Army as gullible and naïve, often celebrated defeats for those fighting for the Papacy, and even claimed that the Irish were cowards who had readily surrendered. In fact, the British, eager to assist any movement that would weaken the Catholic powers of France and Austria on the European stage, unofficially backed the Italian unification movement. They appeared neutral, but in reality supported Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily and southern Italy with their navy.

Catholicism, however, was certainly the most important factor in many of the Irishmen's decisions to join the Papal Battalion of St Patrick, and later the Papal Zouaves. Whilst this was predominantly for spiritual reasons, there was also a political motive for many of the men. This involved the protection

of the Pope's temporal sovereignty, as many of the Irish soldiers believed that the earthly power of the Papacy was linked to its political independence. It is also interesting to observe that, though the opponents of the Irish during the brief conflict in Italy were also Catholics, this fact does not appear to have caused many of the Irishmen to doubt the legitimacy of the endeavour. Neither did this fact lead Irish people in Ireland to support fellow Catholics in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia or those in the Papal States who wished to be part of a united Italy. It is clear from the widespread show of support at home, including the raising of eighty thousand pounds less than a decade after the Famine had ended, that the eyes and support of Irish Catholics were concentrated solely on Rome and the Papacy.

The fall of Rome in 1870 was the final act in the long and complicated process of Italian unification and signalled the end of Delahoyde's soldiering career. Soon after he left the Papal Zouaves and returned to Ireland. In 1871, while living back in his hometown of Dublin, Albert Delahoyde wrote to Monsignor Tobias Kirby, Rector of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome, seeking the pension to which he believed he was entitled from the Papal Authorities. In this letter, he informed Kirby that the majority of his remaining family had emigrated to the United States in June 1871, where soon thereafter they had met with tragedy. Delahoyde's 16 year old brother Robert had drowned shortly after the family's arrival in America. The former Papal Battalion of St Patrick soldier and Papal Zouave was extremely concerned about his late sibling's soul, but consoled himself with the fact that "his last act in Ireland was to make his long delayed First Communion. So I hope Almighty God did allow it, in mercy to him as he had not been reared to obedience" (Pontifical Irish College [PIC], The Kirby Collection [KIR/1871/169]). Even at this late date and after all the setbacks and defeats that had come his way in defence of his religion, Delahoyde appeared to have never wavered in the strength of his religious convictions.

Shortly thereafter, Delahoyde received a position in the Indian mail service, with the duty of travelling with the post from London to Brindisi. At this point in the nineteenth century, mail for India would leave London by train, cross the channel by ferry, and then continue by train across France and Italy until it reached the heel of Italy. Here at Brindisi it would be loaded onto a ship bound for Bombay. Delahoyde travelled this route helping to guard the mail until his retirement. It appears that he married at some point and had at least two children, but again, as with many of the events of Delahoyde's life, details are sketchy. After retiring in 1890, he lived quietly in London until his death at the relatively young age of 63 in 1905. It is fair to say that Delahoyde was emblematic of the many young Irishmen who volunteered to fight in Italy in 1860. His youthful sense of adventure, Irish patriotism, offensive views on the Italians with whom he came in contact, and, most of all, his strong sense of Irish Catholic identity, were characteristics many of the soldiers of the Papal Battalion of St Patrick possessed. In other

ways, however, Delahoyde was an exception. His lengthy stay in Italy and his service in the Papal Zouaves meant that he witnessed the completion of Italian unification, unlike the majority of his Papal Battalion colleagues. His multilingualism and interest in travel also marked him as exceptional, since most of the Irishmen who travelled to Italy in the summer of 1860 could only speak English or Irish, and exhibited no desire to stay in Italy following their service in the Papal Battalion of St Patrick.

In the wider picture, the relationship between Ireland and Italy at this point in the mid-nineteenth century can be said to have been one of lost possibilities. Ireland and Italy had a number of commonalities by the early 1850s. They both sought independence from a dominant neighbour (Britain and Austria), both were attempting to construct a collective national identity, and both were overwhelmingly Catholic. The events of the 1860s in both Ireland and Italy demonstrate how the two countries negatively impacted on each other, however, as, due to the transnational dimension of Catholicism, their respective causes could no longer remain the same. Instead, they took up opposing positions – the anticlerical Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia and the later Italian Kingdom versus the most prevalent Irish version of nationalism and identity which embraced Catholicism. The difficulties encountered in understanding the wider cultural discrepancies between Ireland and Italy in the 1860s contributed to, and exacerbated, instances of prejudice on both sides, not just for the soldiers, but also for the Irish and Italian peoples as a whole. The interaction between the two countries and the two national movements at mid-nineteenth century was, therefore, sadly quite negative, as is clear from the surviving writings of Albert Delahoyde, a remarkable, and hitherto relatively unknown, young Irishman.

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John Hogan in Rome, 1824-1849

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Abstract:

John Hogan (1800-1858) was a sculptor who began his career by studying the collection of plaster casts of Vatican marbles in Cork. He moved to Rome in 1824 where he was deeply influenced by the neoclassical sculpture of Antonio Canova and Bertel Thorvaldsen. His period of greatest activity was the 1830s and 1840s. Nearly all his work was for Irish patrons and he returned regularly to Ireland for commissions. He carved ideal and religious subjects, memorials, portrait busts and figure monuments. His most important themes were drawn from Catholicism and Irish nationalism. He was deeply committed to the papacy and to the constitutional Irish nationalism of Daniel O'Connell. He lived and worked near the Corso in Rome and was well regarded by his peers. After the Roman revolution he returned to Ireland in 1849 where he died in 1858.

Keywords: Canova, Catholicism, Hogan, Irish Nationalism, Rome, Thorvaldsen

On Palm Sunday, 1824, the Irish sculptor John Hogan, aged twenty-three, arrived in Rome and lodged at 132, via Trattorina. His arrival was the outcome of years of preparation in Cork. He was born on 14 October 1800 in Tallow, County Waterford, where his father, a Catholic, was a builder. The family moved in 1801 to Cork, which was enjoying a building boom during the Napoleonic wars when it was a supply centre for the British navy. His mother, uncharacteristically for the time, came from an upper-class Protestant landed family and she forfeited her status when she married. Hogan received a sound basic education and is said to have excelled at history and mathematics. His letters read well. He was initially apprenticed to a Cork solicitor, Michael Foote, but his real interest lay in architecture, drawing and sculpture. His father was foreman to the rising Cork architect Thomas Deane and through this connection the young Hogan was apprenticed to Deane in 1818. There he was employed drawing plans, making architectural models and carving ornament, mainly in wood, for Deane's architectural requirements. In Deane's employ-

ment he replaced the Cork sculptor Thomas Kirk who went to Dublin to pursue his career (Atkinson 1858, 506).

Hogan acknowledged that it was his early work for Deane which allowed him to develop as a sculptor. He acquired a mastery of carving in pinewood and Deane promised to send him to Italy to learn marble figure carving for architectural applications. However this did not happen, and Hogan might well have remained as one of the many artisan carvers who flourished in Cork in the nineteenth-century had he not encountered the large collection of plaster casts of antique marbles from the Vatican. These casts had been assembled under the direction of Antonio Canova (1757-1822), the principal sculptor in Europe, at the request of Pope Pius VII, and sent to the Prince Regent (future King George IV) as a gesture of gratitude to Great Britain for its defeat of Napoleon who had invaded the Papal States in 1798. Pope Pius VI had been captured, dying in France, and his successor Pius VII was a prisoner of Napoleon for five years. The Prince Regent, on a visit to Cork in 1818, donated the casts to the city (Murphy 2010, 43), through the representations of Lord Ennismore, a collector. Thus the young Hogan benefited from the aftermath of the Napoleonic occupation of Rome. The conservative counter-revolutionary restoration in Rome was evident in the policies of Pope Leo XII and Gregory XVI and Hogan's subsequent religious statuary can be seen as a visual dimension of the Catholic restoration in Rome.

The collection of casts included the Laocoon, Niobe, Apollo Belvedere, Ilysius, Medici Venus, Venus of Canova and his portrait of Napoleon's mother, Antinous, Adonis, Piping Faun, Hercules and Diana. It was a selection that showed the best of the antique seamlessly continued into the work of Canova. The collection was taken over by the Cork Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts, and displayed in a converted theatre in Patrick Street, Cork. Hogan studied there and a fellow student was Daniel Maclise who was to have a highly successful career in London. Between 1821 and 1823 while working for Deane Hogan drew from the casts and carved copies of details. He also attended classes in anatomy for artists by Dr Woodroffe and carved a skeleton in pine (Petrie 1840, I, 193-196).

The first commission that Hogan received was to be symbolic of the direction of his future career. Dr. John Murphy, Catholic bishop of Cork since 1815, was a learned man who like many Irish bishops had travelled on the continent. He commissioned Hogan in 1822 to carve twenty-seven figures of saints for St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Cork. This included a bas-relief altar frontal of the "Last Supper" after Leonardo (Crawford Gallery). At this time the Catholic Church in Ireland was just emerging from difficult times and Catholic Emancipation was only to come in 1829.

The young sculptor might never have gone to Rome if his talent had not been identified and his case promoted by William Paulet Carey, artist, dealer and art journalist (Carey 1826). By chance Carey saw a number of Hogan's carvings in

the art school, among them carved copies of the casts. Carey published articles praising Hogan's talent, and through Carey, Hogan received patronage from Sir John Fleming-Leicester of Nether Tabley House, Cheshire, England, a cultured art collector who had been to Rome on the Grand Tour. Through contact with Carey, recorded in their correspondence (Turpin 1982a, 28-38) he received further patronage from the Royal Irish Institution (a society of noblemen and other art lovers founded in 1814, based in Dublin). Hogan exhibited there in September 1823 and the Institution gave him funds to travel to Italy. Having set his sights on travelling to Rome, Bishop Murphy, William Crawford, the Earl of Shannon and Colonel Aldworth in Cork all subscribed to send him there. The Cork Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts, led by William Beamish, gave him a certificate endorsing his progress in drawing and sculpture through studying the cast collection. Again through Carey, the Royal Dublin Society voted him £25. Before he left he received two commissions to be executed in Rome, one from Deane, and another from Fleming-Leicester. Since papal Rome was Hogan's destination, Bishop Murphy his patron wrote a public testimonial in Latin, dated 12 January 1824. This was a useful endorsement for a sculptor whose work was to be closely connected with the Catholic establishment.

En route to Rome he stayed briefly in London where he responded more to the Rococo sculpture of Roubilliac and Rysbrack than to the Neoclassicism of John Flaxman. Nor did he care for the Greek severity of the Elgin marbles. He met the sculptor Francis Chantrey who disapproved of study in Rome as he favoured realistic modern dress, not antique dress, in portraiture. On the way to Italy Hogan visited the Louvre, and also Florence where he would have seen masterpieces by Donatello and others. While he had attained great technical fluency, mainly through his practice as a wood carver, his taste had not yet settled in a clear direction.

Irish artists had continuously travelled to Rome during the eighteenth-century: it was the centre of European art since the High Renaissance and it was also the cradle of the neoclassical revival since the middle of the century, stimulated by the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Rome attracted the nobility and gentry of northern Europe on the Grand Tour. Among these from Ireland were the first Earl of Charlemont, Joseph Leeson Lord Milltown and the Earl-Bishop of Derry. Some Irish figure painters who studied in Rome were Jacob Ennis, James Barry, Matthew William Peters, Robert Fagan and Hugh Douglas Hamilton who spent nine years in Rome and became a friend of Canova. Irish landscape painters in Rome included Solomon Delane, Robert Crone and James Forrester (Ingamells 1997, 1061-1070). The Irish sculptor Christopher Hewetson (1737-1799) spent thirty-three years in Rome and was a friend and rival of Canova. He had considerable success making busts of visiting Grand Tourists and secured papal patronage in making a bust of Pope Clement XIV. His most important work was his memorial to Provost Baldwin, installed in Trinity College Dublin in 1784. This was the first major monument in the

neoclassical style in Ireland. The fact that Hewetson spent his entire career in Rome would have been an example for Hogan. The Napoleonic wars had ended the Grand Tour for the nobility as travel was restricted (Murphy 2010, 47-51).

When peace was restored, Rome remained a major attraction, particularly for sculptors who were committed to the neoclassical style and the study of antiquity. They usually stayed there for only a few months, often supported by benefactors at home. James Heffernan who began in Cork carving ornament for the architect Michael Shanahan visited Rome for a short time. The Royal Dublin Society sent its two best sculpture students Constantine Panormo and John Gallagher to study in Rome in the 1830s. Joseph Kirk was there in 1843 and Patrick McDowell in 1841. It is likely that Hogan met these sculptors. Thomas Farrell went to Rome in 1852 to select marble, and in 1852 James Cahill was there before he returned to become Hogan's Dublin assistant in 1853. None of these made their home in Rome (Strickland 1968 [1913], I and II).

Neoclassical ideals in sculpture were publicised by the German art writer Johann Winckelmann who defined the aim of art as "noble simplicity and silent grandeur" (Winckelmann 1755 in Holt 1958, 351). This was an emphatic rejection of the dynamism of the Baroque and Rococo styles. Austere ideals, based on a renewed study of the antique, were to transform European art, especially sculpture and architecture. In Rome the Venetian sculptor Canova was to dominate sculpture from the 1780s and had a great influence across the continent. North European sculptors like Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844), who arrived from Copenhagen in 1797, studied under Canova and was seen as his heir. Although a Protestant, Thorvaldsen was well regarded by the popes and carved the tomb of Pius VII in 1831. His figures of Christ and the apostles for Our Lady's Church, Copenhagen, and his narrative reliefs were models for Hogan. While mythological classical subjects were common for Canova and Thorvaldsen, so also were religious subjects which served the Catholic revival (Arts Council of Great Britain 1972, 285). The principal Italian sculptor to come from Thorvaldsen's studio was Pietro Tenerani (1789-1869) who became his chief assistant up to 1830. He carved tombs, figure monuments and busts in a severe neoclassical style. After Thorvaldsen's departure in 1838 Tenerani remained the principal sculptor in Rome.

The most important English-speaking sculptor was John Gibson who came from Liverpool and arrived in Rome in 1817. He spent three years in Canova's studio and frequented Thorvaldsen's studio (Matthews 1911, 89-95). Gibson specialised in ideal nude mythological figures and he received major patronage from the English nobility who favoured such subjects for their mansions. Gibson's aims as a sculptor were more aesthetic than political or religious (Edwards 2013, 195). Since Hogan did not know Italian when he arrived in 1824 he relied on Gibson for discussion on art and also for the practical use of his studio. Edward Leahy, an artist with Cork connections, whom Hogan had met in London, visited Rome and painted Gibson's portrait (Strickland 1968 [1913], II, 12).

The Academy of St. Luke was the leading papal art institution which included antique and life studies. It was headed by Canova from 1810 to 1822, then by the painter Vincenzo Cammucini (1773-1844) until 1825, and by Thorvaldsen to 1828; Tenerani became head in 1857. The painter Tommaso Minardi (1787-1871), a professor there in 1821, was prominent in the Purismo movement which followed from the Nazarenes, the group of German artists in Rome. Hogan admired Minardi's work and subscribed towards the purchase of one of his paintings, "The Ascension", by Dr John Hynes OP for the newly built Dominican church, Pope's Quay, in Cork. In the restrained simplicity of Hogan's religious work there is probably some influence of Purismo.

Cammucini and Thorvaldsen were the dominant presences in the 1820s when Hogan was still finding his way as a sculptor. Cammucini was particularly authoritative in the Roman art world after 1815 and became Inspector General of the papal museums. He specialised in history paintings presented like Neoclassical reliefs (Hiesinger 1978, 297). Evidence of Hogan's study in Rome during his first three years there is provided by a book of mainly architectural drawings, dated 1828, in the Crawford Art Gallery (Murray 1992, 74-76). It shows plans and elevations of buildings, some from antiquity like the Temple of Vesta, a plan of the palace of Augustus on the Palatine hill and the sarcophagus of Scipio. There were also drawings of Renaissance buildings such as S. Pietro in Montorio, a portico of a Renaissance church, Facciata del Nobile Ridotto di Casena, as well as funerary monuments by Canova and Renaissance decorative architectural details. There are occasional subjects from outside Rome like the altar of the church of S. Luca, Bologna. Hogan can be seen to be focusing on the classical tradition from antiquity to its Renaissance and modern applications, studiously avoiding the abundant examples of Baroque Rome. The drawings are strictly linear in pencil and ink with a very occasional use of wash.

In acquiring a knowledge of Italian, Hogan was helped by Fr. Luigi Gentile (1801-1848), who had stayed at the Irish College in Rome and was a brilliant man with doctorates in civil and in canon law. Gentile loved art and taught Italian to visitors to Rome. Hogan valued his friendship in the 1820s when he was trying to establish himself in the city. After 1835 Gentile became a popular Catholic missionary in England and Ireland as a member of the Rosminian order. His strong Ultramontane religious fervour probably influenced Hogan's outlook (Gwynn 1951).

The Irish College had been disrupted, like so much else in Rome, during the Napoleonic occupation. It had been restored in 1826 by Pope Leo XII who granted it the Umbrian College, and for Hogan this was a point of contact with Ireland. S. Clemente, house of the Irish Dominicans, and S. Isidoro, house of the Irish Franciscans, were also points of contact through which he met Fr Hynes OP and Fr. Mullock OFM for whom he was later to receive commissions. The Irish College was host to a succession of visiting Irish clerics. One of these was Fr. Justin MacNamara, a fellow Cork man. Hogan and MacNamara visited Pompeii

and Herculaneum to see the remains of antiquity which had been so influential since the mid-eighteenth-century. MacNamara was a man of taste and on his death in 1845 on the way to Rome, Hogan carved a superb marble memorial relief for Kinsale parish church. The key figure at the Irish College was Rev Fr. Paul Cullen, the Rector from 1832; he had an interest in the visual arts and knew Hogan. In 1846 he was asked to contact him in connection with a bust of Dominick O'Reilly, an Irish patron. Cullen was also in negotiation with Hogan about a statue for St. Audoen's Dublin, but eventually the Roman sculptor Pietro Bonanni, main assistant to Tenerani, got the commission in 1847 (Kane 2011, 102).

From 1850 as Archbishop of Armagh and as Archbishop of Dublin Cullen introduced a vigorous emphasis on Ultramontane discipline and devotion which was to define Irish Catholicism for a century. Hogan's Roman-based sculpture complemented that. Hogan was a strong supporter of the papacy and the Papal States and would have mirrored Cullen's viewpoint. He told his family in Ireland on 18 August 1824 that he had seen Pope Leo XII take possession of St. John Lateran and later he told them he had received a Papal blessing at S. Maria Maggiore. He spoke of the "justice of the Papal Government" in executing criminals. His political conservatism contrasted to the attitude of other English-speaking artists in Rome, whom he said were "always sneering, talking of the absurdity of the Catholic religion, misgovernment of Catholic countries and so on". His response was that "as the only Catholic amongst them, I take no notice" (Atkinson 1858, 521-523). He saw no fault in the administration of the Papal States. That veneration of all things Catholic in Rome would have been characteristic of Irish Catholic visitors.

Turning now to Hogan's work as an artist: in late 1824 not long after he arrived, he described the advantages that Rome offered a young sculptor. He singled out the value of contact with artists from all over Europe and the ease of access to a life model (which would have been impossible in Cork). There was also easy access to the studios of Canova and Thorvaldsen where he could have seen the original plasters from which the marble copies were cut. He said that these two sculptors "completely reformed the heavy Gothic overcharged style of Donatello, Bernini and all those of that period, to the beautiful simplicity of the antique". He added that even Michelangelo had deviated from the "true principles of Greek art", and "Winckelmann is our modern guide to sculpture" (Belfast, Public Record Office, Ms D. 1537/6). Hogan was completely converted to an austere Neoclassicism. In Rome he had free entry to the schools of the Academy of St. Luke where he could draw from life. He reported that he was drawing the antique at the Pio-Clementino museum in the Vatican, and from life at the English Academy. He was also a regular visitor to Gibson's studio. It was there, before he could afford to rent a studio of his own, that he carved a head of a woman.

A year after he arrived in Rome, on 26 March 1825, he told W.P. Carey, his supporter in Ireland, that he could not afford a studio, but was drawing in the galleries and academies. He estimated that he would need a minimal

income of at least £100 a year to take a studio, pay models, cut marble, model in clay and cast in plaster. In 1825 he was living in an apartment at 24 Vicolo dei Greci in the Corso, paying two and a half crowns a month. He bought essential equipment: stands, benches, armature irons and clay which would allow him to get started. He acquired part of a studio once used by Canova, 18a and 19, Vicolo di S. Giacomo in Augusta, a street running from the Corso to Ripetta. This remained his studio for the rest of his time in Rome. In 1842 he moved with his family to 156 Via del Babuino, probably to gain living space. He was at all times living and working in central Rome around the Corso. The Caffé Greco, a popular haunt for artists, was where he could meet colleagues and visitors. Torlonia and Company was his bank where financial drafts from patrons in Ireland could be cashed (Turpin 1982a, 50-51).

To establish his reputation he had to produce an ideal subject such as a mythological nude within the established conventions of such subjects, but offering a fresh interpretation. He needed to measure up to his peers. The reclining shepherd theme had been treated by Thorvaldsen and by Gibson. Hogan's response came in his first major work in his new studio, "The Shepherd Boy" (1824-1825, formerly Powerscourt House), originally commissioned by Deane; Hogan reported that Cammucini and the English critics admired it. However, Cammucini and Gibson challenged him to produce a new version of the Faun subject, which was common in antiquity such as the Barberini Faun. In response Hogan created "The Drunken Faun" (1826) (fig. 1):



Fig. 1 – John Hogan, "The Drunken Faun", Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

Thorvaldsen was reported to have been impressed by this. It is a dynamic image; in the play of the limbs its realism relates it back to Canova. This was followed by “The Dead Christ” (1929, Clarendon St., Dublin, figs. 2 and 3) which recalled the High Renaissance work of Michelangelo. It was in the tradition of the deposition of Christ from the cross, but idealised in severely neoclassical terms. The head shows the influence of Thorvaldsen’s Christ. It epitomises the application of chaste neoclassical principles to religious art. All of Hogan’s figures of these years are horizontal male nudes demonstrating to Roman connoisseurs his ability at life modelling but within the idealised conventions of the antique.

In contrast to Gibson, Hogan was not interested in the female nude, perhaps for moralistic religious reasons, but he was obliged to carve a nude, “Eve Startled at the Sight of Death” for a commission for Sir John Fleming Leicester, received in 1825. This slightly sentimental subject (untraced) showing Eve encountering a dead bird was typical of Victorian sculpture, often located amid plants in conservatories. Middle-class Catholics did not favour the female nude unlike Gibson’s aristocratic English patrons.

In November 1829 Hogan made his first return visit to Ireland. He exhibited his new work, “The Dead Christ”, “The Shepherd Boy” and “The Drunken Faun” at the Royal Irish Institution where they were well received. The Carmelites at St. Teresa’s, Clarendon St., acquired “The Dead Christ” which they placed beneath their high altar like the reliquary of a saint.



Fig. 2 – John Hogan, “The Dead Christ”, St. Teresa’s, Clarendon St., Dublin



Fig. 3 – Detail of “The Dead Christ”

The year 1829 was momentous in Ireland as Catholic Emancipation was passed by parliament, which opened the way for a vigorous church-building programme. Hogan hailed the act as a sign of liberation from “the orange yolk” (Atkinson 1858, 563). From 1829 we can date Hogan’s high regard for Daniel O’Connell, the ‘Liberator’, in forcing the British government to concede Catholic Emancipation. On Hogan’s second return visit to Ireland on 1 October 1832 the Cork Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts held a meeting to honour both Hogan and Maclise, who was also visiting home. The Society saw the achievements of both artists as vindication of the teaching offered in Cork which centred on the royal gift of the papal casts.

Hogan’s “Pietà” (1831 [fig. 4]) was to establish his reputation in Rome. It was commissioned by Fr Flanagan, parish priest since 1827, of the newly built neoclassical church of St. Nicholas of Myra, Francis St., Dublin.



Fig. 4 - John Hogan, “Pietà”, St. Nicholas of Myra, Francis St., Dublin

The group is clearly related to Michelangelo's famous "Pietà" in the Vatican and to that of Canova. The Italian art critic Marchese Melchiori in the art magazine *L'Ape italiana* in 1837 described it as a "very touching scene which awakens in you the most profound sentiments of compassion". In this magazine all the other main Roman sculptors were featured: Thorvaldsen, Tenerani, Rinaldi, Gibson, Benzoni, and Tadolini. Hogan had won his place in the international community of sculptors. Among these Maria Benzoni (1809-1873) became his close friend; he had come from Bergamo and from 1823 had studied at the Academy of St. Luke in Rome. Apart from Gibson there were a number of other British sculptors in the city at various dates: Joseph Gott, William Theed, Laurence McDonald and Richard James Wyatt.

By the mid-1830s Hogan had absorbed the example of Canova and Thorvaldsen. He was an established sculptor in Rome working for commissions from Ireland, mainly for memorials and portrait subjects. In religious terms he was committed to a staunch Ultramontane Catholicism and also to constitutional Irish nationalism in the wake of O'Connell. These ideals come together in the commission for the memorial to James Warren Doyle (1786-1834), an Augustinian who was Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and had been a strong supporter of O'Connell. Hogan won the commission in April 1837 in a competition against nine others. He completed the work in 1839. The imagery, with the bishop pointing upwards while encouraging a kneeling figure of Erin to arise from her knees, was symbolic of the Catholic Church giving leadership to the Catholic majority in Ireland. In 1839 the Roman art journal, the *Pallade*, described the figure of Erin as "one patiently supporting the burden of the unjust and oppressive laws which have been placed upon her" (Turpin 1982a, 68). In this, the sculptor had taken a neoclassical tomb memorial formula and given it a Catholic and nationalist application. By placing a harp, based on medieval precedent, alongside Erin he was making one of the earliest statements in the Celtic Revival. This was a step beyond the conventional allegorical images of Hibernia. He based the use of the turreted crown on Canova's example.

This massive sculpture group copper-fastened his reputation in Rome and in Ireland. He was elected unanimously to the Incorporated Society or Congregation of the Virtuosi of the Pantheon in 1839. (It had been founded in 1500 with the Pope as titular head). In addition to painters such as Minardi and architects it also contained fifteen sculptors, normally all Italians. Hogan's diploma of membership was presented by Giuseppe Fabre, later director of the Vatican museums. Hogan was proud of this member

ship which entitled him to wear a uniform of royal blue coat, dark trousers with gold braid, a ceremonial hat and silver-mounted sword. Effectively this was papal court dress. He was also elected a member of the Academy of St. Luke. He was part of the Roman establishment by the 1840s.

His integration into Roman society was strengthened by his marriage to Cornelia Bevignani (1815-1899) on 11 November 1837. He was thirty-seven while she was twenty-two. She was reported to have moved in elevated social circles of Prince Borghese, Lord Shrewsbury and Torlonia the banker. They had twelve children, seven of whom were born in Rome: Margareta, John Valentine, Maria, Richard, Francesca, Cornelia and Catteriana. After his marriage his life centred on his family and his home. He walked with his family along the Corso, and sometimes took them on trips to the Alban hills. He was reputedly hospitable to his friends and frequently had young English and Irish artists at his table. The family lived comfortably and his accounts show numerous bills for large quantities of wine, beer (including XX Dublin porter). His sister Elizabeth, lived for a period in Rome but returned to Ireland in 1842 (Turpin 1982a, 69-70).

His career during the 1840s, its high point, was linked to the Irish nationalist movement. The Repeal Association, dedicated to the restoration of a parliament to Ireland, was founded by O'Connell in 1840. Hogan made another return visit to Ireland in June of that year when the Bishop Doyle monument was exhibited in the ideal neoclassical surroundings of the City Hall, Dublin. His reputation in Ireland was in the ascendant. He was feted by his admirers with invitations to dinners and receptions, but he was anxious to escape back to Rome where he could concentrate on his work, saying "My heart beats within me for quiet solitude and study" (Atkinson 1858, 552). He received publicity from George Petrie, the artist and antiquarian scholar, who published the first article that describes Hogan's work in 1840 (Petrie 1840, 193-196). Petrie also advised his fellow scholar, Samuel Ferguson, to call on Hogan in Rome.

While in Ireland Hogan received numerous Irish commissions for memorials to be executed on his return to Rome. The most important of these was the memorial to the reformer, Thomas Drummond, former Under-Secretary for Ireland, in the Whig government. He had declared that "Property has its duties as well as its rights", and introduced poor relief to tenant farmers. He abolished the tithes to the Established Protestant church in 1838. He was a reforming figure who was well-regarded by O'Connell and other nationalists. The sculpture (fig. 5) shows Drummond in heroic idealised terms wrapped in a great riding cloak like the antique.



Fig. 5 - John Hogan, Thomas Drummond, City Hall, Dublin

When it was completed in 1843 it required three horses to haul it to Leghorn for shipment to Ireland.

A companion piece was the similarly sized marble of William Crawford, co-founder of the Cork brewery and father of Hogan's patron W.H. Crawford. It was for the Cork Savings Bank, a neoclassical building designed by Sir Thomas Deane. Beneath the figure on the pedestal was a relief with a personification of the city of Cork wearing a mural crown. Both Drummond and Crawford cover contemporary dress with sweeping riding cloaks, like antique statues. Neoclassical theory in sculpture argued that this created a "timeless" heroic effect above the petty fashions of the day – ideas articulated by Gibson and Bartolini. In creating these two monuments Hogan may have been looking at a memorial to the South American patriot, Simon Bolivar, by Lorenzo Bartolini (1842). These two over life-size figure

monuments represent the high point in Hogan's neoclassical portraiture. They do not aim at psychological specificity but at heroic generalisation.

During the early 1840s he was working in his studio on several Irish commissions for memorial reliefs. One was to Jeanette Farrell (St. Andrew's, Westland Row, Dublin) commissioned by her father, completed in 1841 (fig. 6). It shows the young girl teaching religion to a child with an accompanying angel.



Fig. 6 - John Hogan, Jeanette Farrell Memorial, St. Andrew's, Westland Row, Dublin

It is a domestic scene in a severely neoclassical style. Gibson stated that this was one of the best of Hogan's works, perhaps because it was so close to the style of John Flaxman; it has highly sensitive modelling of the figures. The memorial to William Beamish, completed in marble in 1844 (St. Michael's, Cork) is very different. It has a touch of the Baroque style in the resurrecting body of Beamish rising from the tomb, accompanied

by an angel, pointing heavenward, while another angel blows the trumpet of the Last Day. An even larger memorial relief was that to the Irish astronomer, the Protestant Bishop Brinkley of Cloyne, which was completed in 1845 for Trinity College Dublin where Brinkley was professor. This celebrates a man of science with his globe, rather than a bishop. This commission indicates that the Protestant establishment in Ireland also valued Hogan's talents. Most of the expatriate sculptors in Rome, like Hogan and Gibson, worked on commissions from their home countries. There was to be an exception when Hogan was commissioned by a Miss Hynes to make sculptures of St. Stanislas and the Madonna for the Sacred Heart Convent of Villa Lante, Via Francesco di Sales, a building given to the congregation by the Borghese family in 1840. The two statues were installed in the Convent in 1843.

Through the Bishop Doyle commission Hogan came into contact with Valentine Lawless, second baron Cloncurry (1773-1853). This Irish nobleman was a former United Irishman and a patron of the arts in the tradition of the eighteenth-century Grand Tourists. He built Lyons House, County Kildare, which housed his collection. He was on a visit to Naples and Rome in 1841 when he called on Hogan. Cloncurry wanted to present a sculpture, incorporating a portrait of himself, to the Dublin Literary Society, but left the composition to the sculptor (Fitzpatrick 1855, 476). The result was "Hibernia with a bust of Cloncurry" (University College Dublin), for which Hogan had to model Cloncurry's head from life in Rome. It shows an idealised female figure of Hibernia or Erin, accompanied by harp, wolfhound, books and an inverted crown, all symbolic of Ireland. She looks towards a bust of Cloncurry which terminates a herm beside her. When it was completed in marble the Roman correspondent of *The Art Union*, the British journal, called to the studio and said that the group "was one of the most beautiful ever executed in Rome. It is admired by all the artists" (*Art Union* 1846, 153). So much did Cloncurry like it that he retained it for himself, rather than present it. The sculpture combines Hogan's Irish patriotism with his neoclassical ideals of purity and simplicity. It is also an early example of the Celtic Revival but more classical than romantic in feeling. The group bears some similarity to Tenerani and Lemoyne's monument to the painter Claude Lorraine (1839). "Cloncurry" was exhibited in the rotunda of the City Hall, Dublin when Hogan returned to Ireland on a visit in 1846. It was then transported to Cloncurry's seaside villa, Maretimo, at Blackrock. As a young man Cloncurry had been in love with the painter Amelia Curran, daughter of the celebrated barrister John Philpot Curran, who had defended the United Irishman rebels. Following her death in 1847 Cloncurry asked Hogan to make her memorial. He carved a sor-

rowing putto, elbow on a harp, while beneath are her palette and brushes. It was placed in the Irish Franciscan church of S. Isidoro in 1848. Another Irish Grand Tourist and collector, Richard White, third Earl of Bantry, commissioned portraits of himself and of his wife Mary O'Brien in 1842 for his mansion, Bantry House, County Cork.

As an Irish Catholic exile in Rome Hogan would have been well aware of the Flight of the Earls, Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell in 1607 after their defeat at the Battle of Kinsale and that they had died in Rome. In 1844 he was commissioned by James Molyneux Caulfield to supervise the restoration of the inscription on their tomb in S. Pietro in Montorio and he paid his assistant Restaldi to do this work.

The central Irish nationalist experience for Hogan was his meeting with his hero, Daniel O'Connell, in 1843 when he was on a return visit to Ireland. He collected payments for past commissions and received new commissions. Among these was a portrait bust of Archbishop Murray of Dublin, commissioned by Rev. Dr Walter Meyler, administrator of St. Andrew's, Westland Row, Dublin. An identical bust was commissioned by Mother Mary Aikenhead, founder of the Irish Sisters of Charity. These busts are a severe portrayal of a leading churchman, emphasising authority. Also for the Sisters of Charity he carved a small "Transfiguration" for their convent at Clarinbridge, County Galway, which is a spirited piece, more baroque than Neoclassical in style.

The Repeal Association commissioned Hogan to carve a figure of O'Connell. This delighted the sculptor who wanted the figure to "express all the power and grandeur of concentrated Ireland" (Gavan-Duffy 1890, 168). He studied O'Connell's features at a dinner to which he had been invited. The high point of the relationship came on 1 October 1843 at the "Monster Meeting" at Mullagmast. It was a vast and tumultuous political rally with bands, banners and speeches. At the request of Charles Gavan Duffy, a leading nationalist, Hogan, resplendent in the uniform of the Virtuosi of the Pantheon, placed the "Repeal Cap" of green velvet on O'Connell's head as a gesture of respect and loyalty on behalf of the crowd. The gesture impressed O'Connell who was always conscious of his public image, for on 3 October he donated 250 guineas, and a further £150 later towards the statue that Hogan was to make. The maquette for the figure was modelled in Ireland.

Back in Italy, he travelled to the quarries at Serravezza to acquire a suitable block of marble for the figure. So great was its weight that it required a wagon drawn by twenty young oxen and four large horses to move it along the Corso to his studio in Via S. Giacomo. The result on completion was a colossal marble figure showing O'Connell swathed in a sheet-like cloak (fig. 7):



Fig. 7 – John Hogan, Daniel O'Connell, City Hall, Dublin

He is presented as a Roman orator with his right arm raised. It is a heroic idealised image of O'Connell, the “Liberator”, which generalises O'Connell's aged features. On completion in 1846 it drew admiring comment from several visitors to his studio and the plaster remained there, towering above the other figures.

During the 1840s Hogan developed a close relationship with the Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto. Mother Teresa Ball had founded a school for girls at Rathfarnham. There the magnificent Gothic Revival chapel had been modelled on Ely Cathedral in England. In 1843 Hogan was commissioned to provide a “Pietà” relief for the altar frontal with two free-standing angels on either side, said to have been based on his two daughters, Margaret and Mary. In 1844 he supplied another altar frontal relief of the “Nativity” for the Loreto summer house at Dalkey. These two altar reliefs are strictly Neo-classical with shallow space, avoiding the illusionism of the Renaissance and

the Baroque. They are close to the religious reliefs which Thorvaldsen made in the 1820s. Thorvaldsen had made a return visit to Rome in 1843 and had worked on a series of low reliefs on religious subjects, which Hogan would also have seen. There is a hint of the Purismo movement in the Loreto “Nativity” relief. The “Pietà” shows a return to the theme of “The Dead Christ” and Canova’s influence.

Hogan was back again in Dublin in 1846. He brought a brooch of Cupid and a dolphin, based on a fresco at Pompeii, which he presented to Sir Thomas Deane, his former patron, in Cork in July. He received new commissions, a memorial relief to Peter Purcell, founder of the Agricultural Society of Ireland, who had died in 1846. It is a pastoral image (fig. 8) with Purcell reclining in nature against a background of a plough and sheep; above is an angel with a sickle and palm of reward (said to have been modelled on his son John Valentine).



Fig. 8 – John Hogan, Peter Purcell Memorial, St. Mary’s Pro-cathedral, Dublin

It is a harmonious composition, completed in 1849, an idealised Virgilian vision of rural life. On this 1846 visit to Cork he would have been acutely aware of the effects of the Famine in west Cork and in January 1847 he sent £20 from Rome to the mayor of Cork city for relief in Skibbereen and Bantry.

The sculptor’s studio in Via S. Giacomo, for one visitor in 1846, was “a sort of Hibernian Walhalla”, with plasters of Doyle, Drummond, Murray, Cloncurry, Brinkley, Crawford, Father Mathew, Purcell and others. Shortly to these would be added the plaster of O’Connell. Owing to the process of reproduction in marble, using the pointing machine working from the origi-

nal plaster cast, studios were left with the plaster originals once the marbles were completed. Thus, over a life-time's work, a sculptor's studio became virtually a museum – a permanent retrospective exhibition and place of study for young sculptors. His studio was a focus of interest for Irish visitors to Rome, especially for churchmen. His collection of these plasters was to pass from his widow after his death to W.H. Crawford who donated them to the gallery in Cork. On 10 April 1849 Hogan, along with Gibson, Wyatt and Gott, attended the funeral of Henry Timbrell, a young Irish sculptor who had come on scholarship to Rome.

Italians hankering for a united Italy and liberal reforms saw the Papal States as a hindrance to this and therefore something to be abolished. Pope Pius IX, Roman Pontiff since 1846, instituted the Roman Guard in 1847 and Hogan enrolled as a Roman citizen acquiring a helmet and a gun. He told Lord Cloncurry of the rising militarism in Rome. "Nothing is heard or seen from morning till night but drums and trumpets, drilling, manoeuvres and mounting guard ... Pius IX is most deservedly beloved by his people for the many just acts of this public life" (Atkinson 1858, 566). That was not an opinion universally shared by Italians and in 1848 revolutions broke out in Italy. The Pope appointed a Liberal ministry on 16 November but fled the city on 25 November to Gaeta. After this, Hogan and his family fled to Carrara. Tenerani too, another papal supporter, fled the city, as did Gibson. Wyatt remained in his studio which was damaged by a grenade. In February 1849 the Roman Republic was declared. Perhaps to protect his studio Hogan returned to Rome and was forcibly enrolled in the Italian National Guard. The Roman assembly handed power to Mazzini and on 30 April 1849 Garibaldi repulsed the French forces coming to the aid of the Pope. However on 3 July the French entered Rome and restored the Papal Government. This ended the short-lived Roman Republic.

All of this deeply unsettled Hogan and he decided to return permanently to Ireland. He probably considered it a better place in which to bring up his growing family, now needing schooling. He may also have felt that after his successes in the 1840s he had an assured career in Ireland. On 25 August 1849 he left. He need not have done so as the Republic was over and other sculptors like Gibson continued to live there in the 1850s when the French guaranteed the continuance of the Papal States. Hogan's return to post-Famine Ireland was to prove ill-advised. He left in his Roman studio, blocks of marble, a double jack-saw, pictures in frames, chisels and boxes of journals. He gave the key to his inside studio to his close friend, the sculptor Giovanni Benzoni. He left his wine cellar, his beds, a gunbarrel and silverware to a signora Pozzi. He held on to his studio until 1852 so that current projects could be completed by Restaldi. His freight back to Dublin included the completed marble memorials for Fr. MacNamara for Kinsale, and Peter Purcell for the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin. He also brought a second version of

“The Shepherd Boy” (Iveagh House) and a marble bust of O’Connell to be sold. Since Hogan had left Rome, just as the papal government was about to be restored, there were rumours in Dublin that he had offended the Holy See. Perhaps to show that this was not true, and more likely simply to tidy up his affairs, he returned to Rome in May 1852. He assigned his studio to Restaldi and settled his debts to his friend Benzoni.

Through Benzoni, Hogan was to have an extended Roman connection. Following the death of Daniel O’Connell in 1847 in Genoa, while on the way to Rome, his heart was removed, embalmed and brought to Rome by Rev. John Miley. Formal funeral obsequies were celebrated from 17-19 May 1847 where the attendance included John Henry Newman, Thomas Croke, John Hogan and Francis Mahony (Father Prout, the writer of Cork origin of whom Hogan made a portrait bust). The Italian Charles Bianconi, the prominent transport entrepreneur in Ireland, had been a friend and admirer of O’Connell. He proposed that a memorial be created in Sant’Agata dei Goti (the Irish College) in O’Connell’s memory and to mark where the heart was deposited. In selecting a sculptor to do this he consulted Hogan in 1852, by then living in Dublin, and he recommended Benzoni. The memorial was installed in Sant’Agata in 1855. Had Hogan remained in Rome, it is highly likely that he would have been the man to carve it. Bianconi paid for most of the cost. In the lower part of the memorial is a relief depicting the passing of the Act of Catholic Emancipation in parliament. For O’Connell’s head Benzoni relied on Hogan’s portraiture of the politician. The upper round-headed relief, showing an angel urging Hibernia to rise, has marked similarities to Hogan’s Beamish memorial in Cork which Benzoni would have seen in Hogan’s studio. The O’Connell memorial is virtually an extension of Hogan’s style. When the Irish College moved to its present location on the Coelian hill in 1927, the monument was moved, although no trace of the heart was found behind it.

Thomas Mullock OFM who had lived at S. Isidoro, Rome, knew Hogan and commissioned him in 1851 to make two memorials of his predecessors as bishops of Newfoundland, for St. John’s Cathedral there. These were modelled and carved in Hogan’s new Dublin studio in Wentworth Place (now Hogan Place) where he was assisted by James Cahill who performed the duties formerly entrusted to Restaldi. Hogan also made two important nationalist sculptures in 1855: “Hibernia with Brian Boru” (Crawford), a variant of the Cloncurry group, and a figure of Thomas Davis, the intellectual theorist of the Young Ireland movement (City Hall, Dublin). For the Crescent Limerick, Hogan provided a statue of O’Connell in antique drapery over contemporary costume; to oversee the casting in bronze he went to Paris in 1857. In these final years he was also commissioned to make portrait busts and versions of his “Pietà”. He was disappointed not to have won the commissions for memorials to Archbishop Murray and to Thomas Moore.

A final link with Benzoni in Rome came with the commission to Hogan from the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Carlisle, to provide a large relief in bronze of Catholic Emancipation for the Wellington Testimonial in Phoenix Park, which was also to receive reliefs by Thomas Farrell and Joseph Kirk. Hogan had completed the plaster sketch model by his death in 1858. To complete Hogan's work the commission was given to two trustees, Charles Bianconi and Sir William Wilde, both of whom had been friends of the sculptor. John Valentine Hogan, the sculptor's son, worked on this in conjunction with Benzoni in Rome and it was unveiled in 1861. John Valentine was to remain in Rome as a sculptor and died there in 1920.

Hogan's style was unmistakably neoclassical, drawing its inspiration from antiquity, but also from contemporary sculptors, notably Canova and Thorvaldsen. He could be eclectic in style as there are also influences of the High Renaissance and the Baroque. His mastery of carving the figure and rendering flesh in marble matches the best of his contemporaries; this is most noticeable in the delicacy of his modelling of hands and feet. He applied this severe but sensitive style to subjects relating to contemporary religious and political ideals – the Catholic revival and Irish cultural nationalism. The representation of Catholic religious themes and Irish nationalist aspirations were new developments in Irish sculpture of the period. His own ardent Catholicism and his nationalism make him representative in visual terms of resurgent post-Union and post-Emancipation Ireland, as defined by the policies of Archbishop Cullen and the politics of Daniel O'Connell. It was a combination of reformist constitutional nationalism and Ultramontane Catholicism – a conservative alliance that was to be long-lasting in Ireland. In his contribution to the emerging Celtic Revival he could be considered as part of the broader Romantic Movement.

Like the Irish artists of the Georgian period who went to Rome, Hogan also had patronage which reflected the Grand Tour, from Sir John Fleming-Leicester, Lord Cloncurry and the Earl of Bantry. His talents were also recognised by TCD and the Lord Lieutenant. However the majority of his patronage came from middle-class Irish professional and business people as well as clergy and religious congregations. Commissions for religious subjects, funerary memorials, commemorative figures and portrait busts came from Ireland but the work was carved in his studio in Rome. It looked best in classical buildings like the City Hall, St. Nicholas of Myra, St. Andrew's Westland Row, and the Cork Savings Bank. Some found their way into Gothic Revival settings like Loreto Abbey, Rathfarnham, or the South Chapel, Cork.

In Rome Hogan identified strongly with the Pope and the Papal States. This differentiated him from other English speaking artists from a Protestant background. While a supporter of Irish nationalism, he was opposed to the Italian Risorgimento and revolution because of its anti-Catholic and anti-Papal intentions. His support for the papacy resembled that of the Irish Brigade which fought in defence of the Pope in 1860-1861.

His position as a sculptor in Rome was recognised by his peers by his election to the Virtuosi of the Pantheon and his marriage to a Roman woman further strengthened his identification with the city. It was his location in Rome, close to a community of Italian and foreign artists, centred on the Corso area, that stimulated his creativity. He lost that stimulus and the prestige of the connection when he returned to the narrower intellectual confines of post-Famine Ireland. His career declined and demonstrated why most of the best Irish artists of the period sought permanent careers abroad.

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Portraits and the Artist: Richard Rothwell's Roman Adventures

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Abstract:

Richard Rothwell was an Irish portraitist who was successful in London in the late 1820s. Despite this achievement he felt he had to leave London to acquaint himself with the Italian Masters and see what trends were in demand in Rome in the early 1830s. This chapter analyses how the Italian experience affected his creativity and examines the reasons for his proclivity towards genre and landscape over portraits in works produced up to his death in 1868. Attention is paid to the Rothwell holdings in the National Gallery of Ireland and the National Museum of Northern Ireland. The reasons for the negative reaction to Rothwell's "Italian" art on his return to England are examined while it is also argued that he may have retained his initial success as a portrait painter had he never gone to Italy.

Keywords: England, Failure, Ireland, Italy, Portraitist

In 1831 when the Irish painter Richard Rothwell decided to interrupt his successful career as a portrait painter in London in order to familiarise himself with Italian art and with the work of the great Italian Masters of the past, he undoubtedly thought that what he would gain in experience and artistic technique would ultimately enhance his career on his return to London. This was not to be. Rothwell was drawn to Rome as an extraordinary centre of culture which could bring the traveller face to face with the glories of ancient Rome together with many artistic treasures of more recent times. In the nineteenth century the leading romantic painters in Italy were Francesco Hayez (1791-1882), Tommaso Minardi (1787-1871), Ippolito Caffi (1768-1839), Felice Giani (1758-1823) and the Austrian Joseph Anton Koch (1768-1839) who worked mainly in Rome. Representations of Roman and Italian scenery and contemporary life were popular among well-known artists in England and Rothwell may well have been familiar with or heard of "Italian scene in the Anno Santo, pilgrims arriv-

ing in sight of Rome and St Peter's" (1827) by Charles Eastlake¹, "A Neapolitan saint manufactory" (1832) by Thomas Unwin² or "Caligula's Palace and Bridge" (1831) and "Rome burning" (1834) by Turner³. Rothwell's desire to become part of this transnational artistic scene and to join successful artists such as Eastlake, Turner and Unwin unfortunately ended in failure as this article will demonstrate.

By the early nineteenth century Rome was still a singular centre for antiquarian and archaeological studies. Many artists from all over Europe travelled there to see the masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance, while in earlier decades the Grand Tour brought travellers face to face with famous monuments and buildings of the past. The excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum from 1738 onwards had caught the imagination of these travellers who also wanted to see places like the Capitol Hill, the Forum and the Colosseum in Rome. Italian portrait painters like Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) often depicted travellers posing near well-known classical sculptures such as the Apollo Belvedere or Laocoön and His Sons or in front of famous monuments of the city to give them a unique souvenir of their visit to the city. Painters and etchers responded to this demand for portable souvenirs and they produced townscapes and views (*vedute*) of the ruins of ancient buildings. The most famous of these was Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1708-1787) whose etchings disseminated an image of a city filled with romantic antiquities. Due to declining patronage from the Papacy, and a less wealthy merchant class, artists consequently responded to the demands of individual travellers and collectors whose personal tastes were reflected in the market for themes from ancient history, legends and myths. There was also great demand for scenes of everyday life, called *bambocciate* in the streets of Rome which often depicted beggars and vagabonds and which gave a sentimental gloss to poverty. Artists painted picturesquely costumed peasants while subject painting of infancy, childhood and old age was created for popular consumption. This then was the artistic scene in Italy and especially in Rome when Rothwell arrived there in 1831. Influenced by what he saw and experienced around him Rothwell now began to move away from portrait painting and ventured into landscape together with the depiction of locals as is apparent from the titles of many of his paintings that were inspired from his first visit to Rome such as "A Roman Street" (1835), "An Italian Girl" (1835), "Calabrian Itinerants, a sketch" (1836), "Flower Girl – 'Piazza Navona'" (1850), "Pifferini – Sunrise, a scene looking from the palace of the Caesars, at the Colosseum" (1850) to mention but a few.

Little information exists about Rothwell's trips to Rome but it is known that Joseph Severn (1793-1879), friend of Keats helped him greatly. Severn had been

¹ Now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

² Now in the Leicestershire Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester.

³ Both paintings are in the Tate Gallery, London.

instrumental in founding the British Academy of Arts in Rome in 1821⁴ and in this he was supported among others by Sir Thomas Lawrence, then President of the Royal Academy in London whom Rothwell studied with on his arrival in that city. This connection proved useful to Rothwell and Severn duly introduced him to English circles and to other artists and acquaintances thereby making him aware of artistic trends in Rome and Italy at that time. Although Irish by birth Rothwell, who was Protestant, does not seem to have been in contact with Irish centres in Rome such as the Irish College or with the Irish artist John Hogan (1800-1858) who was in the city at that time and who was closely associated with Catholic circles in the city. Rothwell had deliberately left Ireland and had settled successfully in London so he may have felt that he had little in common with the Irish in Rome and may have felt more at ease with English circles in that city.

Rothwell was born on November 20, 1800 in Athlone, Co Westmeath. He was the eldest of seven children born to James Rothwell and his wife Elizabeth Holmes⁵. Little is known of his early life in that town but he must have shown some early aptitude in the field of painting because his uncle, Thomas Watson, who lived in Dublin, took charge of him and enrolled him in the Dublin Society Schools in 1814. While there he became a skilled draughtsman and in 1820 was awarded a silver medal for his studies "in oil from the antique" (Strickland 1968 [1913], 301). During this period he had shown considerable promise as an artist and on completion of his studies he began to work as a portrait painter in Dublin. At this early stage he already had an inflated view of his own talent and soon felt that he had not achieved the success that his ability warranted. For a while he considered abandoning his career as a painter but must certainly have been encouraged to continue his work as a portraitist following his election as an Associate to the newly founded Irish Hibernian Academy in 1823. The following year he was elected a Member of that Academy. This was a considerable achievement for one so young and over the next few years he painted many portraits and exhibited regularly at the Academy from 1826 to 1829⁶. Rothwell appears to have gained popularity as a young artist in Dublin, he painted numerous portraits and many of these early commissions came from prominent people. Between 1826 and 1829 more than thirty seven of these works were exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy and included portraits for "Miss Stanfield, of the Theatre Royal", George Henry Pitt, Esq., Archibald Hamilton Rowan Esq., Doctor McCabe, Rev. James Jones, The Lady Dufferin, Lord Dufferin, the Honourable Hans Blackwood, Captain Lord Arthur Chich-

⁴ This Academy was initially housed on Via Sant'Isidoro which also doubled as Severn's home and studio. It subsequently moved to Via Margutta but closed in 1936. It had become increasingly side lined following the establishment of the British School in Rome in 1911.

⁵ Strickland gives a detailed account of Rothwell's life and work as a painter in 1968 [1913], 300-312.

⁶ Stewart 1986 gives details of the work Rothwell exhibited there from 1826 to 1866, 121-122 (referred to henceforth as: Stewart *RHA Index*).

ester, Mrs Gordon, the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Ferrand and several other portraits of unidentified ladies and gentlemen (Stewart *RHA Index* 1978, 121).



Fig. 1 - Self-portrait⁷

An interesting self-portrait from this early period is held in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, and displays the talent that Rothwell had for portrait painting at this time [fig. 1]. It may have been painted in his late twenties/early thirties and was purchased by the National Gallery from a Mrs Dickson in 1887. It is oil on canvas and measures 72x58 cms⁸. The painting shows Rothwell as a handsome young man who is presented sitting from right to left with his right arm resting on a ledge. With his body presented in a triangular fashion the artist is fashionably dressed and the light focuses on his high necked shirt and ruff, his face and upper body. His dark eyes engage vividly and directly with the viewer and much attention is focussed on his face while his cheeks, with their delicate pink hues, bring great warmth and immediacy to the work. Further harmony is brought to the image with his softly tousled reddish brown hair. The brushwork is confident and the portrait shows Rothwell in robust good health while his whole expression would seem to indicate an artist content with his lot in life, his early acclaim and apparent success in Dublin. This portrait is very similar to another slightly darker self-portrait of a younger Rothwell now in the Ulster Museum. In addition to portraits Rothwell had also painted a number of landscapes and had developed a strong sense of colour at this time.

Despite this initial success, Rothwell was not content with what Dublin had to offer and decided to move to London in 1829 where he studied briefly with

⁷ Permission to reproduce this image here has been granted by the National Gallery of Ireland.

⁸ These details are found in *Dossier File 265* on this painting held in the CSIA Archive, National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin. I am grateful to the National Gallery for permission to use these details together with details of other *Dossier Files* referred to in this article.

Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830) who was firmly established as the leading English portrait painter in the early nineteenth century and had been second President of the Royal Academy. He was much influenced by Lawrence's polished style and the latter greatly admired Rothwell's talent referring to him as the "Irish Prodigy" (Crookshank, Glin 2002, 233). This move to London brought Rothwell a certain notoriety and Strickland notes that Sir Edwin Landseer remarked to a friend that "an artist has come from Dublin who paints flesh as well as the Old Masters" (1968 [1913], 301). At this time, according to Crookshank and Glin, he used "a Venetian technique, with thick impasto, glazes and reds" although his "excessive use of bitumen [...] ruined many of his pictures" (Crookshank, Glin 2002, 233). In 1830 he had four paintings exhibited in the Royal Academy and another four in 1831, all of prominent personalities such as Lord Downes, Viscount Beresford and William Huskisson, M.P. (Strickland 1968 [1913], 301). It is interesting to observe that a note on his paintings in the Royal Academy in 1830 states: "Mr Rothwell, it is true, is the fashion and has his door beset with carriages, and fashion like folly, knows no reason and his commissions are numberless"⁹. London had opened a door of opportunity for Richard Rothwell who initially seemed to grab it with both hands. When Lawrence died unexpectedly in 1830, he inherited some of his portrait practice. Rothwell had landed on his feet, his talent was greatly appreciated and there was no shortage of prominent personages willing to pay the now higher fees that his work commanded. His portrait of the poet and novelist Gerald Griffin (1803-1840) now in the National Gallery of Ireland, was probably painted in 1829 when both were in London and befriended each other.



Fig. 2 - Gerald Griffin¹⁰

⁹ British Museum Print Room, Whitley Papers, X, 1309.

¹⁰ Permission to reproduce this image here has been granted by the National Gallery of Ireland.

This portrait [fig. 2] which is in the National Gallery of Ireland measures 168x102 cms and was purchased by the Gallery from Mrs P.V. Duffy in 1910 for twenty pounds¹¹. Once again the painting is in classical portrait style with the sitter, Gerald Griffin, presented from left to right. Dressed in a fashionable black jacket, grey waistcoat, white shirt and black cravat he is seated against a red chair. His hands do not appear and the emphasis is on the upper body and the sitter's persona. There is considerable profusion of a reddish-brown light in the background which also shows off the painter's confident brush strokes. Light falls on the white shirt and casts reflections on the subject's apparel. A special chromatic emphasis lights up his face with its pink hued cheeks, his fine nose and well defined lips. The sitter's dark eyes engage with the viewer while his brown wavy hair is set against the main background and accentuates the sitter's character. There is clearly a bond of friendship and empathy between the sitter and the painter perhaps as both were Irish and were united in their effort to find fame and acclaim in a new and foreign city. Their Irishness would have brought them together in the challenging new environment of London and it consolidated their friendship as each attempted to find acclaim and recognition in a new city. The portrait of Griffin serves as an important contrast between Rothwell's style before he went to Italy and his subsequent approach to his art.

Despite the fact that Rothwell could have taken advantage of the demand for portrait work especially after Lawrence's death, he seemed to have been acutely aware of his lack of experience both of the work of the great portrait Masters of the past and particularly of an Italian art education in comparison to other contemporary artists. It is highly probable that had he remained in London he would have carved out a good niche for himself in this field, such was the demand for his work among prominent customers. Rothwell however decided to give up what he had achieved in London, put aside commissions he had been given for further portraits, and set off for Italy in 1831 in order to fill this self-perceived lacuna in his artistic formation. Little is known about the initial period that Rothwell spent in Italy but he probably spent much of this time in Rome and visited other major cities such as Florence, Bologna, Milan, Venice and Naples where he would have seen the major works of the great Italian and Dutch portraitists of the past together with the work of contemporary artists in those cities. In Rome Rothwell befriended Joseph Severn, who in all probability introduced him to other Italian cities and art galleries and presumably other artists working in Italy at that time. Severn travelled to Venice with Rothwell to renew his acquaintance with the Venetian Masters, a fact alluded to in a letter from Charles Brown to Joseph Severn¹².

¹¹ These details are found in *Dossier File* 609 of this painting held in the CSIA Archive, National Gallery of Ireland.

¹² Letter 36, dated 17 September 1833 contained in the scholarly website *Romantic Circles* (<<http://www.romanticcircles.com/>>). See <<https://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/brownsevern/letters/17sept1833.html>> (05/2016).

Rothwell stayed in Italy for about three years before returning to London in 1834. Some of the paintings he exhibited with the Royal Irish Academy from 1834-1850 have Italian titles such as “An Italian Girl”, “Noviciate Mendicants”, “A Study for a picture of Calisto”, “Titian, a chalk drawing” (now in the National Gallery of Ireland), “Flower Girl – Piazza Navona”, “Alfani Oratore” and “Pifferini” and they bear the hallmark of how his stay in Italy changed his career as a painter.



Fig. 3 - Stella in Rome¹³

The painting “Stella in Rome” [fig. 3] which is now in the Ulster Museum gives a very good idea of the impact that Italy had on Rothwell’s style and paintings. This is a circular oil painting on a square canvas that measures 65.3 cm by 65.3 cm. The subject, a dark haired girl, is presented from left to right, with her right hand resting on the cloth covered balcony ledge, her left hand is holding a bunch of flowers or leaves and she is wearing gold gypsy type earrings and gold chains on her neck. In the bottom centre of the painting is the title “Stella in Rome” and it is signed “R. Rothwell”.

The painting is deftly executed and shows how exposure to Italy and Italian painting had influenced Rothwell at this stage and brought greater light, subtlety and character to his portraits. From the title we can presume that this work was done over the period of his three year stay in Rome and that Stella may have been a real person or Rothwell may also have played on the Italian word *stella* (meaning star) and it could therefore be taken as a reference to the girl’s name and/or her stellar beauty. The mostly darkish background acts as a perfect foil to highlight the fine skin features of this girl. Her dark and luminous hair is piled high on

¹³ “Stella in Rome” (c. 1831-1834). Richard Rothwell 1800-1868. Copyright National Museums Northern Ireland. Collection Ulster Museum (BELUM.U152). I am grateful to the Ulster Museum for permission to reproduce this image here.

her head, her white ruched blouse, her coloured and ribbon-decorated sleeves together with her red lips and gold jewellery bring this girl to life. She may have been a gypsy or country girl that Rothwell encountered in the city and there is far more life in her depiction relative to the portraits that Rothwell had painted before he went to Italy. There is great realism in the young girl who is gazing at something or someone, perhaps even a narcissistic image of herself and her own glittering beauty. Rothwell must have brought this painting back to London and probably kept it in his own possession until he died in 1868. It was formally donated to the Ulster Museum in 1943 by the Misses R and F.F. and Mrs R.R. Patterson who were Rothwell's grandchildren. The *Dossier File* on the painting states that it is now known as the "Rothwell Bequest in accordance with the wishes of the donors". A similar copy by Rothwell was once owned by the author and journalist Bruce Arnold and was displayed in the Neptune Gallery Dublin until it was sold at public auction in Dublin in 1974.

Rothwell left Rome and returned to London in 1834 where he presumed he could take up where he had left off in the field of portrait painting. His place however had been taken in the interim by other artists and he was embittered by the fact that patrons no longer flocked to his door or that they did not seem to appreciate his new-found skills as an artist. Had he persisted as a portrait painter he might have regained his former position but, impatient to achieve success, instead he allowed himself be persuaded by Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846), the painter of historical subjects, to try his hand at historical and subject pictures. This was against the advice of close friends and reports that although there was a certain demand for these pictures "of fancy subjects" by collectors in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, the general public and the Royal Academy did not react favourably to this type of art work (Strickland 1968 [1913], 302). Rothwell's powers of portraiture declined while his relationship with the Royal Academy became fractious as it often rejected his work or he accused it of hanging it badly. Strickland again quotes a contemporary criticism of his pictures which noted that "after years of experience, if not of labour, he has disappointed his friends and fulfilled the predictions of his detractors. His first portrait exhibited was his best" (*Evening Mail*, 4th July, 1838, *ibidem*). Some of the few portraits painted at this time suggest that his real talent lay in this area and this is apparent from his acute presentation of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in 1840 which is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. His best known subject paintings of this period were "Noviciate Mendicants"¹⁴, "The Little Roamer"¹⁵ and

¹⁴ This is also known as the "The Poor Mendicants". It was first exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1837.

¹⁵ It was first exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1843.

“The Very Picture of Idleness”¹⁶ all now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. These are attractive sentimentalised pictures of peasants and recall similar subject scenes that he would have seen during his first stay in Italy.

In 1847 he became so discouraged by his lack of success and patronage and by his own heightened feeling of unfair treatment by the Royal Academy that he left London and returned to Dublin. From then until his death in 1868 he changed residence and country at a rapidly increasing pace as he constantly searched for the recognition he dreamed of and ardently craved in the world of art¹⁷. From London he had sent paintings regularly for exhibition and sale to the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin but ceased exhibiting with them in 1846. He had already resigned his membership in 1837 but on his return to Dublin in 1847 he was again re-elected an Associate and then a full Member and began exhibiting with them the following year possibly in the hope of finding new patrons and buyers for his art work. Despite the Hibernian Academy’s generosity of spirit towards him he resigned once more in 1854 when he was made an honorary life Member of the Academy (Strickland 1968 [1913], 303) but that institution continued to exhibit work by him right up to 1866.



Fig. 4 - The Mother's Pastime¹⁸

¹⁶ Painted in 1843.

¹⁷ The Stewart *RHA Index* notes his various addresses from 1834 until 1866. In London he lived in Newman Street and 31 Devonshire Street, Portland Place; in Dublin he lived in Rose Cottage, Rathfarnham and he is also listed as living at different addresses in London, Belfast, Leamington in Warwickshire and finally in Via Felice, Rome.

¹⁸ Permission to reproduce this image here has been granted by the National Gallery of Ireland.

In 1842 Rothwell married Rosa Marshall, the daughter of a Belfast doctor, with whom he had several children. The marriage initially brought him great happiness and also introduced him to prominent figures in Belfast and Northern Ireland who commissioned work from him. The painting, "The Mother's Pastime" [fig. 4], now in the National Gallery of Ireland, may well be a portrait of Rothwell's wife and their first child and it reflects his new found happiness as a husband and father. First exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844 and then in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1845, it was subsequently purchased by the Royal Irish Art Union for £120 and given as first prize to P. Watters Esq. from Killiney. In 1942 it was purchased by the National Gallery of Ireland from Miss Edith Watters (presumably a descendant of P. Watters) who in a letter addressed from 12 Eaton Square, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, states that she "is pleased to accept" the offer of £50 from the Gallery for this picture¹⁹. It now forms part of the Rothwell holding in the National Gallery and the image was featured on a supplement to the *Irish Independent* entitled *Mothers and Babies* which was published on March 11, 2000.

This painting shows a mother with her young child. She is seated on a chair and is presented from left to right. There is a bright blue/green landscape in the right hand background while the left hand background features dark trees. The mother is obviously rejoicing in her happy and contented child who is standing on her lap and dressed in a white bonnet and flowing white gown. The mother is clothed in the classical Italian Venetian colours of deep yellow, blue and red while light rays dance on her hair, her bared shoulders and particularly on the folds of her sleeves and dress. There is a strong Italian influence here ranging from the vibrant chromatic tones to details like the red coral necklace and pearl pendant worn by the child or the discreet bracelet worn on the mother's arm. Her hair style is fashionably swept back from her face and gathered into a brocade ribbon at the back of her head, a feature that further highlights the sheer joy in the face and body movements of the mother towards her child.

¹⁹ Details of this letter are in *Dossier File* 1102, CSIA Archive, National Gallery of Ireland.



Fig. 5 - Study of a Smiling Child²⁰

This portrait [fig. 5] measures 39 cm x 36 cm and was purchased by the National Gallery of Ireland at Christie's London in 1882 and it may well be the "Study of a Child" shown at the Royal Academy in 1848. It featured in an Exhibition, "A Celebration of Childhood", at the National Gallery in 2004²¹ and it was also shown in the National Gallery *Diary* for 2015. It is a warm and vivid portrait painted by Rothwell sometime in the mid-nineteenth century and shows the ability that he had as a portrait painter where he avoids the sentimentality often used in Victorian pictures of young children. A further example of this talent is the portrait he painted in 1826 of the curly haired young boy, James Warwick Macauley, eldest child of Frederick William Macauley and Anna Macauley (whose portraits he also painted) which is now in the Ulster Museum. The smiling child in the image presented here looks directly and engagingly at the viewer and epitomises what is called the "speaking eyes" of many subjects presented by Rothwell in his work. Set against a blue/green/brownish background the child is presented in classical triangular form and his light coloured gown shows off the artist's brushstrokes. The child's pale face, pink cheeks and sparkling eyes make warm contact with the viewer while his tousled chestnut hair adds to the sense of merriment and humour that the child embodies. It is clear that fatherhood further enhanced Rothwell's ability to capture the innocence and playfulness of sitters like this young child.

²⁰ Permission to reproduce this image here has been granted by the National Gallery of Ireland.

²¹ Details taken from *Dossier File 223*, CSIA Archive, National Gallery of Ireland.

The restlessness of Rothwell's character is borne out in the itinerant life endured by his wife and family. Following their marriage in 1842 Rothwell lived with Rosa in London for five years until he returned to Dublin in 1847. The death of their first child, sometime around 1852, affected him deeply and he returned with his family to London. In 1854 he went to America where he hoped to have more luck as an artist and left his wife and family with her friends in Belfast. His work was appreciated in Boston but he decided against setting up home in America. On his return he took the family instead to Rome for the next year and a half before returning with them to Leamington in Warwickshire in 1858. While in Rome he continued his painting and also concentrated on variations of the subject painting "Calisto" [Fig. 6] which he considered to be his masterpiece.



6 - Calisto²²

Two letters that Rothwell wrote to Mr Mulvaney (of the National Gallery of Ireland) show that he considered "Calisto" to be his finest work and he wanted it to be purchased for the Gallery. The first letter from Leamington dated July 12, 1860 states:

I have done with passion for Art. My youth was given to the dream of posthumous fame, - to leave something that would outlive me was my proudest aspiration;

²² Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by the National Gallery of Ireland.

and now having wound up my Knowledge on a picture which was intended by a late friend to have it presented by him to the National Gallery, he died suddenly before his will was legalized, - the picture returned to me and I intend to have it seen in Dublin. I think it a work carried as far as Modern Art has gone, and I should like it to be presented in your National Gallery. The picture is my Calisto, which I have gone over again and again, adding to, and pruning, until it has arrived at that state of perfection on which my judgment cannot add another touch.

Another letter sent from the same address and dated July 23 reiterates his exalted opinion of this painting:

I show this picture of Calisto as one, for delicacy, for beauty of colour, drawing and richness of background as equal to anything which we poor Moderners can exhibit, and I should like it to take its place in a National Gallery [...] You can scarcely form any idea of the time which I bestowed on my Calisto model after model whenever I found one that I thought would add a hair's breadth to its refinement, and dashed money at it, - therefore I now expect now [*sic*] to be paid for it.²³

There is no evidence that Mulvaney purchased the picture from Rothwell. One such copy is now in the National Gallery of Ireland and was purchased in 1901 from Shepherd Bros, King St., London, for the sum of £40. Measuring 3ft by 3ft8" it is signed R. Rothwell. A picture of the same subject was exhibited by Rothwell at the British Institution in 1837 - a larger picture it measured 3'6" by 5'4". The title "Calisto" is a variation on the Latin *Callisto* which derived from the ancient Greek *Kallistos* meaning "most beautiful". In Greek mythology Kallisto was a nymph who was changed in to a bear by Hera as a punishment for her love affair with Zeus. He in turn placed her in the sky as the constellation Ursa Major. Originally sighted by Galileo in 1610 Callisto is one of the four brightest satellites of Jupiter and the third largest satellite of the solar system. The choice of name (Rothwell drops an "l" in the name perhaps to anglicise it) together with the artist's description of this painting gives us an idea of how far Rothwell had moved from his original talent in presenting portraits of real people to an abstract subject representing beauty in a work that he considered close to perfection.

On an overly dark background that is relieved by a glimpse of bluish sky the figure of Calisto is presented asleep with her body naked from the thighs up with her left arm posing languidly against her hair. This pose recalls depictions of Venus by Italian artists such as Giorgione and Titian

²³ Both letters are found in *Dossier File 506* on this painting in the CSIA Archive, National Gallery of Ireland.

which Rothwell would certainly have seen in Venice but here the comparison ends. The figure is lying on a white sheet laid over a gloomy yellow brown surface. The upper part of Calisto's body has warm skin tones while the lower part is draped with white and dull red sheets with light picking out her covered knees. Apart from the attractive skin features of the body the overall impression is of leaden dullness and the painting lacks real life. Near the sitter's arm is a toppled-over jar with paint brushes almost as if the artist is saying, as indeed he did in his letter to Mulvaney, that he could do nothing to further perfect this painting.

Rothwell had placed all his hope on this work and it was exhibited together with two other paintings in the Royal Academy in 1862. Rothwell was furious with the way the pictures were presented to the viewing public and complained bitterly to the Academy. He considered them to be "so badly hung, placed in an obscure corner, high up, almost beyond my recognition" (Strickland 1968 [1913], 304) that it was difficult to see them let alone value them for their worth. Rothwell then wrote a vehement protest to Lord Granville, President of the Exhibition:

The pictures I contribute were considered elaborate works of Art [...] by painters of reputation. And now that an indignity has been publicly heaped on me, I am obliged to come from my privacy and as publicly proclaim the wrong. In honourable rivalry with the best painters in England I contributed my works, for I play with no second class [...] After the injury aimed [...] at me, I am entitled to have my pictures placed in the midst, side by side with those the boasted painters of England, if only for a day – an *hour*. (Strickland 1968 [1913], 304)

Rothwell published these and other letters of protest in pamphlet form and vowed never to exhibit his work in the Royal Academy again. Following this rebuff he left Leamington and brought his wife and children to Belfast where they presumably stayed once more with friends and family. He himself set off for Paris and Brussels where some of his work was shown and much appreciated. From there he returned to Rome where he lived in Via Felice and he worked on poetical subject paintings which he still hoped would bring him the acclaim he longed for. However he caught a fever and died on September 8, 1868. His friend Joseph Severn arranged for him to be buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome where a small block of travertine with a headstone of Carrara marble marks his grave (Black 1980, 207). Eileen Black points out that Strickland was mistaken both when he gave Rothwell's death as September 13 and in believing that he was buried beside Keats in the Protestant Cemetery. Black points out that Joseph Severn is buried beside his friend Keats while Rothwell is buried elsewhere in the cemetery.



Fig. 7 - Photo of Rothwell's Grave²⁴

The photograph [fig. 7] reproduced here shows the headstone on Rothwell's grave and the inscription reads "In memory of Richard Rothwell, Painter, Died September 8th 1868, Aged 68". This grave in the Protestant Cemetery (also known as the Cimitero Acattolico) is to be found in area 2, row 16, grave number 20 and it is interesting to note that a descendant of Rothwell, one Richard Rothwell Bolton, who was born in London in 1939 also died in Rome in 1985 and is buried in the same grave.

The poem "From a Museum Man's Album" written by John Hewitt (1907-1987) gives an insightful overview of Rothwell's life and of his relationship with people:

[...] Take, for instance, the tall large-knuckled woman in tweeds²⁵
 whose grandfather was an artist of repute,
 and had his quarrel with the Academy
 and wrote his angry letters, and marginal notes
 on those from his friends and patrons (O pitiful letters,
 I keep your copies safely in a metal drawer.)

²⁴ This photo was taken at the Protestant Cemetery in Rome on March 15, 2016. The correct location of Rothwell's grave is area 2, row 16 (not 14 as stated by Black), grave 20.

²⁵ This was more than likely Miss Rosa Patterson, Rothwell's granddaughter, whom Hewitt met in 1943 re the donation by her family of "Stella in Rome" to the Ulster Museum.

Her mother had been part of the caravan
he trundled through Europe, eloquent, passionate, poor.

Now she offers us a few early copies
made in his student days when Rubens hit him
like a boy's first cigar;
a badly-cracked circular head-of-a-girl
with flowers on a balcony,²⁶ from his Roman days [...]. (Larkin 1973, 427-428)

Rothwell showed huge promise as a young artist and was especially gifted in the art of portraiture. His early sojourn in London exposed him to the art fashion of the day and despite his lack of training in classical Italian art he had acquired sufficient command of draughtsmanship and character depiction to attract the attention and custom of prominent people in that city. There is no doubt that his first trip to Italy would have made him aware of the vibrant colours and painting skills used by the great Masters of the past. His mistake seems to have been in not realising that by absenting himself for three years from the competitive art scene in London his place would inevitably be taken by others eager to satisfy the needs of patrons anxious to have their persona recorded in portraits. Furthermore, by ill-advisedly concentrating his major efforts on historical and subject paintings, he moved away from his area of strength in portrait painting and this was something that he failed to realise after he left London for Italy in 1831. Even in later life he persisted with many Italianate themes even though patrons and the public did not appreciate his work in these areas and were slow to buy them. His persistence with landscapes and Italian scenes is apparent in the titles chosen for four paintings displayed in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1860: "Rome from 'The Esquiline Hill'", "A Study from Nature – Glendalough – Guides to the Churches on the look-out for Tourists' baskets", "Venice – 'The Canal Grande' and Either Admiration of Contemplation or both". Meanwhile in the British Institute titles such as "A Thing of Beauty is a Joy forever", "Il Ventaglio", "The Pastime", and "The Woods of Rocco di Papa" were shown from 1850 to 1858 while the Royal Academy displayed "Addio pro Sempre", "A Remembrance of the Carnival" and "The Student's Aspiration" in 1862. The Italian experience had obviously deeply influenced his work. However, Rothwell's was not strong in these areas of painting and this more than likely accounts for the rejection of some of his work by the Royal Academy and probably explains the poor display position often afforded them during Exhibitions. All of this augmented his sense of dissatisfaction and unhappi-

²⁶ An obvious reference to the painting "Stella in Rome" which has a significant number of cracks on the surface of the painting.

ness. His portraits in the National Gallery of Ireland²⁷ bear ample testament to his skill and ability as a portraitist while the painting, “Two Children on a Bank near Glendalough” (also in the National Gallery), is a stylised and somewhat romanticised rendition both of the children and of the landscape in the background and as such it has significantly less appeal than his portraits. The Rothwell holdings in Dublin show us both Rothwell’s strengths and weaknesses as a painter. Driven by his artistic vanity and by his longing to achieve fame and success throughout his life he mistakenly placed all his delusional hopes in “Calisto” in which he could find no fault. When it did not achieve the success he craved he was angry and failed to understand why people did not respond to his artistic endeavour.

In many ways Rothwell’s life epitomises that of the promising young artist in the early and mid-nineteenth century whose precocious talent promised great things. However the ill-advised use of this talent together with his inability to realise where his real strength lay made him an average painter as opposed to one who could have achieved significant fame as a nineteenth-century portraitist especially at home and abroad. His time in Italy afforded him the possibility to encounter different styles and forms but on his return to England, he was unable to reconcile these with the trends in portraiture in the Anglophone world and was unable to regain the prominence he enjoyed in London from 1829 to 1831. Although Italy opened up new worlds to him it was ultimately not a successful sojourn and, in contrast to the successes of other Irish artists who left Ireland to work abroad such as James Barry (1741-1806), Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) and John Hogan (1800-1858), Italy did not professionally enhance Rothwell’s career. He may have made artistic and stylistic advancements but professionally his work suffered after his time in Italy. Rothwell’s career is therefore a curious example of one whose career never went back to or surpassed its earlier promise following his time in Italy.

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A Musical Italy: Michael W. Balfe's Italian Experiences

*Basil Walsh*¹

Abstract:

The Dublin-born musician, Michael W. Balfe, was a singer, composer and conductor whose brilliant musical career was heavily influenced by formative experiences in Italy. In 1825, Balfe, interested in broadening his musical studies first went to Paris where he was introduced to the great composers, Luigi Cherubini and Gioachino Rossini, who took a personal interest in him and his musical talents. On the advice of Rossini he spent the next few years in Italy studying singing with the famous Rossini singer, Filippo Galli, and taking music composition lessons from Ferdinando Paer, in Rome. Later in Milan he studied harmony and counterpoint with Vincenzo Federici. By 1831, when he was only 23 years old, his first three operas had been produced in Palermo, Pavia, and Milan. He returned to London in August 1835, participating with the great Lablache, Tamburini, Rubini and Grisi in a concert in Vauxhall Gardens. In 1834 he made his debut at La Scala, Milan, singing opposite the renowned mezzo-soprano, Maria Malibran in Rossini's *Otello*. He appeared again with Malibran in Venice early in 1835, singing once more in Rossini and Bellini operas. Balfe worked as a singer and composer throughout the Italian peninsula/states during the years, 1825-1835 and this article will chart these experiences and demonstrate how the time he spent in Italy and the people he met, influenced his life and later career as an important and popular European composer.

Keywords: Composer, Ireland, Italy, Music, Opera

The nineteenth-century Dublin-born composer and singer Michael William Balfe (1808-1870), best remembered today as the composer of *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), spent about eight years learning his craft in Italy. Balfe's

¹ *Editors' Note:* Basil Walsh, who had originally agreed to contribute to this issue of *Studi irlandesi*, died on 21st November 2014. This article is taken from chapters 2 and 3 of Basil Walsh's book *Michael Balfe: A Unique Victorian Composer* (Irish Academic Press 2008). The material is reproduced here with permission from Irish Academic Press.

experience and activities on the peninsula from around 1825 played a significant part in defining his long career. This article will chart these experiences and demonstrate how the time he spent in Italy and the people he met, influenced his life and later career as an important and popular European performer and composer. Indeed, by the time the twenty-seven-year-old Balfe emerged as a successful writer of operas in London in the mid-1830s, he had already come in personal contact with composers such as Rossini, Bellini, Cherubini, and probably Donizetti, and sung in a number of their operas as well. Later he also had contact with Verdi. Over the years, he sang or established strong personal ties with several of the greatest singers of all time, including Giuditta Pasta, Maria Malibran, Giulia Grisi, Giovanni Battista Rubini, Mario, Antonio Tamburini, Pauline Viardot, Jenny Lind, Giorgio Ronconi, Domenico Donzelli, Henriette Sontag, and Luigi Lablache. Balfe wrote twenty-eight operas for London, Paris, Milan, and Trieste. He also composed some 250 songs to poems by Longfellow, Tennyson, Moore, and various Italian poets. His other compositions include several cantatas, a symphony, and vocal scenes and arias, some of which were interpolated into other composers' works. In 1846 Benjamin Lumley, the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in London, appointed Balfe musical director of the Italian Opera, a position he held until 1852. During that time he conducted several British premieres, including those of Verdi's *Nabucco*, *Attila*, and *I due Foscari*. In 1847, when Verdi departed London for Paris after conducting superstars Lind and Lablache in the premiere of *I masnadieri*, it was Michael Balfe who took over the podium and completed the run.

1. *Music in Italy in the 1820s and 1830s*

The Italy of this period was vastly different from the unified country we know today and the country was divided into a series of states and regions. Anyone endeavouring to pursue their chosen profession as a musician or singer had to move between various political regions, in order to participate in the opera seasons and earn an income. For a singer to move from one region to another, it was necessary to have documentation and also a passport. The northern Italian circuit for opera during these years saw many small towns, such as Cremona, Pavia, Vicenza and Varese, involved in presenting opera. Towns with larger populations like Parma, Bergamo, Verona and Genoa were in the second tier and they usually had longer seasons because of their socio-economic structure. Genoa later became more important. The cities of Milan and Venice, and to a somewhat lesser degree Turin, were the top tier. Further south Florence and Naples also qualified.

Sometime singers who performed at La Scala Milan or in Venice were invited to sing at the Italian opera in Vienna which brought with it higher fees and great prestige and frequently a Habsburg, Royal audience. The Director

at La Scala also managed the Italian opera in Vienna along with others. The performances throughout northern Italy were generally controlled by a string of impresarios who had a network of arrangements through which the singers passed in order to gain a singing contract. Depending upon the location sometimes it was princes who controlled orchestras and the theatres, which added to the confusion. Some of the more important impresarios of the time, such as Alessandro Lanari (1790-1862), who started his career in the small town of Lucca in 1819 and later managed the Teatro Pergola in Florence and the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, were continually on the verge of bankruptcy, which meant singers did not always get paid on time; the chorus sometimes not at all. Another important impresario, Bartolomeo Merelli (1794-1879), who managed La Scala intermittently from 1829 to 1850 and later, was not above selling his singer contracts to one of his competitors if he thought he could make money on the deal. Merelli's La Scala also included a gambling operation in the theatre. A singer's contract generally held more leverage for the impresario than for the singer. If a singer violated their contract such as showing up late for a season or declaring illness they were liable to find themselves in court or perhaps in jail. The system was also fraught with favours. Regardless of contractual obligations, roles were often promised and dished-out based on personal favours. Those who objected found it difficult to get new roles due to the impresario communications network. Frequently *prima donnas* were accompanied by their mothers or another family member as part of their protection.

The business of singing almost anywhere in Italy during the early years of the nineteenth century was certainly precarious at best, particularly at the secondary levels where the economics were forever unstable. Similar situations prevailed for operatic composers. The history of battles between Verdi and Merelli, which happened later, are legion. At one point Verdi refused to have any of his operas produced at La Scala. Bellini and Donizetti had the same problems at various theatres. So for Balfe, it would have been a difficult experience trying to earn a living. Being married (in 1831 to soprano Lina Roser) possibly initially brought some level of stability to his earnings since if he was not employed at least his wife could be working. However, it is also important to remember that the years Balfe was in Italy, were some of the most productive times in terms of the major new works being introduced by Bellini, Donizetti, Pacini, Ricci and others. This was an enormously valuable learning experience for the twenty-two-year-old future composer as he continued to sing in the works of these composers while learning his craft.

2. Balfe's Career in Italy

In 1825, the promising young Irish musician Balfe, interested in broadening his musical studies first went to Paris where he was introduced to the

great composers, Luigi Cherubini and Gioachino Rossini, who took a personal interest in him and his musical talents. Luigi Cherubini, the elderly Italian composer, was then the director of the Paris Conservatoire, a position he held from 1821 until 1841. He took an immediate liking to the young student and was impressed by his musical talents. He talked to the youth about study and the opportunities in Paris for a musician, offering Balfe 'gratuitous instruction' if he remained in Paris (*The Musical World* 29 March 1856, 197). However, Balfe was not diverted from his desire to go to Italy, advising Cherubini that he would return to Paris if things did not work out in Italy.

Sometime later in 1825, probably in the spring, the young musician and his patron (Count Mazzara) reached Milan where they spent some time. Balfe was invited to participate in a private concert in the home of Giovanni Ricordi (1785-1853), the music publisher who frequently arranged such events. Other singers included the noted French tenor, Gilbert Duprez (1806-1896), and another French tenor, Alexis Dupont (1796-1874), both on their way back to Paris. Some years later, Balfe was destined to compose a remarkable cantata for these two singers and others, while in Paris. Most important perhaps is the fact that Balfe's entry into Italy started in esteemed company, which says something for his talents and personal style.

While in Milan, Balfe and his patron also visited the opera: Rossini's *Semiramide*, *Mosè in Egitto*, *La Cenerentola* and *Tancredi* were being performed at La Scala. These were operas that Balfe would become very familiar with in the future. Afterwards they departed for Rome. The year 1825 was a Holy Year in Rome; as a result all of the theatres were closed, which would have been a disappointment for Balfe as it was for Donizetti (Ashbrook 1982, 33). How much time Balfe spent during 1825 languishing in Rome is not really known. Whether he took music lessons or singing lessons or participated in any concerts is also not really known as no direct documentation has been found that might provide an insight into his activities during this period. However, by early 1826 his patron deemed it desirable that his young guest should consider moving to Milan for study, where there were experienced instructors and more opportunities to participate in concerts. Milan also had several opera houses. The patron needed to travel to England on business and on the way he offered to take Balfe with him to Milan and to make arrangements for him to study there. It seems he also provided the young musician with an initial stipend to enable him to get established in the northern Italian city.

In Milan, Balfe worked with Vincenzo Federici (1764-1826) through the summer of 1826. While Federici was associated with the Milan Conservatory, Balfe actually took lessons with him privately, probably because Balfe would have been over age for the institution. This was the same Conservatory that refused to admit the young Giuseppe Verdi a few years later because they considered him too old, at the age of eighteen. In any event, Balfe continued

his tuition in counterpoint and harmony with the aging Federici. The music teacher later died in Milan in August 1826 so Balfe was left to continue his studies with his singing teacher, Filippo Galli (1783-1853) as his sole instructor. It was also around this time that Balfe decided to branch out. He made contact with various theatre managers in the area to see if there were opportunities for him as a composer or singer or possibly as a copyist for orchestral scores. During the early nineteenth century, orchestral scores were not printed. Most theatres had copyists on staff or access to outside copyists for the purpose of creating the orchestral parts from a composer's autograph score.

There were several theatres functioning in Milan at the time, including the Teatro Carcano, Teatro della Cannobiana, Teatro Re, Teatro Santa Radegonda and several other smaller places, all of which presented opera in addition to the city's principal venue, La Scala. During this time period Balfe also made contact with the London-born Joseph Glossop (1793-1850), the son of a wealthy London merchant and property owner. Glossop in his youth had established the Royal Coburg Theatre in London, which went into bankruptcy around 1822, forcing Glossop to depart London. To avoid his creditors Glossop took off for the continent to try his success there. When Balfe arrived in Milan, Glossop in fact was in charge of the Royal Theatres of Milan with an appointment from August 1824 to May 1826. Through a somewhat audacious application to the ruling Austrian authority (Austria ruled Lombardy and Venetia at the time), Glossop gained control of La Scala, and the Teatro della Cannobiana and other Milan theatres in August 1824, having already been appointed lessee at the San Carlo in Naples earlier that same year².

In 1826, Balfe was finally successful in gaining an assignment to compose a ballet, titled *Il naufragio di La Pérouse*. This was gained through his relationship with Glossop. However, Glossop had concerns about a composer who was British and whose name was unknown. As a result, he assigned the work to one of his secondary theatres, the Teatro della Cannobiana, not to La Scala. The sets and scenery were designed by an Englishman by the name of Barrymore. It was reported that the work was quite successful (*The*

² Glossop was a man of the theatre, as were his sons. He was first married in 1812 to the English soprano Elizabeth Féron (1797-1853). She established herself as an important singer and she was in fact singing at La Scala during this period also. In turn one of their sons, Augustus Harris Glossop (1825-1873), who was born in Naples, became a London impresario, and his son Sir Augustus Harris (1852-1896) became, perhaps, the most famous family member as the lessee of Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres in London, where he managed some of the greatest singers of the late nineteenth century. Glossop senior married a second time in 1827, this time to Josephine de Méric, another singer, who would also get to know Balfe at a later date through members of her family. Joseph Glossop died in Italy in 1853 and is buried in Florence. Balfe was destined to come in contact with various Harris Glossop family members again later in his life in London, in a different capacity. See Cheke 1993, 43-54.

Musical World, 12 April 1856, 229). How many performances it may have had, is not known. The music has not survived and there does not appear to be any documentary information or reviews available. The Cannobiana being a secondary theatre in Milan, it would not always have had musical critics in attendance.

With Glosso gone from Milan in 1826 and no real opportunities, Balfe became somewhat despondent with his limited progress and the fact that he was most probably short on money. Additionally, he continued to struggle with his thoughts of becoming a singer versus a composer; trying to work both sides of the street created a conflict. Balfe made up his mind to return to London, where he had contacts and the opportunity to gain an income. There is a reference to him in *The Harmonicon* as having performed at a private concert in London around this time³. Remembering Cherubini's kind words he decided to visit Paris on the return trip early in 1827. Once there, he immediately contacted the aging Italian composer Cherubini to seek his advice and help. Cherubini was sympathetic to the young musician. He invited Balfe to dinner where his guests were Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) and his wife of five years, the successful singer Isabella Colbran (1785-1845) and some other people. As the evening progressed, Rossini in his inimitable style suggested some music and singing. Balfe was invited to display his talents. The young Irishman, with great flair, accompanied himself on the piano in a recital of Figaro's aria "Largo al factotum" from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, to the amazement of all present, most of all the composer himself. Rossini's response was quite complimentary (*The Harmonicon*, January 1831, 49). Balfe was about to turn nineteen years old at the time. Rossini was so impressed with the erudite Balfe's performance that he committed to helping him, at the same time promising him that he would eventually perform at the Théâtre-Italiens, the premier Italian opera house in France. Another guest at Cherubini's dinner party, a banker, agreed to underwrite the cost of Balfe's vocal lessons with the well established singer and coach, Giulio Bordogni (1789-1856). For the next year Balfe studied both with Cherubini and Bordogni, applying himself with great zeal according to reports.

Balfe's baritone voice had matured by now: he had a two-octave range, with significant flexibility, that was suited to Rossini's music style. He was also an excellent sight-reader of music, a talent rare among singers of that period. Balfe's operatic debut occurred at the Théâtre-Italiens in January 1828 in the role of Figaro in nine performances of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. The Rosina of the cast was none other than the celebrated Henriette Sontag (1806-1854), Giulio

³ See *The Harmonicon*, January 1831, in which there is a reference that "About three years ago he [Balfe] returned for a short time to London, and we heard him in private sing a cavatina of his own composition" (49).

Bordogni (Balfe's teacher), was the Almaviva, with Nicholas Levasseur (1791-1871) as Don Basilio. By all accounts, it was a very successful debut. Following the fourth performance, Rossini advised Balfe that he would be receiving a three year-commitment from the opera's management, which was welcomed by the somewhat amazed Balfe (*The Musical World*, 12 April 1856, 229).

Over the next several months Balfe added the part of Dandini in *La Cenerentola* by Rossini, with the renowned Maria Malibran (1808-1836) in the title role. Domenico Donzelli (1790-1873) sang the tenor role of the Prince. Balfe's next portrayal was that of Don Giovanni in Mozart's opera of the same name. He later sang in Rossini's *La gazza ladra* in the part of the Podestà with Malibran and the short comic role of Batone in *L'inganno felice*, which finished up a very successful season for him. This relationship with Malibran would be extremely valuable to Balfe in the future and the two would become close friends.

Towards the end of the season in Paris the theatre management decided to mount a production of Nicolò Zingarelli's (1752-1837) opera *Romeo e Giulietta* with Malibran in the part of Romeo. Malibran in her capricious style was not completely happy with some of Zingarelli's music. She requested Rossini to make some adjustments so that the music was more suitable for her vocal style. Rossini declined but recommended that Balfe be considered (*The Musical World*, 12 April 1856, 229). Balfe jumped at the opportunity to compose music for Malibran and interpolate it into Zingarelli's score. And so his first musical effort included composing an overture, two choruses and a special scene for Malibran and an aria for the secondary role of the soprano. This was virtually a restructuring of the opera. However, Malibran was more than satisfied as was the theatre management, to the extent that they offered Balfe a libretto for him to compose a new opera, with the title of *Atala*.

As it turned out, Balfe only composed selective pieces for the opera, electing instead to return to Italy to gain more experience as a singer and possibly a composer. Before his departure there was a concert performed in which some of his musical pieces were performed. His friend Malibran participated, as did tenor Alexis Dupont, whom he had met earlier in Milan. The great tenor Adolph Nourrit (1802-1839), who would go on to create the role of Arnold in Rossini's crowning achievement, *Guillaume Tell* in Paris a year later, was also on the programme (*ibidem*). On 16 August 1828, apparently Rossini and his wife were scheduled to participate in a concert at the Hôtel de Ville in Dieppe. Rossini brought Balfe along. The concert was for the Duchess du Berry. What they performed is not known. Obviously the relationship between the young Irishman and the famous Italian composer was excellent. On his return to Paris Balfe prepared himself for his journey to Italy and for what would be the start of the next stage of his career.

How Balfe got to Italy this time has been the subject of much speculation. After leaving Paris he did not have much money after paying his debts,

even though he had good earnings as a singer for several months. However, ever optimistic, he decided to return to Milan as quickly as possible given his new credentials from the Théâtre-Italiens. Rossini had also provided a letter of introduction for him to various people in Italy. Balfe arrived in Milan in December 1828, where he most probably contacted the music publisher Giovanni Ricordi, whose business was now flourishing, or possibly an ex-Ricordi employee, Francesco Lucca (1802-1872), who had started his own music publishing business in Milan in 1825. Lucca would publish some of Balfe's works in the years ahead. Possibly because of his prior contact with Ricordi or maybe through his letter from Rossini he managed to gain a position in a concert being sponsored by the Garden Society of Milan on 7 December 1828 in which the featured singer was the great soprano, Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865) who was then only thirty-one years old and about to create major new roles in Milan for Bellini and Donizetti within a few years. Also sharing the concert platform along with Balfe was the tenor Berardo Winter and a mezzo-soprano, Marietta Tonelli (Appolonia 2000, 302).

The concerts consisted of excerpts from Giacomo Meyerbeer's (1791-1864) *Il crociato in Egitto*, Rossini's *Tancredi*, Giovanni Paisiello's (1740-1816) *Nini* and Francesco Morlacchi's (1784-1841) *Tebaldo e Isolina* which were performed by the singers. Balfe had not sung any of this music previously. However, given his ability to sight-read and being a quick learner, no doubt he performed well. He would meet with Pasta again many years in the future in London when she would perform together with Balfe in a very different role.

During this time, the composer Vincenzo Bellini (1802-1835) was also in Milan finalizing his new opera, *La straniera*, which had originally been scheduled to premiere at La Scala for the opening of Carnival on 26 December, but because of illness on the part of his librettist was delayed until 14 February 1829. Balfe met Bellini during his stay in Milan more than likely introduced by Pasta (Biddlecombe 1994, 127)⁴. While in Milan he presented the Rossini letter to the Conte di Sant'Antonio (later Duke of Cannizzaro) and as a result an assignment was secured for him in Palermo at the Teatro Carolino for the spring/summer period 1829 (*ibidem*).

After leaving Milan, Balfe made his way to Bologna to visit one of Rossini's wealthy musician friends, the Marchese Francesco Giovanni Sampieri, whom he had met in Paris. During his stay in Bologna Balfe was introduced to the future great soprano, Giulia Grisi (1811-1869). The two were initially attracted to each other and she and Balfe were destined to become lifelong

⁴ Bellini was later to convey his good wishes to Balfe through a friend (Andrea Monteleone in Palermo) when the baritone was about to sing in the local premiere of Bellini's new opera, *La straniera* in Palermo (letter from Bellini to his friend Monteleone dated 17 September 1829 that mentions Balfe by name). See Biddlecombe 1994, 127.

friends. The Marchese as a patron of the arts hosted various evenings and events for his friends. In the early months of 1829, Balfe and Giulia Grisi sang together at concerts. During the Lenten season, the Società del Casino sponsored Rossini's *Mosè*, which was performed on 17 March with the eighteen-year-old Giulia Grisi in the role of Sinaide and Balfe as Farone⁵. Balfe also sang one of his favorite arias, Figaro's "Largo al factotum", at one of the concerts, much to the delight of Grisi. Shortly afterwards Balfe composed a cantata quartette (32 pages) for Grisi, the tenor Francesco Pedrazzi (1802-1850?), and the composer and bass, Giuseppe Tadolini (1789-1872) and one other voice. Pedrazzi was later to create leading roles in several operas at La Scala and elsewhere. Tadolini was a composer, vocal teacher, the husband of the soprano of the same name and a friend of Rossini's.

In Bologna Balfe also composed his first and only Sinfonia (88 pages), which was completed on 31 March, 1829, in honour of his host's birthday. It was probably performed by what would have been a small orchestra in the service of the Marchese. The complete autograph score of the cantata and the Sinfonia autograph score are both held by the library of the Accademia Filarmonica in Bologna, under the name Guglielmo Balfe. The Marchese was so impressed by his young guest that he arranged for Balfe to be offered a lifetime honorary membership in the Società Filarmonica di Bologna. It was interesting to see that Balfe is described as being "from Dublin", not London, and aged twenty in the official document dated 20 March 1829 that was submitted for his appointment. The long formal document making his appointment official also included some other recommended applicants and was dated 14 April 1829 in the signature section. At the top it was dated 27 March 1829. Apparently the document had to wait until the next meeting of the members before it became official. In the document Balfe is described as "Michele Guglielmo Balf, di Dublino" with the 'e' missing from his name. The document was signed by nine members of the Academy.

Shortly afterwards Balfe left for Palermo, where he was engaged to make his Italian operatic debut. Giulia Grisi left for Florence, where she would sign a contract with the impresario, Alessandro Lanari, as a *prima donna assoluta*. She and Balfe were destined to meet each other and perform together many times in the years ahead. Grisi had a remarkable career in London, Dublin, Paris and St. Petersburg. She became one of the most important singers of the nineteenth century.

There seems to be some confusion among his biographers as to when Balfe actually arrived in Palermo. However, new evidence suggests that Balfe probably left Bologna in April and arrived in Palermo by the second week of

⁵ E-mail communication from Philip Gossett to the author, dated 9 December 2001.

May 1829⁶. Most probably he made his way first to Genoa or possibly to Naples and from either one then took a boat to Palermo. On arrival in Palermo he joined the season at the Teatro Carolino. His debut there took place on 30 May 1829 in Bellini's opera *Bianca e Gerlando*. This was followed by Donizetti's *Lajo nell'imbarazzo*. It was during this time that the chorus threatened to go on strike either for increased pay or more likely for back pay. The administrator, Count di Sommatino, decided to mount an opera that didn't need a chorus; however, he didn't have the scores for a Cimarosa or a Rossini opera that did not require a chorus. It was then that the ever-resourceful Balfe stepped into the breach, suggesting that he could write an opera in the time allotted, probably flaunting his newly acquired credentials from Bologna. Sommatino was able to provide a libretto based on a French vaudeville play by Antonio Alcozer, a librettist who was to later revise one of Donizetti's operas, and so Balfe got to work immediately on creating an opera minus a chorus. The libretto for *Il rivale di se stesso* (44 pages), states that it is a "Melo-Dramma Comico per Musica". It is a two-act opera with eight scenes.

By the time Balfe had composed the opera, the newly published libretto mentioned that the music was specially written by Signor Maestro Guglielmo Balfe, of the Accademia Filarmonica di Bologna and honorary member of the Accademia di Palermo. So Balfe must have established his credentials almost immediately to have been appointed as a member of the Academy in Palermo on such short notice. Possibly his letter from Rossini created the opportunity. His new work which premiered on 29 June 1829 at the Teatro Carolino was a success since it was repeated a number of times⁷.

Balfe did not sing in it immediately, however it appears that he may have taken over the baritone part of Durmont in one or more of the later performances. It had a strong cast; some of the singers had previously created leading roles in Rossini and Donizetti operas. The London *Harmonicon* newspaper, which had representatives throughout Europe reporting on local musical events, now featured a report on Balfe's exploits in far-off Palermo. The *Harmonicon* representative said: "Teatro Carolino; At this theatre an opera, by the bass [the baritone voice during that period was generally known as a bass voice in Italy] singer Guglielmo Balfe, was given some months ago, of which the Bolognese Journal says that 'The opera by Signor Balfe is now beginning to please; and a new production by this professor may be shortly expected.' Other journals speak differently of this work, not even dignifying it with the title of opera.

⁶ The libretto for Balfe's first opera *Il rivale di se stesso* which was composed for Palermo, has a printed date of 29 June 1829 on its cover, which means that Balfe most probably arrived in Palermo around May 1829 or earlier and not in December 1828 as suggested by some of his earlier biographers.

⁷ *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* needs to be corrected as the opera actually had its premiere in 1829 not 1830, based on the date printed on the libretto. See s.v. Sadie 1992.

Be the merits of Balfe as a composer great or small, his vocal talent is unquestioned, and gave great delight in a piece composed by Maestro e Direttore La Manna, [Director and orchestra leader] which was introduced among many other pieces in Rossini's *Bianca e Falliero*" (July 1829).

Unfortunately the music for this first Balfe opera is lost. However, clearly this was an opera, not a musical play. The singers who performed it all had good operatic careers in major opera houses afterwards. It seems that after this effort the chorus acquiesced and meekly went back to work as the season continued. Balfe sang in several more operas and his new opera was performed again in September and early in the New Year. On New Year's Day 1830 he took on the principal baritone roles in the local premiere of Bellini's new opera *La straniera*. The evening included a state visit by the Viceroy. Balfe's performance was loudly applauded, once the Viceroy indicated approval, particularly the second act aria, "Meco tu vieni, o misera". The native Sicilian composer's opera was of course a great success, with the opera being performed for seventy nights⁸.

As the season at Palermo wound down Balfe returned to the mainland, feeling confident and with some money in his pocket. He continued to build his career; however, he was still not sure of his overall direction. He was having some success at singing and new opportunities were beginning to open up for him. His first experience with composing an opera had been exciting and it too provided new scope and opportunities.

Meanwhile, continuing to use the name 'Guglielmo' Balfe, he had made contact with the Teatro Comunale in Piacenza and had reached an agreement with the management to perform there, during the latter part of the summer season in 1830. He agreed to sing in five operas, as follows: *Matilde di Shabran*, *La gazza ladra*, *Semiramide* and *Demetrio e Polibio*, all by Rossini, and the spectacular *Gli Arabi nelle Gallie* by Giovanni Pacini. The *Harmonicon* (London) reported on his progress in Piacenza, saying: "Two foreign artists, Mad.lle. Josephine Noël-Fabre, and an Englishman of the name of William Balfe, are great favourites here at present. The applause which they obtained, was of a very flattering kind" (January 1831, 49). However, the report did not end there. There was an asterisk after Balfe's name to an extensive footnote that expanded considerably on Balfe's background, his talents and how he got to Italy, as follows: "This young man (an Irishman by the by), if all we have heard of him be true, is a real musical genius. After making a kind of debut some years ago, as a juvenile violin-player, at a theatrical benefit [London],

⁸ *Harmonicon*, July 1830 reported on the performances of *La straniera*, saying that much applause was bestowed on Madame Fink, and Messrs. Boccaccini and Balfe: "The latter gentleman, whose name is spelt Balf and Balph, is an Englishman, very young, and possessed of a remarkably fine bass voice" (310).

we have heard that, led by his enthusiastic love of his art, he made his way to Italy on foot. In that country he met with patronage which enabled him to enter on a course of study; and his inclination, and a fine bass voice, led him to cultivate, especially, composition and singing... his voice was a bass voice of two octaves compass from F to F; and he possessed much energy of manner, and great flexibility of execution" (*ibidem*).

This contemporary report on Balfe is one of the earliest reports that provide information on his vocal capabilities and skills while in Italy during these years. The reference to Balfe getting to Italy "on foot" is also intriguing. A later report in the *Harmonicon* refers to his history as being somewhat romantic, reinforcing the fact that he had actually "walked [hitch-hiked?] to Italy" so that he might have an opportunity of hearing and imitating the great singers there. In any event, the *Harmonicon* was sufficiently interested in the young artist's career to continue to provide feedback on Balfe's progress in Italy during the next few years.

We next find him at the Teatro Sociale in the town of Varese, north of Milan (*Harmonicon*, December 1830, 522). Here he opened the newly decorated theatre in Filippo Celli's *La secchia rapita* which had moderate success. This opera and Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* continued to be performed over several weeks, after which Giovanni Pacini's (1796-1867) *Il barone di Dolsheim* was introduced. In general Balfe received good reviews except for the Bellini opera, in which he sang the tenor part of Tebaldo with disastrous results. This was a mistake he never repeated. With the season over, Balfe moved on to Milan where there was exciting new operatic activity. The Carnival season that year at Teatro Carcano in Milan had been organized by a group of dilettanti who were upset at the way La Scala was being run. In the process they offered leading composers such as Donizetti and Bellini special terms to write new operas for their theatre, as a counter to La Scala's management (Ashbrook 1982, 62-63).

Donizetti came to Milan early in October to finalize arrangements with his librettist and the Teatro Carcano for what would be one of his masterpieces, his new opera *Anna Bolena* (Ashbrook 1982, 62-63). He also visited Bergamo to see his parents for the first time in nine years. His new opera was scheduled to premiere on the prestigious opening night of the Carnival season on 26 December 1830. The cast included Giuditta Pasta, tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794-1854), Filippo Galli (1783-1853), and the mezzo Elisa Orlandi (1811-1834). The score of *Anna Bolena* was completed by Donizetti at Pasta's villa at Blevio on Lake Como by 10 December, after which he returned to Milan. Balfe, who was in Milan during this period, had more than a passing interest in Donizetti's new opera. He was on personal terms with Pasta, and Galli, who had been his vocal coach in Milan for almost a year. There is no doubt that given Balfe's precocious nature he would have somehow arranged to obtain a seat for one of the performances of the new opera, which was anx-

iously awaited by the elite of Milan. The Carnival season at Teatro Carcano that year also included someone that would have a major influence on Balfe's life, the young attractive soprano Lina Roser (1810-1888) who was to become Balfe's wife⁹. It is possible that they met through Pasta, who may have invited them to her villa at Blevio on Lake Como, where she frequently had guests. In February Lina Roser sang the leading soprano role in Luigi Majocchi's opera *Rosamonda* with tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini and baritone Paul Barroilhet (1810-1871). Balfe had a commitment to be in Pavia by April for the opera season. As part of his contract he also had to compose a new opera for the Teatro Condomini. During April he also sang in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Mosè*. April was also spent finalizing his new opera, his second composition, *Un avvertimento ai gelosi*, a one-act comedy with sixteen scenes which was scheduled to premiere on 11 May 1831 with an experienced cast. Possibly Balfe may also have been the musical director of the orchestra.

The opera was an immediate success. The librettist Giuseppe Foppa (1760-1845) had provided librettos for Rossini, Paer, Zingarelli and others. Balfe, ever vigilant and restless, spent the next few months in the area, singing, working on some new compositions and looking for new opportunities that would give him income. Clearly Balfe was making good progress as a composer. His new opera was later performed in Milan with a distinguished cast. Early in June he was contracted to perform at the Teatro Riccardi in Bergamo, Donizetti's home town. The Bergamasc composer was in Naples at the time. Balfe was scheduled to sing in Pacini's remarkable opera, *Gli Arabi nelle Gallie*. His partners were the young soprano Lina Roser, the renowned tenor Giovanni David (1790-1864) and the bass, Carlo Cambiaggio (1798-1880) who was also a librettist, a composer and eventually an impresario at the Teatro Carcano. There was also a concert on 29 September at the Accademia in Bergamo in which Balfe participated with Roser and David. Carlo Cambiaggio was well-connected in operatic circles and he became a good friend of Balfe's. They sang together in various performances over the next several years. Cambiaggio would also be helpful to Balfe in premiering the Irishman's next opera in Milan.

Balfe was awarded an honorary membership in the Accademia Filarmonica di Bergamo for his participation, giving him additional accreditation for his work and adding to the recognition he achieved in Bologna and

⁹ Lina Roser had arrived in Milan circa 1829 from Berlin with her Viennese foster mother, Katharina Vogel. A copy of a document in the possession of the author written by one of Balfe's granddaughters states that Lina talked about studying in Milan with one of Mozart's sons, Karl Thomas Mozart (K.T. Mozart spent most of his adult life in Italy). It is possible that Lina only had music lessons from Mozart's son and not vocal lessons which would still leave open the question as to whom her vocal coach may have been. Micheroux's name was never mentioned in the document referred to above. Whether Micheroux was in Milan during this period is not known.

Palermo. Sometime between June and September 1831, Lina Roser and Michael Balfe were married. Meanwhile Balfe's new opera composed in Pavia was now being performed in Milan at the Teatro Re, with an excellent cast that included the future great Verdi baritone, Giorgio Ronconi (1810-1890), who would create Verdi's first great operatic success, *Nabucco* in March 1842, at La Scala, Milan. Immediately after the Bergamo season was over, Michael and Lina Balfe set off for Varese, where they both had a contract to sing in several operas. This was the start of what would be a thirty-nine year marriage and a strong partnership that would bring both of them to several of the most important capitals of Europe and beyond in pursuit of music.

In early November 1831 Balfe and his wife went west from the town of Varese near the lakes to the small town of Novara in the Piedmont region, a distance of maybe forty miles. They were a travelling troupe, as they were accompanied by some of the performers from Varese. The month of November was spent in Novara singing in two operas, Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and Pacini's opera *Il falegname di Livonia*. This time Balfe sang the bass part of Capellio, in *Capuleti*, having learned his lesson the previous month. The reviews were satisfactory. The big event in Milan that season was the planned premiere of Bellini's new opera, *Norma*, which was to open at La Scala on 26 December with Giuditta Pasta in the title role, Giulia Grisi as Adalgisa, Domenico Donzelli in the role of Pollione, and Vincenzo Negrini (1807-1840) as Oroveso. However, Balfe had to be in Bergamo in December for rehearsals as he was scheduled to sing there in early January. Lina was engaged to open the season in Parma in a Bellini opera on 26 December. Their contractual obligations prevented them from being in Milan for the opening night of what would become one of the century's greatest operatic works. Years later when Balfe would conduct one of Europe's great *prima donnas* in the title role of *Norma* in London, his handling of the orchestra for Bellini's masterpiece was greatly acclaimed by the critics. He was singled out for his precision, knowledge of the work and his overall direction of the orchestra. No doubt his early experiences in Milan contributed to his achieving such praise.

Meanwhile, the now pregnant Lina Roser-Balfe was due in Parma for the Carnival season at the Teatro Ducale, where she would sing the role of Adelaide in Bellini's *La straniera* on opening night, 26 December 1831. There were twenty-five performances of this successful opera. This was followed by nine performances of Donizetti's *Alina, regina di Golconda*, a two-act opera buffa in which Lina sang the role of Alina. Her next performance was a premiere by Luigi Ricci, *Il nuovo Figaro*, on 15 February with the important tenor Francesco Pedrazzi in the cast¹⁰. Lina sang the part of Amalia, with

¹⁰ Stagione lirica Carnevale 1831-1832 (Parma). The programme can be found at <<http://www.lacasadellamusica.it/cronologia/>> (05/2016).

some of the performances again shared with Margherita Rubini¹¹. The opera ran for twenty-four nights, which tends to refute some of the reporting that said the opera was a failure¹².

It was not unusual for singers in the nineteenth century to sing night after night, for four or five nights or even longer without a break. Towards the middle of the season, Lina had experienced some difficulties with the theatre management when they requested her to sing an unscheduled work, which did not suit her vocally or dramatically. She was also having some signs of exhaustion and had to bow out of some performances. While Lina did share her roles in Parma on a few occasions with the soprano Margherita Rubini, her schedule for a young woman now about four months pregnant still seems astounding by any standards. On the other hand, this is evidence that says that Lina's professional career was clearly on an upward trend. Later in life, when Lina was to occasionally sing in London or Paris, her professionalism was always greatly praised by the critics.

In December, Balfe had to part company with his wife for the first time since she was due at Parma by mid-December and he had to be in Bergamo a little later for rehearsals. It would have been too far and take too much time for him to travel with her to Parma before going to Bergamo. He was returning to sing at the Teatro Riccardi for several performances of *Il falegname di Livonia* during January 1832. It is possible that he also sang in other works during this period. Operatic management gave little attention to the needs or scheduling of two married singers working in the profession. They had to work out for themselves where and when they sang. Immediately following this activity, Balfe went to Parma to be with his pregnant wife in mid-February. However, before leaving Bergamo he had composed a cantata for one of his friends there. The short piece was for tenor and bass with a dedication that said "To Guglielmo Balfe's friend, Francesco Maria Zanchi". It is an autograph score and more like a Fanfare than a full cantata and it is dated Bergamo, February 1832.

When Lina's season at Parma was over they immediately left for Milan. From March to December 1832 Lina did not sing again. Their first child, Louisa Catherine Maria Balfe, was born probably in the Milan area between June and August 1832. The arrival of baby Louisa, however joyful for the couple, must also have brought some concerns for their economic welfare.

¹¹ See the report in the *Harmonicon* of August 1832, which says "... the new opera has experienced a most brilliant reception ... the principal singers, and Signora Roser [Balfe] in particular, exerted themselves with great effect" (186).

¹² The 1889 edition of *The Grove Dictionary of Opera* states, under "Luigi Ricci", that the opera failed, which appears to be incorrect. A 'failed opera' in Italy in the nineteenth century was generally pulled after the third night. Additionally, the opera was also performed at La Scala during the 1833 season. Pedrazzi also performed in it at that time.

Since their marriage Lina had been working regularly and while her pay would have been modest in those days, it was probably enough to support them, along with Balfe's irregular earnings, at that stage of their life. Whatever their circumstances they managed to survive until the start of the next Carnival season at the Teatro Carcano, Milan, which opened on 26 December 1832 with Lina in the role of Giulietta in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and mezzo-soprano Palmira Michel as Romeo. The tenor role of Tebaldo was performed by her partner from Novara, the role's creator, Lorenzo Bonfigli¹³. No doubt Balfe attended. Balfe's friend, the buffo bass Carlo Cambiaggio had now turned impresario. He was the manager at the Carcano, so Balfe was assured of getting work. The future certainly looked brighter. Almost immediately, Cambiaggio had Balfe singing in Rossini's *L'inganno felice* with Bonfigli. He then gave Balfe an assignment to write a new opera for his theatre. This was an opportunity that Balfe had been waiting for.

Balfe had worked on a libretto some time previously based on an early historical tale relating to Enrico IV in Lombardy. The libretto was possibly given to Balfe by one of the monks in the Oratory of San Carlo in Milan. The poet or author's name is not shown on the libretto, which indicates that the music for the work was written especially for the Oratory of San Carlo. No date was given. Additionally, Balfe's name is written on the libretto in handwriting that is clearly from the period¹⁴. The part that would become the female lead role and be sung by Lina Balfe at the later Carcano performance was written for a youth named 'Carlino'. The performance at the Oratory of San Carlo was probably sung by novices in the monastery as there was no female role in their libretto. In view of Balfe's activity in 1832 it may have been performed at the Oratory in 1831. The text for the libretto was appropriately adapted for the Teatro Carcano performance with the addition of the female role of Cristina. In general though, when the libretto for the Carcano performance is compared with the Oratory libretto they are essentially the same, except that the Oratory performance was given in two acts while the Carcano was in one act. How Balfe might have been involved with the Oratorio is unknown. Possibly Lina, who was a strong Catholic, may have had something to do with it. It's also possible that they had been married there and that would have been Balfe's way to pay for the ceremony? We don't know.

¹³ *Harmonicon*, March 1833. "The Teatro Carcano opened with Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, the part of Juliet by Madame Roser Balfe, Romeo by Mdlle. Michell, and Tebaldo (the tenor) by Bonfigli. Though this opera is far from being a novelty in Milan, it still retains a great share of popularity" (65). The opera had opened the previous season at La Scala with Bonfigli in the cast.

¹⁴ I am indebted to Alexander Weatherson of the Donizetti Society (London) for bringing this to my attention and giving me a copy of the libretto of *Enrico IV al passo della Marna*, the Oratory of San Carlo work.

In any event, Balfe's opera *Enrico IV al passo della Marna* premiered with some fanfare at the Teatro Carcano on 13 February 1833 (not at La Scala as stated in one of the early biographies) with the tenor Bonfigli as Enrico IV, Balfe as Constantino, Lina as Cristina, the soprano lead, and Cambiaggio as Gervasio. The opera was quite successful. Balfe was featured in one of the leading Milan musical periodicals the following week with a very complimentary article that was about a column and a half in length¹⁵. The opera was performed again during the 1834-1835 season in Milan at the Teatro Carcano. Later there were other productions in Genoa at the Teatro Carlo Felice, also in Lecco and in the Turin area in the town of Bra. Florence possibly also heard it. Francesco Lucca of Milan published *Enrico IV* in 1832. This was a major step-up for Balfe from his previous publishers. It was also to be the last new opera Balfe composed in Italy for many years.

The Cambiaggio connection paid off even more for Balfe. The impresario had decided to mount a production of Donizetti's delightfully sparkling new opera, *L'elisir d'amore* with Cambiaggio himself in the role of the quack, Dr Dulcamara, and Balfe as the braggadocio sergeant Belcore for 25 March 1833¹⁶. This was only eight months after the opera's premiere at the Teatro della Canobbiana in Milan in May 1832. There can be little doubt that this was a role ideally suited to Balfe's talents. The swaggering sergeant Belcore would have been beautifully presented by the Irishman. Balfe sang in two other operas, with Lina joining him in the opera *Elisa di Montaltieri* by Antonio Granara (1809-1836), along with Bonfigli at the Carcano before his season ended. He would meet again with his friend Carlo Cambiaggio the following year in Venice.

Despite his recent success as a composer, his focus was now on singing. Strangely, as will be seen, it was a time when he appeared to receive fewer engagements not more, while Lina's career was taking off at a rapid pace. Over the next several months Lina sang leading roles in a number of operas by Donizetti, Bellini, Mercadante and others. In Piacenza she sang with baritone Giorgio Ronconi (1810-1890) in *La straniera* and again with Ronconi in Mercadante's *I Normanni a Parigi*¹⁷. There were also reports that Balfe had gone on a tour with the horn player, Giovanni Puzzi who would later become one of Balfe's close friends in London along with Puzzi's wife, Giacinta. However, no documentary evidence has been found to support the fact that Balfe was travelling anywhere during this timeframe. Perhaps he helped his wife with learning the many new roles she was taking on?

¹⁵ See the periodical *Il barbiere di Siviglia, Giornale di Musica, Teatri e Varietà*, 21 February 1833, 8, 1.

¹⁶ Information provided by Giorgio Appolonia of Varese, Italy.

¹⁷ *Donizetti Society Journal* 5 (1984), article on a chronology of Giorgio Ronconi performances by Thomas G. Kaufman. See p. 183.

Their next joint appearance was at the Carnival season opening on 26 December 1833 in Mantua. Here Lina sang in Bellini's *La straniera* in the role of Alaide, a role she was quite familiar with. She later appeared in Ricci's *Chiara di Rosemberg* with her husband, after which she sang the title role in *Norma* with Teresa Brambilla as Adalgisa. Returning to Milan in the spring of 1834 she appeared at the Teatro della Canobbiana for the first time in *L'orfano della selva* by Carlo Coccia (1782-1873). This was followed by *Un episodio del San Michele* by Cesare Pugni (1802-1870), which had its premiere in June 1834 with Lina in the cast. She continued to push herself and sing wherever she could get work.

Balfe's friend from Paris, Maria Malibran, arrived in Milan in the spring of 1834. She was scheduled to make her debut at La Scala in Bellini's *Norma*. She didn't know it then, but Giuditta Pasta, the role's creator, would be in the audience for her debut. Malibran and Balfe were the same age, twenty-six and by now Malibran had the equivalent status of a Maria Callas in the 1950s. In his immediate future Balfe and Maria were about to sing together at La Scala, where her influence had prevailed upon the management to hire Balfe to sing opposite her in Rossini's *Otello* in May 1834. He would later compose an opera for Maria which she would sing in London. For Balfe, performing at La Scala had been an ambition since he first talked with Glossop a few years previously. They gave two performances of *Otello*, Balfe sang the role of Jago, which had originally been composed for tenor voice in 1816, but by its nature the role required a darker heavier voice and by tradition in the nineteenth century it was frequently transposed for a baritone. Maria sang Desdemona and Domenico Reina (1797-1843) sang the title role. Giuseppina (Josefa) Ruiz-Garcia, Malibran's half-sister¹⁸, sang the role of Rodrigo, which was normally sung by a tenor. The performances went well and Malibran was invited back with the same cast the following October.

After La Scala, Balfe and his wife went to Turin, where Lina was engaged to sing in three operas during the summer and autumn. All of the operas were local premieres. Malibran stayed on in Milan for about a month before going to Sinigaglia, where she was to sing in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Norma* and *La sonnambula* in July. In Turin Lina was paired again with the baritone Giorgio Ronconi at the Teatro Carignano in Cesare Pugni's (1802-1870) *Il disertore svizzero*, Ferdinand Hérold's (1791-1833) *Zampa* and Donizetti's *Parisina*. The tenor in the performances was Giovanni Bassadonna (1806?-1851), who created roles for Donizetti and others. Lina's career continued to be on the fast track. When Ronconi left Turin Balfe took over his part of Daniele in *Zampa*.

¹⁸ Josefa Ruiz-Garcia was the daughter of Manuel Garcia and his first wife, Manuela Moralez.

On 23 September Balfe wrote a personal letter in Italian to Giovanni Ricordi, the music publisher in Milan, detailing the performances in Turin mentioning the dramatic content of the opera *Zampa* and saying among other things that “Ronconi and my wife received great applause in Hérolde’s opera”¹⁹. The tone of the letter indicated that he had a good relationship with the founder of the music publishing empire, who was now one of Milan’s most important citizens. Balfe signed the letter, “tuo amico G. Balfe”. It was also indicative of Balfe’s learning skills that by now he was not only speaking Italian but also able to write it. He and Lina returned to Milan in early October where Malibran was already performing at La Scala in various Bellini operas. On 14 October Malibran and Balfe again sang in Rossini’s *Otello* for two performances.

By now the Balfes’ daughter, Louisa, was two years old and probably requiring more attention. The parents took some time off in Milan before proceeding to Lina’s next engagement, which would be at the Teatro Emeronittio (now the Malibran) at year end in Venice, where Lina was due to open in Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore* on 31 December 1834 in the role of Adina. Carlo Cambiaggio was scheduled to sing Dr. Dulcamara again and another future great Verdi baritone (*Rigoletto*, 1851, and *La traviata*, 1853, creator) Felice Varesi (1813-1889), was slated for the role of Belcore. The Nemorino was Filippo Tati, a role creator for Donizetti. Another Donizetti work followed, *Torquato Tasso*, an opera which had premiered a year earlier in Rome with the same cast. Lina sang the role of Eleonora and there were about ten performances.

Maria Malibran made her entrance into Venice in advance of her performances in that city which had anticipated her arrival for weeks. Carlo Cambiaggio, ever the promoter and opportunist had written a booklet with verse to celebrate her arrival. Venice basically closed down at the moment of her arrival at the Grand Canal and her entrance from a gondola on to St. Mark’s Square, where she and her party were escorted to the Palace where she was staying. She made her debut in Rossini’s *Otello* on 26 March. Balfe did not sing the role of Jago in Venice but performed Elmiro, a bass role, instead. There were three *Otellos*. Rossini’s *Cenerentola* followed with Balfe as Dandini after which *Norma* was scheduled. Lina joined Malibran in *Norma*, singing the role of Adalgisa in three performances. It was a remarkable culmination for Lina given all of the roles and places she had sung over the previous three years. While some of the audiences were critical of Malibran’s portrayal remembering Pasta’s of earlier times, it was a matter of personal taste, as Bellini was favourable to a Malibran interpretation. For Lina to be singing with Malibran in Bellini’s *Norma* at La Fenice no doubt was to be a high point in her career.

¹⁹ *Editors’ note*: This letter was in the personal possession of Basil Walsh.

The manager of the Teatro Emonittio, Gallo, was introduced to Malibran possibly by Cambiaggio, who seemed to know everyone. Gallo asked Malibran if she would consider giving performances for his theatre, which had been feeling the financial impact on seat sales with her presence and her sold-out performances at La Fenice. Malibran, who was always generous with her time, after a slight hesitation agreed to sing a benefit performance for him, choosing Bellini's *La sonnambula* as the opera. A date of 8 April was set for the performance at the Teatro Emonittio. In addition, she offered one performance of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, which would be sung at La Fenice with Gallo getting a percentage of the takings. Balfe was to be Figaro and Cambiaggio Dr Bartolo. Gallo's theatre was completely decorated with flowers for the one and only appearance by the great Maria Malibran on 8 April 1835 in *La sonnambula*. Balfe was set to sing the role of Count Rodolfo. The level of excitement was very intense by all reports. As the evening progressed the audience threw flowers at their *prima donna*, so much so that the entire stage was covered. Maria at one point slipped; Balfe grasped her and saved her from falling. In the process, her slipper became dislodged and fell off into the pit, where it immediately disappeared. The pianist Franz Liszt, in the audience that eventful night, counted thirty-six curtain calls²⁰.

It was a night to remember for the Balfes, as no doubt Lina was in the audience or backstage too. Maria refused to take any money from Gallo for her performance that evening. Gallo, quite awed by the turn of events, renamed his theatre the 'Teatro Malibran' – a name that endures to this day²¹. While with Balfe in Venice, Maria, recalling his compositional skills from Paris and hearing about his accomplishments in Italy, had called him the 'English Rossini' and had suggested that he compose an opera for her for London. There was some discussion of Hamlet as a subject but nothing seemed to develop on that front. He agreed to contact her when he found a suitable subject and libretto. She suggested that he hurry.

Neither the Balfes nor Malibran would ever sing in Venice again. The experience of that eventful evening at the Teatro Malibran was unique in their lives. Malibran left for London shortly after this, to perform *La sonnambula* again, this time in English, with Bellini in the audience. Balfe and his wife returned to Milan around the middle of April, and there they met Giovanni Puzzi, who was organizing some concerts in London. With Louisa now going on three Balfe and his wife must have had thought about their future and

²⁰ For a detailed account of Malibran's appearance at the Teatro Emonittio in *La sonnambula* see Bushnell 1980 (1979).

²¹ The Teatro Malibran which is not too far from the Teatro La Fenice in Venice, was refurbished in recent years and operas are still performed there. There is a beautiful book on the Teatro Malibran, that gives a listing of all of the performances there over the years (Biggi, Mangini 2001).

what was best for the family. Puzzi's offer was attractive as it meant that he had an immediate opportunity to work when he got to London. So he made up his mind and he, Lina and Louisa would move to London that April 1835. Since they now had some funds, most probably they sailed from Genoa to England towards the end of April, arriving in London sometime in mid-May.

The experience that Balfe gained in Italy greatly influenced his direction as a composer in London and elsewhere in the years ahead. His time in the operatic trenches also gave him a deep understanding of a singer's needs, which would be acknowledged by some of the leading singers who performed in his operas. Within a short period of time after arriving in England in May 1835 his unique talents would dramatically burst forth on the London scene to create a whole new genre of English opera for what would soon become the Victorian age in Britain.

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Lady Morgan in Italy: A Traveller with an Agenda

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Abstract:

Lady Morgan (née Sydney Owenson) was a professional Irish traveller and travel-writer, who spent over a year on the peninsula. The travelogue *Italy* (1821) she was commissioned to write on the basis of the reputation she had acquired as a novelist (e.g. *The Wild Irish Girl*, 1806) and a socio-political writer (*France*, 1817), left a mark on Italy and on the understanding of Italy in Great Britain. Her writings, in fact, helped disseminate the ideal of a unified Italy and influence British and Irish public opinion in favour of Italy's aspirations to cast off foreign or domestic autocratic rule. Moreover, she used her travelogue to serve the cause of Ireland disguising a patriotic message about her home country under her many sallies about nationalism and the right to self-determination concerning Italy. The political impact of her book, unusual for a travel account written by a woman, was enhanced by Morgan's radical ideology, the gender bias of her observations and her original methods. The present article purposes to examine Morgan's double, feminine and masculine, approach of mixing solid documentation with apparently frivolous notes originating in the feminine domain of society news, commentary on the domestic scene and emotional reporting on social and historical events. Distrusting male-authored official history, Morgan gave a central place in her work to the informal sources from which she gathered her insights about Italy. Analysing how she came to obtain the contemporary input for elaborating her ideas will be the aim of this chapter which will dwell on the more worldly aspects of Morgan's sojourn in the peninsula focussing on the company she kept, the activities she partook of, the events of a domestic nature she witnessed.

Keywords: Anglo-Irish Literature, Italy, Lady Morgan (Sydney Owenson), Travel Writing

Among the professional Irish travellers and travel-writers who spent some time on the peninsula, the name of the author of *Italy* (1821), Lady Morgan (née Sydney Owenson), comes to the fore as one on whom Italy left a mark

and who, through her book, left a mark on Italy and on the understanding of Italy in Great Britain. Her writings, in fact, helped disseminate the ideal of a unified Italy and influence British and Irish public opinion in favour of Italy's aspirations to cast off foreign or domestic autocratic rule. The political impact of her book, unusual for a travel account written by a woman, was enhanced by Morgan's radical ideology, the gender bias of her observations and her original methods.

The keynote of Morgan's production prior to her visit to Italy had been to give life and visibility to Gaelic culture through her national tales and to contribute through literature to the construction of an Irish identity. After her journeys to France and Italy, she came to see that her brand of nationalism was part of the European drive to recognize national identity and that the greatest obstacle to the affirmation of this idea was a lack of freedom. Consequently, *Italy* is replete with examples of how freedom was oppressed by the church and by foreign and domestic autocratic powers and of how, in certain happy moments of the country's history (the republican ones, mostly), it had instead flourished, fostering an awareness of national identity. The travelogue traces the development of the idea of civic, social and national identity through history, imposed at times even violently by means of revolutions, and denounces the obstacles this idea encountered, highlighting the suffering of an oppressed people. In Morgan's mind, society had to be made aware of past and present achievements or injustices so that reforms could be implemented. This was the chief aim she hoped to achieve with her book.

A gendered bias is also an important component of *Italy*. The way Morgan experienced and represented the places she visited was determined by what she believed were essentially feminine components, 'affection' and 'sentiment': "I trust, however, that in a woman's work, sex may plead its privilege and that if the heart will occasionally make itself a party in the concern, its intrusions may be pardoned, as long as the facts detailed are backed beyond the possibility of dispute, by the authority of contemporary testimonies" (1821, I, 71). Next to the sentimental, feminine bias, thus, she also puts forward a masculine insistence on documentation as "the authority of contemporary testimonies". In this double, feminine and masculine, approach consists her originality, which distinguishes her travelogue from similar publications.

Italy intersperses historical chapters "firmly located in the masculine domain" of documented political writing, as Anne O'Brien notes (2003, 179), with other chapters originating in the feminine domain of society news, commentary on the domestic scene and emotional reporting on social and historical events (such as, for instance, the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799). The division, however, is deceptive because both domains represent "a platform from which she could express political views" (183). In reporting with a political bias on what was considered the feminine domain and in using what she deemed the privilege of her sex, as detailed above, Morgan illustrates the

chief tenet of her *Patriotic Sketches* that “Politics can never be a woman’s science; but patriotism must naturally be a woman’s sentiment” (1807, I, 12). Whether the term patriotism applied to her own or to a foreign country became increasingly irrelevant in her cosmopolitan outlook while much of what she wrote about Italy had implications for her own country.

Although she may appear frivolous, Morgan went about her fact-finding mission in a thorough and comprehensive way supplementing the information drawn from the documents she has consulted (most of them French) with the observation of facts and the integration in her text of the opinions of her Italian acquaintances. Her construction of Italy is, thus, filtered through an Italian gaze and shaped by the words and writings of like-minded contemporaries who shared her ideology (Sismondi, Ginguené, Breme, Botta, Rossetti, and many more).

Analysing how she came to obtain the contemporary input for elaborating her ideas about Italy will be the aim of this chapter. Her influential travelogue, *Italy*, has often been studied as a political or ethical text; the time has come to look at the more worldly aspects of Morgan’s sojourn in the peninsula focussing on the company she kept, the activities she partook of, the events of a domestic nature she witnessed. Distrusting male-authored official history and perceiving that Metternich’s Europe was experiencing an underground liberal agitation not documented yet and whose aim was the subversion of the Council of Vienna status quo, Morgan gathered her insights about Italy from informal sources to which she gave a central place in her work. Although she came to Italy with preconceived ideas and a blueprint of what she should write, the apparently anodyne and superficial aspects of her sojourn are the ones which changed her attitude and inspired her to adopt the influential positions she took towards Italy and, concomitantly, towards Ireland. Moreover the account of contemporary life inspires the more interesting and lively sections of Morgan’s *Italy*, allowing the reader to have a glimpse of Italian society in the Restoration period on the eve of the momentous events that would lead to the unification of the nation.

1. *Sojourn in Italy*

The journey to Italy of Sydney Morgan and her husband, Sir Charles, took place between May 1819 and May 1820 with a period of several months of preparation in London and Paris where Sydney immersed herself in the study of Italian history and literature and tried to refresh her Italian in which she had been tutored by a friend of her father’s in her school days. The diaries and letters collected in *Passages from my Autobiography* (1859) and *Memoirs* (1862) indicate how, even before she and her husband, Sir Charles, had left Dublin, they were getting ready for Italy through a serious program of studies. “We are deep in the lore and literature of old Italy”, reads an entry in her

diary dated August 1818, “[but] we want to get at living Italy as she now is, after the passage of so many recent and important events” (Morgan 1859, 2).

Morgan’s immersion into “living Italy” through a year-long stay, her classical itinerary¹, the participation in many day-to-day events, as well as her social connections, determine the nature of the book and of her engagement with the present. Although she made sure she saw all the sights a tourist is expected to see in Italy, she also engaged with the Italian Other trying to assimilate into the community, achieve a thorough understanding of the situation and form an opinion of her own. Indeed, her sojourn in Italy was denoted by greater social engagement than is customary with other cultural travellers.

2. *Genesis and Purpose of Italy (1821)*

Morgan’s *Italy*, hovering on the borderline between description and interpretation, guidebook and personal diary, pamphlet and history, was written in the wake of her controversial *France* (1817), an account imbued with sympathy for revolutionary and Napoleonic France and caustic about the nation as it was after the Restoration. *France* made waves in Great Britain and gave her a reputation of being a Jacobin, attracting a lot of abuse for Morgan. Friends and admirers, however, as she wrote in her diary, were asking for “a repeat performance” (1859, 186) which this time should regard a country that had also emerged from the Napoleonic adventure, Italy. Invitations to write about Italy also came from prominent figures of the target country itself. In a letter to her sister, Morgan reports that “My two Italians [Confalonieri and Capponi, whom she had met in Paris] urged our visit to Italy, and said ‘they only asked such a book as ‘France’ adding ‘and with such feelings of sympathy with the oppressed as in your Irish novels’” (*ibidem*). This was to be the book her publisher, Henry Colburn, commissioned for the substantial sum of two thousand pounds and which was published in 1821.

Morgan’s residence in Italy, thus, was of a professional nature. She came to Italy as a reporter, not just as a passer-by or a mere tourist like many who crossed the Alps in those days. Travelling to Italy for her was not a rite of passage as it had been for the young men of the classical eighteenth century Grand Tour, but it certainly provided the occasion for honing her political ideas and sharpening her sense of national identity. Her agenda was that of “aiding the great cause, the regeneration of Italy” (1859, 131). Like a doctor, she felt the pulse of the country, detecting signs of disease and signs of change (such as an impatience for the restored governments and the emergence of a

¹ The Morgans’ tour covered Turin, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, the Adriatic coast, Loreto, Verona, Padua and Venice.

sense of national identity). Diagnosis and prescriptions were to be made by conveying up-to-date information and impressions in order to elicit sympathy for the oppressed and for those that wanted to escape the restoration of the ancient regime sponsored by the Holy Alliance. On the other hand, however, *Italy* boasts a heavy historical apparatus that dwells on the wrongs suffered by Italy but also suggests (in the wake of such a historian as Simonde de Sismondi) some remedies to be found in the republican past.

The influence of the beliefs Morgan held and of the people she met resulted in a book whose ‘business’ was to go beyond the practically-oriented transmission of facts of mere travel writing. She had an ethical and political agenda, that of doing “good by telling truth according to our impressions” (1821, I, 124) in a book that would have a far-ranging effect. By revising current interpretations of Italy, denouncing the past and present sufferings of the country, underlining the actual state of degradation and repression and highlighting the achievements of the past Napoleonic era and of its modernising project, she purposed to prepare the English-speaking public for the new developments which were brewing during her stay.

Morgan’s passionate affirmations that her book was written to serve the cause of Italy have also, however, another motivation. Besides serving the cause of Italy, she used her travelogue to serve the cause of Ireland disguising a patriotic message about her home country under her many sallies about nationalism and the right to self-determination concerning Italy. I have argued elsewhere that “[b]etween the lines regarding the political and social conditions of the various states of the Italian peninsula, there lurks a tacit comparison of the plight of Italy and that of Ireland” (Badin 2006, 334).

Morgan’s socializing, described amply and narcissistically in her travelogue and her autobiographical writings (*Passages from my Autobiography* and *Memoirs*) provides more than gossipy information. The rituals of society – balls, receptions, *conversazioni* – she took part in, the plays and operas, church ceremonies and charity events she attended, the excursions and the holidays she enjoyed led to an understanding of the manners and customs of that society and, through her reflections on the social and moral codes of the guest country, to an understanding of her own. Even the peculiarities of social conventions, domestic arrangements or details of dress and furnishings become in her eyes signifiers of political realities. As I have argued, “Such is Lady Morgan’s political passion that she reads signs of Italian oppression or conversely of the patriot’s love in the most unexpected everyday events” (Badin 2006, 343). Customs, social manners and culture, people and their doings, landscape and the arts, all are tropes or symbols of a political reality through which she attempts to capture the essence of the country. As O’Brien argues, “she saw in art a social context, she saw in landscape a historical *drapeau*, she saw in society divisions and classes, and she saw in culture the voice of the people” (2003, 178).

3. *Social Life in Italy*

As the Grand Tour – and the forms of travel that followed it – had a leisurely pace, there were multiple occasions for socializing either among the British visitors and expatriates who were present in Italy in large numbers or with that portion of Italian society that mixed with foreigners and could speak English. Entertaining and being entertained, participating in *conversazioni*, mingling with the locals for an evening at the opera were an essential part of a stay abroad and so it was for Morgan, with the advantage that her knowledge of French acquired through a Huguenot education, opened many other doors for her, allowing her to mix with the mostly French-speaking Italian intelligentsia. Thus she did not limit herself to the artificial community of British expatriates with their patterns of sociability exported to Italy from London, but congregated with the Italians. She was not a resident but she resided long enough in some Italian cities not only to participate in the usual social activities of visitors but also to make friends and become involved with political questions.

The social dimension of her stay had been prepared as accurately as the cultural one in the months spent in London and Paris before setting off for Italy. Besides reading and studying the language, she had also tried to meet as many Italians as she could. Looking at her guest book of this period, she felt flattered by the variety of Italian names registered:

There were, too, the Neri and Bianchi from Florence, Imperialists and Nationalists from Lombardy, and Guelphs, Ghibelines and Carbonari, with romanticists and classicists from all parts of Italy [...]. How prettily these historic-poetical names write down among the O's and the Macs of my 'native troops!' The Strozzi and Frangipani, and Pucci, and Piasasco, and Ugoni and Pozzo, and Cinetelli, and Castiglione, and Pepe – all connected with struggles for liberty, and with illustrations in letters, both in modern and ancient times. (Morgan 1829, 142)

These sorts of contacts and the letters of introduction the Morgans were given, opened for them the doors of the best salons and aristocratic and intellectual circles of the cities they visited, thus allowing them to obtain an insider's view of the cultural and political climate of the day. In return, Morgan spoke highly of Italians and of Italian hospitality, contradicting current views about the lack thereof. *Italy* can, indeed, be read as an elaborate thank-you-note to all the people who were kind to her.

Morgan, especially in the letters addressed to her sister, often brags about the extraordinarily warm welcome she received in Italy. According to her, they were “the only strangers for whom the Italians make dinners” (1862, II, 119). The couple received invitations to balls and receptions in private palaces, to evenings in the *casino* or *Circolo dei nobili* the exclusive clubs of the aristocracy, and to that particular form of entertainment and instruction represented

by salons and *conversazioni*. Carriages were put at the couple's disposal so that they could indulge in the pleasures of the Corso, the driving up and down the main avenue of a city in order to see and to be seen. They were also offered the use of a box for their evenings at the opera or at a playhouse. In Florence, Capponi put an apartment in Palazzo Corsini at their disposal. Their new friends organized outings for them (such as an escapade from Milan to Pavia and another to Genoa) and helped them find a summer house on Lake Como where the Milanese escaped from the heat of the summer. They were, indeed, covered with all sorts of attentions. In reporting the courtesies they received, Morgan certainly displays great vanity, but as Walchester argues (2007, 139, *passim*), her celebrity abroad also allowed her to express unconventional and dangerous views and therefore had to be highlighted as in the following examples:

The Count Confalonieri, and his lovely Countess, came to us the moment of our arrival, and from that moment attentions, visits, friendship, and services on all sides. Madame Confalonieri began by taking us to the Corso, and introduced us at the Casino, where the nobility are exclusive [...]. Not only the Liberal party have visited and invited us, but the Austrian Commander-in-Chief have been to see us, and we have spent an evening there. (Morgan 1862, II, 93)

In Florence the Countess of Albany, Bonnie Prince Charlie's widow and Alfieri's lover (Morgan half-jokingly calls her "the legitimate queen of England") kept "the seat of honour vacant for [her]" in her celebrated salon which vied with Madame de Staël's in Coppet (*ibidem*, 116-117). The highlight of the Morgans' stay in Turin was the welcome they were given when they visited the university in the company of Count Prospero Balbo, then Vice-Chancellor. Classes were interrupted so that the professors could meet the celebrated author and her learned husband. The account she gives of the event in a letter to her sister, brimming with pride and amusement, reflects Sydney's self-indulgent delight in being honoured in such a way:

Count de Balbo, minister, [...] as head of the university, gave orders that all the professors should attend to receive us. At the University, imagine my shame to see all the learned muftis in their robes, each in his department, receiving us at the doors of their halls and colleges. In the Cabinet of Physique, they prepared all sorts of chemical experiments for us, &c. &c. These poor gentlemen were under arms three days for us. (*Ibidem*, 92)

Although Morgan realized that the attentions they had received were due to the influence "of the illustrious person under whose sanction we visited the university", yet she "remained deeply impressed with a sense of the kindness and patience of the learned individuals, who so cheerfully quitted more important avocations to contribute to our information and entertainment" (1821, I, 41).

In relating many similar occasions, the middle-class Sydney not only flaunts the high regard in which her rank, fame and intellectual gifts were held abroad but compensates for the fact that in the eyes of her fellow countrymen she was still a former governess, the daughter of an impecunious actor, who pretended to belong to the elite. Morgan, however, was not aware that even her so-called friends exchanged comments in which we may detect a note of perplexity for her exuberant and brash character. That same Count Confalonieri who gave her such a warm welcome and exchanged so many friendly letters with the Morgans even from his exile, sounds less than enthusiastic when he writes to Capponi: “Ella è un’ottima donna; ma a dire il vero, non ho grande opinione del suo criterio e del suo tatto, e ne tengo una migliore del suo spirito, e del suo cuore principalmente” (“She is an excellent woman but, to say the truth, I have no great opinion either of her common sense or of her tact, although I have a much higher opinion of her spirit and, especially, of her heart”, Confalonieri 1911, 126).

Pellegrino Rossi, the politician and jurist, and later Minister of Justice of the Papal States, accused her of reporting gossip about him and wrote to Confalonieri “[C]erto quando consimili indegnità si ripetono a un donna dal calibro della M. potrei sospettare che lo si fosse fatto per un fine anche più indegno” (“Certainly when such ignominies are recounted to a woman of M.’s disposition, I could suspect that it was done with an even more ignominious purpose”, *ibidem*, 349). Most of the time, however, her social relations confirmed the idea she liked to cultivate about herself as that of an aristocratic radical who, like Madame de Staël, fought her battles with the pen and witty conversation.

The “flurry of pleasures” that greeted the Morgans in the first major city where they sojourned, Turin, is indicative of the rhythm of their social life while in Italy. A letter to Lady Clark, Sydney’s sister, well illustrates the whirlwind of those first days in Italy:

I must give you one of our days at Turin. From nine to twelve, morning, we received visits from professors and literati who accompanied us to see the sights. Every one dined at two o’clock. Between four and five, regularly, the Countess Valperga called for us in an open carriage, and we drove to see some villa near the town. By seven o’clock we were back for the Corso, where all the nobility drive up and down till the opera begins. From thence we went to a coffee-house and had ices, and then to the Opera, where, the whole night, visits were received, and everything was attended to but the music; by eleven we were at home. (Morgan 1862, II, 92)

There were also more peaceful activities which provided a lot of food for thought. Like true Italians, the Morgans often participated in *conversazioni*, evenings spent in brilliant debates among hand-picked congenial guests around a famed host or hostess like the Countess of Albany in Florence, Countess Valperga di Masino in Turin or Marchese Berio in Naples. A brilliant conversationalist, Morgan appreciated those spaces in Florence, Naples and Venice, in which new currents of philosophical, literary and political opinion were circu-

lating while she complained that “in Rome a *conversazione* is an assembly where nobody converses” (1821, II, 403). Neither domestic nor openly political, a salon was the proper sphere for female agency. Mostly ruled by women, literary salons and *conversazioni* were often cosmopolitan spaces fostering an exchange of ideas and values and, in the nineteenth century, of patriotic sentiment and political engagement. To a cosmopolitan feminist like Morgan they offered a model of gendered history in the making. Moreover, she enjoyed the opportunity these gatherings offered her to shine in spite of her linguistic disability. But above all they became her chief sources of information about contemporary issues which could not be found in written texts. In the days before the circulation of daily press, the *conversazioni* were a weather glass of cultural and political change and a privileged window on public opinion and on the perception of what made the country tick.

While the description of social life in *Italy* is never an end in itself and provides a glimpse of things of greater import, so does the absence of a proper social life. In cities like Milan, Morgan notes that social life was conducted mainly outdoors (the Corso, the Opera and the *Caff *) since large gatherings in private houses in the Austrian-dominated regions would attract the attention of the secret police: “The Milanese are aware that their house, if open to such indiscriminate society as must make up a crowded assembly, would forward the views of that fearful espionage which [...] has now become the bugbear of Lombardy” (1821, I, 63). In spite of this, the contacts established in this city under siege were the strongest and they were to continue years later, when many of Morgan’s friends were suffering from the consequences of the upheavals of 1821 which she had seen in the making. The social connections she acquired during that year were to blossom in her patronage of Italian exiles,² which confirmed her political engagement, but they would also inspire her to establish a salon of her own in her Dublin residence at 35, Kildare Street. Morgan’s salon, alongside her attempt to bring Italian opera to Dublin, are an expression of the flowering of a cosmopolitan society in Ireland.

4. *Italian Contacts*

The people Morgan consorted with in that year were her most important sources of information and indoctrination. Thanks to her extrovert character and to her letters of introduction, she could count on a wide circle of acquaintances and made the most of the relations she established with all classes of people. To her great surprise and satisfaction, some of the intellectuals that frequented

² The Marshall Osborn Collection of The Beinecke Library of Yale University holds a substantial collection of letters addressed to Lady Morgan, some of which, by former Italian acquaintances mostly in exile, have been published in Badin 2011.

Italian salons belonged (like herself) to the middle classes. While the *parvenue* Lady Morgan could cite proudly the honours she had received from the aristocracy, her democratic self was pleased to note:

We had an opportunity of observing, that merit and talent are there a full substitute for quarterings and *crachats*; that in the saloons of the palace Masino, the Planas, the Carenas, the Borsons, were associated with the descendants of feudal Counts and gothic Barons; while the liberal and philosophic minister, Balbo, and the ultra, but very agreeable, De Maistre, disputed amicably upon points of literature and poetry, however they might differ upon politics. (1821, I, 59)

The scientists and academics mentioned above gathered in the salon of Countess Valperga di Masino who was a great philanthropist and a hostess renowned for her intellectual gifts and for her hospitality. She belonged to a class of moderate dissidents who had bridged the passage from the Napoleonic era to the new conservative state and who, having been shaped by French influences, were actively or passively opposing the more retrograde aspects of Restoration despotism and preparing to reform and liberalize the new state. Pleased though part of this intelligentsia was with the return of the King, they could not forego the advances that had been obtained in fifteen years of French government and they expressed their dissatisfaction by joining those Masonic lodges that had had such an importance in the Piedmontese Enlightenment. The Morgans who were also Freemasons³ could thus obtain a privileged insiders' view of the ideas and of the schemes that were being aired. In the first part of the nineteenth century, Freemasons in Italy aimed at bringing about the fall of the temporal power of the Church and establishing governments inspired by reason and a secular ideology. The Morgans shared these ideals and Lady Morgan's personal pantheon included aristocrats or plebeians, provided they cared for the public good.

The leading light *in absentia* of Turinese society was Vittorio Alfieri whose memory was still alive among the many people who had known him and those for whom he was a model. Morgan's sojourn in Turin reinforced her cult of that democratic aristocrat who fought his battles with his writings bequeathing "to posterity the expression of his hatred, his pity, and contempt of a government and court, whose existence were incompatible with the independence he adored, and the vocation he had adopted" (*ibidem*, 51). Morgan, too, liked to think of herself as invested with the high mission of opposing culture to despotism and of becoming, through her works, the spiritual guide of the nation. The atmosphere she found in Turin was a source of inspiration and encouraged

³ Morgan and her husband had been received in a Masonic lodge in Paris during their second visit there, as she recounts in *Passages from my Autobiography* (1859, 290-291, 300). Although she did not take this too seriously and relates it in a humorous tone, being a Freemason helped in establishing contacts in Italy.

her to imitate in her writings “the wild and noble petulance of well-founded indignation” (*ibidem*).

Conversations with Alfieri’s successors in Turin were not her only source of inspiration. She was also presented with articles and pamphlets that provided her with material on which to base her critique of the current government and a more articulate idealization of the early Napoleonic era, based on an understanding of the reforms introduced by the French. Some of the detailed suggestions for improvements and reform that she offered in her text, for instance, can be traced to Fernando Dal Pozzo’s *Opuscoli Politico-legali d’un Avvocato Milanese originario Piemontese*. After an evening in Turin conversing with her, the eminent jurist and politician sent her his anonymously published work, being aware, as he wrote in the accompanying letter, that she was not afraid of “politico-juridical topics” and that she was inspired by the “sublime idea” of knowing the localities she visited in depth instead of being content with the external aspects of a country or with the opinions of only one social class (Badin 2011, 48)⁴. This is but one example of how her association with the Piedmontese intelligentsia provided amusements as well as ideas to appropriate and prompted much food for thought.

The socialites she met in Milan and some other cities (especially Naples) were more politically engaged than her Turinese friends and some of them belonged, like Federico Confalonieri, to the movement of the Carboneria. It was through Confalonieri, an old acquaintance from her Paris days, that she came in touch with the journal *Il Conciliatore* (1818-1819), a bi-weekly publication under the editorship of Silvio Pellico, which spread liberal ideas while launching Romanticism in Italy. The dispute opposing Classicists and Romanticists, at the heart of the concerns of *Il Conciliatore*, is amply summarized in chapter XVII of *Italy*, “Literary Disputes in Italy”, actually written by Sir Charles but reflecting also his wife’s sentiments and incorporating many of Pellico’s and Breme’s views. A sign of the friendship Confalonieri and the other editors of the journal bore the couple was the publication in issue 83 of the journal, of a long article by Rasori on Sir Charles Morgan’s philosophical and scientific work.

⁴ In his letter of 10 May 1819, Dal Pozzo writes: “Vous m’avez fait l’honneur de me dire que des discussions politico-legales ne vous effrayaient pas tout-à-fait, et que même elles étaient du goût de Monsieur votre mari. Je n’espère cependant pas que vous aurez le courage, avec votre imagination riante, de vous arrêter longtemps dans ces déserts, hormis qu’une plus sublime idée, véritablement digne de vous, ne vous y engage; celle de connaître véritablement les localités, plus que ne fait ordinairement la foule des voyageurs, qui ne considèrent que l’extérieur des nations, qui ne voient que la capitale, et qu’une seule classe de la société” (Badin 2011, 48). Morgan repeatedly mentions and praises Ferdinando Dal Pozzo’s pamphlet on the benefits of the revolutionary system in Piedmont. Later on, when he was an exile in London, he contacted her again and a friendly exchange of letters followed. Dal Pozzo was one of the first and most explicit in evaluating positively the impact of Morgan’s travelogue and in recognizing her role in favour of Italy.

The journal was financed by Count L. Porro Lambertenghi, in whose house the group met, and its contributors, besides Pellico, were Confalonieri, Porro Lambertenghi himself, Ludovico Di Breme, and many other intellectuals involved in the political and philosophical life of their times. Having been censored several times, the journal was eventually suppressed by the Austrian police. By 1821 many of its editors were jailed or exiled and the heroic phase of Italian Romanticism came to a premature end. Not, however, without having transmitted some of their ideals to Lady Morgan through, for instance, Ludovico Di Breme, the father of Italian Romanticism, whose “deep affections were concentrated upon the regeneration of Italy and its re-union into one *corps de nation*” (Morgan 1821, I, 57n.). In *Passages from my Autobiography*, she was to reminisce about the thrilling climate of those days: “The terrible hereafter, which pursued them from their palaces to their dungeons, was then undreamed of in their laughing philosophy, for they were full of hope and enthusiastic expectations of the liberation of their glorious native land at no distant period” (1859, 185n).

As the mother of the national tale and the collector, before Moore, of ancient Irish airs, Morgan could well sympathize with the linguistic and cultural nationalism of these early Romantics, admiring their endeavours to recover a national literary tradition and condemning in their wake the disregard for the models and the subject matter of the past she had witnessed in the literary production of her Italian contemporaries:

The Italians, notwithstanding the example of Dante, Ariosto and their followers, have been compelled to renounce the idea of a national literature, and have confined their poetic efforts for a long series of years, to reproducing, in an endless succession, the mythology and sentiments of antiquity; to the entire neglect of all those noble and spirit-stirring subjects, which were offered in the history of the middle ages, when Italy had a political existence. [...] [T]o hold up the transactions of the middle ages as subjects for literary composition, is to turn the public attention upon those virtues and those glories which remind the Italians that they had an ancestry. It is placing before their eyes the blessings of independence, and the substantial comforts which accompany liberty”. (1821, II, 137-139)

The promotion of historical themes, especially those going back to the age of the republics and the Lombard League, reminds us of how much Morgan owed to Sismondi, the common source of inspiration of *Il Conciliatore* and of her own views. It was but a short step, in their minds, from an ideal of linguistic and literary unity as was to be found in the past, to political unity. Breme’s assumption that “all’unico vero sistema letterario tien prossimamente dietro l’unico sistema intellettuale e morale d’un popolo” (“a thorough literary frame of mind will be closely followed by the only acceptable moral and intellectual frame of mind of a people”, Breme 1979, 97) is echoed in Morgan’s “There are very few instances in which the political and literary enthusiasm are not found together” (1821, II, 140).

The objective of the journal was to make Italians aware that the nation had always existed as a linguistic and literary entity and all that was needed was to awaken national conscience through literature as a means to reaffirm identity. The notion was fully shared by Morgan as proven by her fiction and the opinions she upheld. The literary battles waged by the nascent Romanticism could actually be interpreted “as a means of energising their countrymen” (1821, II, 139) through an ideological campaign against Austria even while they promoted moral and economic reforms. Indeed, reforms, in the Irish author’s views, were a way to show love for one’s country. “It is not difficult to conceive”, writes Morgan, “[...] that the advocates for an innovation in literature should be found among that description of persons who are zealous for political reform” (140).

On this account, Morgan drew a flattering portrait of some gentlemen-manufacturers, gentlemen-farmers and gentlemen-reformers who, especially in Lombardy and Tuscany, had founded their success on trade and profit-making activities even while entertaining enlightened attitudes towards their dependents and dreaming of reforms that would improve the community. Their civic virtues made them appear in Morgan’s eyes as the new patriots of Italy, an example to be followed. Conversations with them were the source of her understanding of economic life and necessary reforms. The Marchese di Breme (Ludovico di Breme’s father) in Piedmont, Federico Confalonieri and Porro Lambertenghi in Milan, Gino Capponi and Cout Ginori in Florence, although belonging to ancient and glorious families, did not “dream away life” in “luxurious lethargy” like many aristocrats (*ibidem*, 41) but contributed to modernizing the country by introducing new machinery and services in industry, farming and urban life, such as the application of steam to transport and better illumination of cities by gas. Morgan particularly admired the advances in education represented by Lancastrian schools which several of her friends sponsored, having brought the idea back from England. Factories like Ginori’s porcelain manufacture, La Doccia, for one, were “the object of a benevolent citizen, seconded by a liberal fortune, and ennobled by patriotic intentions, and by liberal and philosophical views” (42).

It is a consequence of what Kucich defines Morgan’s “feminized cosmopolitan outlook” (2009, 154) that her interpretation of patriotism is not simply equivalent to nationalism but also an affirmation of civic virtues such as fostering reforms and promoting wellbeing.

Whichever way, indeed we turned in Milan, we found traces of the ardent but rational patriotism, with which a little band of nobles, with whom those truly excellent persons are intimately connected, are unceasingly occupied in bettering at once the moral and the physical aspect of their country and are preparing it to receive that liberty which, however apparently remote in the present most unhappy moment, by the very nature of things, cannot long be delayed (Morgan 1821, I, 123).

Such civic virtues were particularly developed in women, whose history Morgan tried to tell in her unfinished work, *Woman and Her Master* (1840) where, in Kucich' words, she argues that "women's social interventions prove vital in forwarding the causes of civilization, national reform, and international peace" (2009, 156). Given that much of her time in Italy was spent in female company, encounters with open-minded women were particularly important for the fervent feminist. The examples she had the opportunity of observing, whether negative or positive, led her to refine her ideology concerning the fight in favour of liberty and against oppressive institutions, the former in her eyes including also the emancipation of women. Admittedly she found fault with much she saw concerning the feminine condition, which confirmed her belief that, as I have argued elsewhere, "women could not blossom if their sex was oppressed by patriarchal institutions and there could be no free women if there was no free nation" (Badin 2007, 166).

Thus, the negative representations she often gives of Italian women are not dictated by contempt but by her criticism of an oppressive society and by her advocacy of a proper education and a stronger role for them in the social and economic life of the country. Women of the idle and moneyed classes, such as "the ladies of the *Biscotini*" in Milan, who went about distributing sweets to the poor, often became the target of her satire. As a professional woman, she viewed their charitable role, imposed by the Church and by an unenlightened patriarchal aristocracy, as making them marginalized and subservient subjects. Similarly she blames Italian women (much out of hearsay rather than from direct experience) for succumbing to the practice of *cicisbeismo* and (surprisingly) for neglecting their maternal role. Their behaviour, however, is again interpreted as the result of "the demoralizing bigotry, which was calculated to make women concubines and devotees, but which could not produce good wives and good mothers" (Morgan 1821, I, 115).

Many of her negative constructions were derived from literature and widespread clichés. Actual encounters with Italian women helped change her mind and refine her ideas about Italian society. The charm, elegance and vivacity characterizing "the ladies of Milan" was attributed by her to "the promptitude with which their fine organization has responded to liberal and improved institutions" (Morgan 1821, I, 168), in other words, those introduced in the revolutionary and Napoleonic era. Whenever among the nobility of Italy, she encountered what she esteemed to be educated and virtuous women enjoying a normal family life, she expressed surprise and took this as an opportunity for underlining the positive effects of the modernisation and enlightenment brought about by the French. Thus Marchesa Pallavicini's family in Genoa is an emblem of the "improvements which have taken place in the moral and domestic habits of the people, once so universally accused of having none" (252). Thanks to that liberal noblewoman who had privately organized performances of Alfieri's tragedies, "a new image" was presented in the salons of a Genoese palace:

A family of three generations, a young and lovely mother, occupied with the care and education of her children, an youthful, *an attached* husband, and an anxious and amiable grandmother presiding over all. [...] No *cecisbeo*, no *patito*, no meddling confessor! Such were the effects of that recent *disturbance of social order*. (*Ibidem*)

The mere existence of such families is a display of ‘patriotism’ and promises a revolution that from the domestic sphere will spread to the whole social and political body of the nation.

The library of Casa Trivulzio in Milan, an unusual addition to “the Marchioness’s own suite”, affords an image of healthy morals and emancipated and cultivated females, holding the same promise as the Pallavicini household in Genoa:

[W]e found the young ladies of the family cultivating all the arts with diligence and success; forwarded by their governess and masters, and presided by their father and mother: in a word, one of those blessed scenes of domestic education and endearment, supposed only to be found in England, and certainly unknown in Italy a few years back. In the study of the ladies Trivulzi, existed the true antidote to heartless intrigue and idle dissipation. (*Ibidem*, 121-122)

Besides women in their family environment, Morgan also encountered several intellectual women who elicited her admiration and influenced the shaping of her beliefs. In Turin Morgan was at the bedside of a fellow poet and author of national tales, Diodata Saluzzo, contessa di Roero di Revello, in poor health at the moment of her visit, whose experiments in historical narrative and her use of the Italian vernacular instead of French, as was customary in Piedmont, introduced the Irish writer to some of the crusades of Italian Romanticism. Although one was a conservative and the other a Jacobin, they were brought together by cultural nationalism, by feminism and by the influence of Madame de Staël. Both had put their literary profession above family life and had created strong and emancipated literary heroines. Morgan appreciated Diodata Saluzzo’s romance, *Gaspara Stampa*, and the volume of her poems, *Versi di Diodata Saluzzo Rovero* (1816), which the author had sent her. Morgan’s enthusiasm induced Lord Byron to read it too. In spite of Diodata’s illness, their encounter must have been lively and instructive since Morgan commented: “but neither sickness nor pain had dimmed the brilliancy of her conversation, nor paralysed the activity of her acute and inquiring mind” (Morgan 1821, I, 43). Met at the beginning of Morgan’s sojourn in Italy, Diodata Saluzzo was one of the examples which would make the Irish author affirm that “Italy has produced more learned women than any part of Europe” (292), a fact that was confirmed by the many portraits of women hanging in the ante-room of the library of the Institute of Arts and Sciences in Bologna. Admiringly – and, as a feminist, proudly – Morgan tells her readers that “the chairs of the university, down to the present

day, have been occasionally filled by female professors” (291) which was not the case in Great Britain.

Both negative and positive impressions drawn from her observation of female society turn, thus, into a pretext for political commentary. The issue of Italian women allows her to lash out against aristocracy for its numbing effect on society and, implicitly, on women’s role and status. As a woman who had risen in the social ladder solely thanks to her education, she could make a plea for proper female education as a way to counteract the influence of church and government, that used religion and ‘superstition’ to control and marginalize women. The example of the women she had met through her socializing supported her belief.

On the other hand, Morgan’s negative national stereotyping and generalizations about Italian women so angered a contemporary Italian writer, Ginevra Canonici Falchini, that she purportedly addressed her Irish counterpart a letter which she used as a preface to her *Prospetto biografico delle donne italiane rinomate in letteratura dal secolo decimquarto fino a’ giorni nostri. Con una risposta a Lady Morgan risguardante alcune accuse da lei date alle donne italiane nella sua opera l’Italie* (1824). The Italian intellectual’s work is a precursor of Morgan’s own proto-feminist *Woman and Her Master: A History of the Female Sex from the Earliest Period* (1840) which, like Canonici Fachini’s history, bore out the belief that the female sex had been excluded from (literary) history by an unsympathetic master narrative. Had the two women met, they would have found much in common and seen that after all they shared similar views about women. This virtual encounter across cultures points to the difficulties of interpreting correctly the Other’s intentions, a divergence that can be corrected and transformed in cross-fertilization when an actual encounter occurs.

5. *Opera, Church and Artists’ Studios*

Salons were not the only places from which Morgan drew her sense of the moods and tensions smouldering in the country. As an Irish actor’s daughter (her father, Robert Owenson, had been the founder of the Dublin National Theatre), it should not surprise us that many of Sydney’s evenings were spent at the Opera or at a playhouse. This, after all, was also the favourite pastime of the Italian upper classes, as Morgan notes: “[I]n Italy, the Church and the Opera were on a par; and both were resorted to, by the higher classes, as a resource against the tedium of lives devoted by political institutions to the most disgraceful idleness” (1821, II, 246).

Attending a performance in one of the mythical theatres, such as La Scala in Milan or San Carlo in Naples, was indeed a tourist must, offering foreigners the possibility to enjoy the music, admire elegant women dressed in the latest French fashion and mix with local society in the boxes and in the foyer without depending too much on conversation in a foreign language. For the

radical author, however, it was more than that: every performance offered an opportunity for detecting signs of foreign oppression or conversely of the patriots' love of liberty hidden in the most unexpected details of a show. "The state of a national theatre", she wrote, "may be taken as no unfair barometer of public opinion, as well as of national taste" (1821, I, 102). This was in line with the opinions of cultural historians who see nineteenth century melodrama as a means of diffusion of a nationalist-patriotic discourse. Consequently, she fills both *Italy* and her *Memoirs* with pointed accounts of the theatrical life of the age which testify that it had a subtle and cautious political colouring even before Verdi galvanized his audiences with the patriotic messages of his operas. Drama and the opera became pretexts for a running commentary on society, history and politics.

The physicality of theatres offered, to her eyes, the occasion for subtle forms of sedition. A playhouse such as the Scala, in spite of "the foreign soldiery" guarding the doors and the "gens-d'armes [...] conspicuous among the audience in the pit", is described by Morgan as the place where conspiracies are started: "there alone, amidst the openest publicity, can privacy find an asylum against the intrusion of espionage. The box is sacred [...] and the numerous "arie di sorbetta" [...] with their accompaniments [...] drown the whispered conversation, whatever may be its tendency" she writes (*ibidem*, 94). Morgan herself, a frequent guest in the box of Federico Confalonieri and of other editors of the *Conciliatore*, must have overheard such conspiratorial conversations.

The content of the fashionable melodramas of the age, and even of the operas of the 'divine' Rossini, however, failed to stimulate her political consciousness. Tired of "insipid pastoral dramas" and of the *opera buffa* she felt that public feeling and taste called "for something not yet attained, and that probably would not be permitted" and went on to propose the country's "own history, (tragic in every page)" as a source of "fine themes" for melodrama (*ibidem*, 103). Very soon the libretti of Italian opera would indeed turn to domestic history and be charged with political innuendos. Some of the titles of mid-century operas seem to derive directly from Morgan's list of suggestions. *I Lombardi alla prima Crociata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *I vespri siciliani* by Verdi are all national tragedies which lent themselves to double entendre.

Meanwhile, however, Morgan found that, rather than the opera, the best suited theatrical form for conveying a political message was the *ballet d'action*. This new choreographic form, very popular in Italian theatres towards the end of the eighteenth century, lent itself particularly well to guarded communications about political issues. Morgan describes a satirical *ballet d'action* set in Rome, a "bold and quite extraordinary" play or pantomime which represented a "mode of attacking the strong-hold of superstition" represented by the Church (*ibidem*, v. 77) or a performance seen at La Scala of *La vestale* by Salvatore Viganò, a *choreo-drama*, privileging mime and action and which, in Morgan's opinion, perfectly suited the times which required political opinion to be carefully hidden:

[A] habit of distrust, impressed upon the people by the fearful system of espionage, impels them to trust their thoughts rather to a look or an action, than to a word or a phrase. It is not easy to denounce a smile or to betray a beck; and communications are thus made, over which the police holds no control. (1821, I, 98)

The fate of “the unfortunate priestess of Vesta” indirectly denounced all forms of repressive institutions (be they the Church or the government) which might not be condemned openly. Morgan was equally prudent. She, too, ‘trusted’ her explosive thoughts about Church, government and revolution to the apparently innocent device of travel writing. Under the pretence of describing polite conversation, socializing, visiting theatres and admiring works of art she conveyed her own and her interlocutors’ critiques of Italian institutions, potentially dangerous to be broached directly. Moreover her writing about a foreign country often hides thoughts about her home country. Her readers, however, were not dupes nor were the critics who attacked her.

A very Italian form of entertainment on which many travellers dwelt, was the performance of *improvvisatori* in salons and theatres (but sometimes even in the street). Morgan enjoyed those ex-tempore poets who would improvise verses on subjects proposed by the public and who gave free vent to their own and the audience’s concerns. Gabriele Rossetti (the father of Dante Gabriel and Christina), was in Morgan’s eyes “one of the best, and certainly one of the most amusing ‘improv[v]isatori’”. She had the opportunity of seeing him in action in Naples in the salon of Marchese di Berio accompanied on the piano by Gioacchino Rossini and noted “He assured us, that having once uttered his inspirations, he could not write them down, nor even remember a word” (1821, II, 405). Considering the Jacobin violence of Rossetti’s published works and the attacks they contained against the Bourbon Monarchy and the temporal power of the Church, one might expect that the source of amusement he provided was tied to a political stance which would have delighted his Jacobin admirer, Lady Morgan.

During Morgan’s trip to Italy, performances of all kinds, be they sung, spoken or danced, rehearsed or improvised, élitist or proletarian, in a theatre, in the street or in a church, became a vantage-point from which to observe society and a privileged way to become involved emotionally in the political issues of which plays and operas are a more or less open vector.

Undoubtedly the most popular source of entertainment for northern, Protestant travellers was provided by the Church. Tourists would flock to Rome during Holy Week and vie for invitations to St. Peter’s and the other Basilicas. Morgan herself was not immune from the pleasures of clerical company and she raves, for instance, about the charm of Cardinal Consalvi in whom “lay-graces so blended with Church dignity” (*ibidem*, 213). No travel account is complete without a description of the pomp of the fabulous rituals and Morgan mixes sarcasm and indignation in submitting ceremonies as

well as religious architecture, art and music to her scathing investigation. Observing them elicits the most contemptuous conclusions regarding the temporal power of the Church, as well as its opulence, greed, hypocrisy, and – a source of much sarcasm – its irrational practices that all tend to indicate the Church as the chief culprit in Italy's degradation. Constituting the bulk of Morgan's text and the source of her most virulent criticism of Italian institutions, they are a topic too vast to be confronted here. Suffice it to say that Morgan would have approved of Marx's saying that religion was "the opium of the people" distracting them from the real issues – their poverty and the prevarication they were the victims of. Morgan understands this well and finds sociological explanations for the phenomenon of the Italian taste for pomp:

In Rome [...] and in most Catholic countries on the continent, the people denied all interest in public affairs, and condemned to poverty and inactivity by their political institutes, seek resource, and find almost their only recreation, in the ceremonies of the church: the priesthood, by celebrating the forms prescribed by their rituals, conform to the wishes of the lower classes, and they forward their influence, while they perpetuate the errors on which it is founded. The *dictum* of the church, in both instances, is nearly the same – the relaxation of its forms depends upon the greater or lesser illumination of the people. (*Ibidem*, 78)

While the contemplation of artistic objects, especially, as is often the case of religious artistic objects, often elicits comments inspired by politics, the frequentation of artists' studios (another activity popular with foreign travellers and residents) fills Morgan with the mournful thought that she lives in an age "when there are few to admire, fewer to encourage, and none to purchase" (*ibidem*, 230). The philistinism of the Italy of the early nineteenth century, so much in contrast with the Maecenatism of the past, reminds her of Ireland where the talent of an artist such as Raphael Morghen, who asserted he had Irish origins, "might perish in oblivion, or wither in neglect" (58) because of the indigence of the country. These melancholy considerations, however, did not keep her from drawing great pleasure from the visit to Antonio Canova's studio in Rome or that of Lorenzo Bartolini in Florence, "one of the first portrait-sculptors in Italy" as he is unquestionably one of the most fashionable (59) who made the busts of many English personalities including Lady Morgan's and, on her recommendation, Thomas Moore's (see figs. 1, 2 and 3 below):

The studio of a sculptor is always a delightful place to visit: that of Signor Bartolini is particularly so to an English traveller, because it is 'a brief abstract and chronicle of the times' and country to which it belongs. [...] Here [...] the Jacobinical head of the author of Florence Macarthy stands close beside the cranium of an ultra-royalist reviewer. (*Ibidem*)



1 - Lorenzo Bartolini, Lady Sydney Owenson Morgan (1845-1850), marble, unfinished. Archivio immagini Museo di Palazzo Pretorio, Prato - ph. Antonio Quattrone

2 - Lorenzo Bartolini, Lady Sydney Owenson Morgan, plaster mould. Galleria dell'Accademia, Firenze



3 - Lorenzo Bartolini, Thomas Moore (1845-1850), marble. Archivio immagini Museo di Palazzo Pretorio, Prato

6. Conclusions

Morgan's socializing provided many occasions of pleasure and a boost to her vanity as well as opportunities for shaping original opinions based on her observations of what was in the making or under discussion in Italy. The description of the people she encountered and her reactions to the social events in which she took part are, by far, the liveliest and most interesting sections of the travelogue and the ones in which she conveys impressions of Italy different to those that were current at the time. *Italy* is not only a record of a bowed people but also of a lively generation of active men and women possessing a sophisticated political culture. By making their aims known, Morgan, with an eye also to her own country, makes a plea for reforms and even insurgency. *Italy*, as Stuart Curran writes, it is an invitation "to secure for the country and its culture its further liberation from the twin empires of Austria and the Papacy, and thus to allow it to regain the character of the republican institutions that had accompanied the growth of the Renaissance in Italy" (2002, 150).

In the rhetoric of nationalism that Morgan espoused both in her Irish romances and in her travelogues, the subjugated country, be it Ireland or Italy, is often represented as a fallen or violated woman who could only be redeemed by "the masculine energy of its 'sons'", as Kathryn Walchester writes, adding that "the specific source for the re-masculinization of the population is at this point unidentifiable" (2007, 169). Morgan, however, does actually identify individuals and groups, male and female, capable of asserting control. The role of "saving sons" was played in her eyes, for one, by the active reformers mentioned above, and, especially, by those pioneers of the Risorgimento, "disinterested and brave individuals, who undertook the defence of their independence" (Morgan 1821, II, 397-98) enthusiastically preparing the uprisings that were to break out in Naples and in the Piedmont-Lombardy area shortly after the Morgans had left Italy. There was, however, also a role to be played by women as the country needed feminine values next to masculine energy. The Irish writer strongly believed that "[t]he society in which woman holds no influence is in the last degree degraded, and even disorganized; for the influence of woman is a 'right divine'" (471). The many women Morgan identified as working a slow revolution in their family lives, in education and in literary production were also joining in the renovation of the country and forwarding what Morgan calls "the great cause of peace and humanity" (90).

Morgan's book is dedicated to these "saving" sons and daughters, as she declares, rejecting all criticism of the press:

Their briefs of condemnation [...] are now but waste paper; while days and nights passed in the societies of Geneva, Milan, Florence, Bologna and Naples, are entered in the records of the heart, and are at once the reward and stimulus of exertions, which, however inadequate, have never been made, but in the full conviction that they tended to forward the cause of truth and of virtue. (*Ibidem*, 398)

Linking the purpose of her book to the individuals who inspired her is the best recognition of the important role sociability represented in the making of *Italy*.

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Charles Lever: An Irish Writer in Italy

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Abstract:

Victorian Irish novelist Charles Lever spent much of his adult life living in Italy and in the partly Italian city of Trieste, serving as British Vice-Consul in La Spezia and later as Consul in Trieste. He used his experience and knowledge of Italy as the source for many articles and as raw material for the Italian sections of his novels. He is one of the most acute observers of Italian life at the time of the unification of Italy but his experience in *il bel paese* also played a key role in forming his views about the Ireland that continued to be the central interest of his fiction.

Keywords: Europe, Exile, Garibaldi, Ireland, Italy

It being now proved, I hope, to my readers' satisfaction,
that the bent of an Irishman is to go abroad.
(Lever 1845 [1843], 177)

In many ways Dubliner Charles Lever was a figure ahead of his time. As an Irish writer abroad, and a British Consul, living in Italy (mostly in Florence, Bagni di Lucca, and La Spezia, where he served as Vice-Consul from 1858), and later in the predominantly Italian-speaking Austro-Hungarian city of Trieste (for the final five years of his life), this ineluctably composite figure spent the greater part of his adult life “dislocated” in Europe, always negotiating between “home” and “away”, between “here” (mostly Dublin) and a sprawling, variegated European “elsewhere”. His middle years, prior to his settling in Italy and his taking up diplomatic positions there, were already spent in regular motion between Dublin and a variety of places on the continent, so much so that it is hard not to see his shadow behind the character of Peter Dalton who, in *The Daltons or Three Roads in Life* (1852) is said to have had “to drag out life in the cheap places of the Continent; and thus, for nigh twenty years, had he wandered about from Dieppe to Ostend, to Bruges, to Dusseldorf, to Coblenz, and so on, among the small Ducal cities . . .” (Lever

1872a [1852], 24). In *The Dodd Family Abroad* (1854), Lever would again portray an Irish family seeking to economise by living on the Continent. Lever's own life was not dissimilar prior to his appointment as British Vice-Consul in La Spezia and later as Consul in Trieste, where he took over from Sir Richard Burton as "her majesty's flunkey" – his term – in the Adriatic city. Although he never stopped writing (producing over 30 novels and 5 volumes of essays), the final two decades of his life were spent in an almost perpetual state of disappointment, watching the Ireland he knew as a staunch Unionist slowly ebb away as Home Rule began to loom on the horizon. Similarly disappointing was his vain struggle to regain his earlier literary or popular success from the city that he so despised but which was his final home, Trieste.

As soon as he reached the Adriatic emporium to take up the sinecure secured for him by Lord Derby, he took an instant dislike to it, writing with what was by now characteristic self-pity and melodrama: "As to my new post—*keep the confession purely to yourself*—it is unpleasant, damnable. There is nothing to eat, nothing to drink, nothing to live in, no one to speak to. Liverpool, with Jews and blacklegs for gentlemen—*voilà tout*" (Downey 1906, II, 199). He declared himself "very down in the mouth about my move. I feel as might a vicar leaving a snug parsonage to become bishop in the Cannibal Islands" (*ibidem*).

Disinterested in his role as Consul, suffering from depression, gout, and heart disease, believing that he had been at best hard-done-by as a writer, it was almost as if he felt that he and his hopes had been devoured by the Adriatic city, while in reality he wrote some of his finest works there. He increasingly found his by now enforced exile an oppression and a cruelty as he suggested in an 1868 letter to his friend, John Blackwood:

As the Government are good Christians, and chasten those they love, they have made Hannay a consul! Less vindictive countries give four or five years' hard labour and have an end of it; but there is a rare malice in sending some poor devil of a literary man who loves the Garrick, and lobster salad, and small whist, and small flattery, to eke out existence in a dreary Continental town, without society or sympathy, playing patron all the while and saying, "We are not neglecting our men of letters." I'd rather be a dog and bark at the door of the Wyndham or the Alfred than spend this weariful life of exile I am sentenced to. (*Ibidem*, 224-225)

As he settled into Trieste his view only darkened, and he soon realised that what he called his "leap in the dark" had been a mistake, telling his friend, Burbidge:

Of all the dreary places it has been my fate to sojourn in, this is the very worst. There are not three people to be known; for myself, I do not know one. English are, of course, out of the question. Even as a novelist I could make nothing out of the stoker and engineer class. Then as for all the others, they are the men of oakum, hides,

tallow, and tobacco, who are, so far as I can guess, about on a par with fourth-rate shopkeepers in an English provincial town. The place is duller, the tone lower, the whole social atmosphere crasser and heavier than I could have believed possible in a town where the intelligence to make money exists so palpably. (*Ibidem*, 211-212)

Not surprisingly, Lever would refer only very sparsely to the city in his fiction, peremptorily referring to it in *The Boy of Norcott's* (1869) but preferring to describe the countryside that wound down the Istrian Coast from Trieste to Fiume (where he spent time, during one of his sporadic "changes of air" in order to relieve his depression). Even in this work of fiction, there is a sense of Lever's own alienation from his previous lives in the phrase "how essential it was to leave all my former habits behind me as I entered here" which almost seems to echo Dante's "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!", the inscription at the entrance to the *Inferno*:

It was late at night when I reached Trieste, and I left it at daybreak. The small steamer in which I had taken my passage followed the coast line, calling at even the most insignificant little towns and villages, and winding its track through that myriad of islands which lie scattered along this strange shore. The quiet, old-world look of these quaint towns, the simple articles they dealt in, the strange dress, and the stranger sounds of the language of these people, all told me into what a new life I had just set foot, and how essential it was to leave all my former habits behind me as I entered here. (Lever 1869, 126)

The vision of Fiume (which, somewhat paradoxically, resembles Trieste quite closely and which was populated by a similarly cosmopolitan mix), lifts the spirits enormously, bringing on thoughts of "Paradise" in a passage which illustrates well Lever's gift for scenic description:

The sun had just gone below the sea, as we rounded the great promontory of the north and entered the bay of Fiume. Scarcely had we passed in, than the channel seemed to close behind us, and we were moving along over what looked like a magnificent lake bounded on every side by lofty mountains "for the islands of the bay are so placed that they conceal the openings to the Adriatic. If the base of the great mountains was steeped in a blue, deep and mellow as the sea itself, their summits glowed in the carbuncle tints of the setting sun, and over these again long lines of cloud, golden and azure streaks, marked the sky, almost on fire, as it were, with the last parting salute of the glorious orb that was setting. It was not merely that I had never seen, but I could not have imagined such beauty of landscape, and as we swept quietly along nearer the shore, and I could mark the villas shrouded in the deep woods of chestnut and oak, and saw the olive and the cactus, with the orange and the oleander, bending their leafy branches over the blue water, I thought to myself, would not a life there be nearer Paradise than anything wealth and fortune could buy elsewhere? (*Ibidem*)

Despite himself and his litany of complaints, Lever also sporadically realised that Trieste allowed him peace and space for writing. At one point, after a brief working visit to London he announced that he was looking forward “with pleasure to the unbroken quiet of Trieste, in a different frame to heretofore. Indeed I doubt now (as regards a place to work in) I’d change it” (Stevenson 1939, 286). However, the death of his wife, Kate, in 1870 (his son, Charles had died in 1863 aged just 26) was a final crushing blow and put paid to his ever finding peace on the Adriatic. He did, however, soldier on to complete his final and probably finest novel, *Lord Kilgobbin*. But his preface (dated 20 January 1872) betrays all the unhappiness and sorrow of his final years:

To the memory of one whose companionship made the happiness of a long life, and whose loss has left me helpless, I dedicate this work, written in breaking health and broken spirits. The task, that once was my joy and my pride, I have lived to find associated with my sorrow: it is not, then, without a cause I say, I hope this effort may be my last. (Lever 1872c, n.p.)

Once *Lord Kilgobbin* was written – initially in instalments for *The Cornhill Magazine* – Lever died suddenly in his home at the Villa Gasteiger in Trieste on 1 June 1872. Not for nothing would Joyce tangentially allude to his predecessor’s fate in the city in *Finnegans Wake*, when he wrote, playing on the liver/Lever echo: “And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver!” (FW, 301, 16).

It might all have been so different. Born into a comfortable middle-class Dublin background (he was the son of an immigrant English father and an Irish mother, Protestant Unionists, both), Lever enjoyed a brilliant start to his literary career following his graduation in medicine from Trinity (he also studied for a time in Göttingen). However, even before graduation he had itchy feet and took a position as a ship’s surgeon on board an emigrant ship bound for Canada where he remained for a period, even spending some time in the North American backwoods. In the years after College, he practised medicine first with the Clare Medical Board where he worked trying to stem a cholera epidemic, and later, in 1832, as a dispensary doctor in Portstewart in County Derry. This was followed by several longish spells in Europe, working as a medic and making his first forays into writing. But by the end of the thirties his writing career really began to take off. His early novels sold brilliantly and his earnings, by the mid 1840s, competed with those of Charles Dickens and exceeded those of all his other contemporaries, including his friend Thackeray. This made him the ideal candidate to take up the editorship of the *Dublin University Magazine* (following James McGlashan) in 1842. He rapidly boosted circulation to 4,000 copies, by toning down the *Magazine*’s Unionist line and by serialising his own novels there before publishing them in book form. He was on a £1,200 annual salary as editor and

this was comfortably topped up by royalties on his many big-selling novels, all of which allowed him to set up a fairly lavish home at Templeogue House, where he famously entertained Thackeray. But Lever had his enemies, many of whom disliked what they considered his stage-Irish writings and the frivolous nature of his novels. Samuel Ferguson was among his chief critics along with William Carleton, who accused him in the pages of the *Nation* of “selling us for pounds, shillings, and pence” (1843, 826). In 1845, Lever, tired of criticism from all sides, brought his editorship at the *Magazine* to an abrupt end. Worse still, he discovered that his Irish publisher, Curry, was on the verge of bankruptcy. With his Irish literary affairs suddenly in a precarious state, he moved back to the Continent setting up home initially in Brussels. But from 1846 on, Lever’s own commercial pull also began to flag. The more sombre and probing novels of the second half of his career evidently frustrated the expectations of his early readers who preferred the rollicking comedy of early works like *Harry Lorrequer* and *Charles O’Malley* (which, ironically, were the ones that ultimately undermined his critical reputation). 1846 was the year he published his eighth novel, *The Knight of Gwynne*, a work which, in John Sutherland’s words, “came to an end amid a general feeling of gloom and mortification” (1976, 164). Once enormously popular, now in the grim mid-century years of the Famine, Lever found himself complaining in a letter to Maria Edgeworth in 1847 “that anything Irish is an ungracious theme to English ears just now” (Downey 1906, I, 256-257), which suggests the extent to which Irish issues in general (however dramatic) and Irish novels in particular struggled in the midst and aftermath of the Famine to find a sympathetic ear in England (or Britain).

His letters in these years are overflowing with concern with Ireland and all things Irish. And Europe offered little at this time by way of solace. The conservative Lever was shocked by the tumultuous events on the Continent at the end of the decade, which he witnessed at first hand, having set up home, mostly in Florence, as Fitzpatrick colourfully describes in his lively but rather problematic and imprecise early biography:

Revolution shook Europe, and a vast change had come over that delicious dreamy Florence which had long made life there a luxury. In February, 1849, Lever describes: “The streets, once thronged with gay groups intent on pleasure, or hastening from gallery to gallery, now filled with beggars, whose demands too plainly evince that the tone of entreaty has given way to open menace. Burglaries and street robberies take place in open day, the utmost penalty of such offences being a few days, sometimes a few hours, imprisonment. Nor is the country better off than the town”. (1879, 270)

Little surprise, then, that Lever alternated between Florence and the more tranquil Bagni di Lucca, where his daughter, Sydney, his fourth and last child was born and which he liked because “it was picturesque and qui-

et, and not invaded by that miserably minded class of small English, which were the curse of Florence” (*ibidem*, 271). That said, he had little time for the Grand Duke himself, if the opinions proffered in Lever’s early *Nuts and Nutcrackers* can be taken to represent those of Lever himself. “What is a Grand Duke?”, Lever asks and answers: “Picture to yourself a very corpulent, moustached, and befrogged individual, who has a territory about the size of the Phoenix Park, and a city as big and as flourishing as the Blackrock; the expenses of his civil list are defrayed by a chalybeate spring, and the budget of his army by the license of a gambling house” (1845 [1843], 180-181). For all that Bagni di Lucca kept him away from the bustle and heat of Florence yet still at a good vantage point from which to observe the changing Italy. However, much though the events in Italy and in Europe interested him, like Joyce after him, Ireland remained Lever’s principal focus. But again like Joyce he never saw Ireland as a sealed or enclosed island impervious to the events of the outside world. Instead Lever’s Ireland was brought into focus through a European lens which allowed him to see it side by side with other countries, such as Italy, with which it had elements in common. As is clear from what he told Blackwood in 1866, he clearly believed that the distant vantage point brought clarity to his vision of Ireland: “I believe I have lived long enough *in* Ireland to know something of the country, and long enough *out* of it to have shaken off the prejudice and narrowness that attach to men who live at home” (Downey 1906, II, 186). In a preface he wrote specifically for the 1872 edition of *The Martins of Cro’ Martin*, he describes the freedom he felt, decades earlier, in writing about Ireland from Florence:

As this strange drama unfolded itself before me, it had become a passion with me to watch the actors, and speculate on what they might do. For this, Florence offered an admirable stage. It was eminently cosmopolitan; and, in consequence, less under the influence of any distinct code of public opinion than any section of the several nationalities I might have found at home. (Lever 1872b, 1)

Again, like Joyce, in his writing Lever never stumbled into nostalgia in his home thoughts from abroad. He saw nothing tragic about Irish people going to live abroad in exile – although it should be said that he rarely worried too much about the fate of the masses of Irish peasants who sailed more in hope than expectation for Britain or the United States. His Irish diaspora was an unusual one, bound for London or better, if they could afford it, to a European city, sometimes for careers in business or in the military, sometimes as artists. He suggested that “of all people, none are so naturally absentees as the Irish” and, half in jest, whole in earnest, saw this in a positive light:

[...] it would seem that one great feature of our patriotism consists in the desire to display, in other lands, the ardent attachment we bear our own. How can we

tell Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Russians, Swedes, and Swiss, how devoted we are to the country of our birth, if we do not go abroad to do so? How can we shed tears as exiles, unless we become so? How can we rail about the wrongs of Ireland and English tyranny, if we do not go among people, who, being perfectly ignorant of both, may chance to believe us? (Lever 1845 [1843], 177)

Turning the usual emigrant story inside-out in what is a characteristic and almost Swiftian provocation, Lever claims that it is poverty that keeps the Irish at home; the wealthier they are, the further they will travel with inevitably damage to the home economy. He also notes that the Irish buy homemade products only when “we cannot afford English”:

So it is exactly with absenteeism; it is only poverty that checks it. The man with five pounds in this pocket starts to spend it in England; make it *ten*, and he goes to Paris; *fifteen*, and he’s up the Rhine; *twenty*, and Constantinople is not far enough for him! Whereas, if the sum of his wealth had been a matter of shillings, he’d have been satisfied with a trip to Kingstown, a chop at Jude’s, a place in the pit, and a penny to the repeal fund; all of which would redound to his patriotism, and the prosperity of Ireland. (*Ibidem*, 178)

When writing this, Lever was still living in Dublin and he enjoyed poking fun at other prominent Irish figures abroad who praised Ireland – from a distance – including Thomas Moore. In a review of *The Popular Songs of Ireland* by T. Crofton Croker (“a pleasant bit of a leprechaun”), he writes, in a tone of divilment worthy of Myles na Gopaleen: “One expends every epithet for the language to represent our country as a kind of Elysium upon earth and the other, like our great national poet, pronounces Ireland a beautiful country to live out of” (Lever 1839a, 91). It was an error he would be careful to avoid in the future, trying always to be even-handed in his depictions of the country. Nor was he under any illusions as to the dominant reason that drove most Irish people abroad – economic need. In *The Daltons*, the Dalton family are portrayed as having travelled to Europe simply to try to make their dwindling resources stretch a little longer than they might have done had they stayed at home in Ireland. In portrayals like these, in a very real sense, Lever is the first Irish writer to convey the existence of an Irish diaspora in Europe. Stuck penniless in the Tyrol, Frank Dalton reaches out for help to his uncle, his father’s only brother “GRAF DALTON VON AUERSBERG, Lieut.-General and Feldzeugmeister, K.K.A” (Lever 1872a [1852], 22) not seen for 17 years but still, he hope, sufficiently part of the family to lend a hand and find him a place in the army. This and many other allusions to what the Citizen in *Ulysses* calls “our greater Ireland beyond the sea” (U 12.1364-12.1365) shows Lever’s sensitivity towards the sometimes successful, often vulnerable Irish exiles in Europe. But such concern would

do little for Lever's reputation where it mattered, that is, in Dublin or London. In fact, as Tony Bareham writes: "Lever became more European than his readership could well stomach, and having first reviled him for invoking the stage Irishman they then neglected him for his intelligent internationalism" (1991, 9). There is much truth in Bareham's contention that the "career of Charles Lever suggests very strongly a man striving to be at the centre of things, but constantly being impelled towards the periphery, a position of 'outsiderness'" (96) and he would pay a high price, among critics of his work, for his detachment on the outside (even if his pronounced Unionism also provided a good excuse for his work to be critically ignored or summarily dismissed down to our own times by many Irish critics). Ironically it was the gradual, cautious rethinking of his Unionist beliefs and his slow, mostly grudging acknowledgement of Irish Nationalist aspirations (read against a broad European backdrop of similar movements), coupled with his outsider status and the perspective that it offered him as a novelist of Ireland (and of the "greater Ireland" of the diaspora) that gave Lever's later novels much of their power but which, at the time, deprived him of his public:

[...] the objectivity born of Lever's geographical separation, which enabled him to offer fresh and dynamic views of Irish affairs, may have been responsible in part for an exclusion from the affections of a reading public which preferred to have its prejudices flattered. (Haddelsey 2000, 23)

Lever and his contemporaries were, in Chris Morash's words: "too Irish for an English canon but they were too English for an Irish canon, and, as a result, they fell somewhere into the Irish Sea – and that's where they've been floundering around ever since" (Morash quoted in Haddelsey 2000, 25). Perhaps it would be truer to say of Lever that he fell into the English channel – somewhere between the islands of Britain and Ireland and mainland Europe. All of which means that there is definite value in re-examining Lever's ongoing literary entanglement with the continent and looking at his relationship with Ireland through a European perspective. As Haddesley points out: "It was this self-imposed exile and his concomitant role as a Europeanised Irishman which made him almost unique in the nineteenth century" (23-24). More than anything else, in the later work, Lever attempts to break the binary English-Irish opposition by mapping Ireland and Irishness within a European context, reading Ireland through a European lens of connection and influence, and attempting to construct an Irish novel rich with continental connections. As Bareham writes:

Lever's attitude to the problems of Ireland grew steadily more sober and responsible. Unlike some of his immediate contemporaries however, he saw the struggle for Irish independence in a large European context. He was on dining terms with

Garibaldi and followed with close interest the movement for Italian Independence. Later he worked within the Austrian Empire at a time when the signs of disintegration were beginning to show. He was present, for instance, in his consular capacity at the funeral of the unfortunate Maximilian, late Emperor of Mexico. (1991, 9)

He anticipated the funeral to Blackwood, writing: “We are going to have a mournful spectacle here—the funeral reception of the poor Mexican Emperor’s remains. It will be, they say, very solemn and imposing” (Downey 1906, II, 204).

Most of the later works enjoyed scant popular or critical success but they are infinitely more innovative and experimental than the early work by this writer who never stopped attempting to reconfigure his country in fiction and managed to bring it into focus only by understanding it through a distant lens, a parallel vision which saw it through a series of comparisons with other European realities.

The opening story of Lever’s late work *Paul Gosslett’s Confessions* – which he originally published in Anthony Trollope’s *St Pauls Magazine* and then in book form in 1872 – deals with the problematics of writing about Italy as an outsider and, in a sense, casts back into the writer’s early years in the *bel paese*. It plays on stereotypes of Italian brigandry, backwardness, and deceit, but does so in a manner that actually paints the British visitor rather than the supposedly Italian villain in a negative light. The collection itself is an unusual hybrid composed of what can be loosely termed short stories but it also plays with the idea of confession – telling tales, confessing past misdemeanours, allowing the reader into secrets in a series of short narratives held together by the protagonist, Gosslett himself. He is the narrating voice in this volume which blends genres and even uses the diary form. Among other things, it tells tales of Gosslett’s adventures on behalf of the English Foreign Office. In the opening story “My First Mission under F.O.” Gosslett is sent among the brigands in Calabria to pay the ransom for the release of “the son of a wealthy baronet, a Wiltshire M.P., [who] has been captured and carried off by these rascals” (Lever 1868, 2). Gosslett’s contact in the Foreign Office insists that Lord Scatterdale, the Foreign Secretary “will not recognize anything political in these scoundrels” (2), which is, of course, to deny much of the political context of the political upheaval in the Italy of the time and to reduce political protest to mere brigandry (a policy, this, closer mirrored by similar government responses to agitation in Ireland). In the later years of his career, Lever was increasingly disillusioned with British attitudes and with the limits of British political diplomacy in both Italy and Ireland, where he bemoaned a failure to adequately address the worsening political situation. Very often he voices this disillusion with policy in Ireland through both veiled and open comparisons with British readings of Italy.

Gosslett prepares his journey well, telling the reader: “I studied the map of Calabria thoroughly” (Lever 1868, 22), and eventually meets a man whom he thinks is “Stoppa, the brigand, – the cruellest dog in Calabria” (21)

as he is described in the text by “Mr Spoonnington, Attaché, H.M.’s Legation, Naples” (18). He meets him in the brigand-town which could almost be a lawless Irish outpost if it were not for the booty of stolen jewels worn by some of the inhabitants:

Four hours’ walking, occasionally halting for a little rest, brought me to Rocco, a village of about twenty houses, straggling up the side of a vine-clad hill, the crest of which was occupied by a church. The population were all seated at their doors, it being some festa, and were, I am bound to admit, about as ill-favored a set as one would wish to see. In the aspect of the men, and, indeed, still more in that of the women, one could at once recognize the place as a brigand resort. There were, in the midst of all the signs of squalor and poverty, rich scarfs and costly shawls to be seen; while some of the very poorest wore gold chains round their necks, and carried handsomely ornamented pistols and daggers at their waist-belts. I may as well mention here, not to let these worthy people be longer under a severe aspersion than needful, that they were not themselves brigands, but simply the friends and partisans of the gangs, who sold them the different spoils of which they had divested the travelers. (*Ibidem*, 32-33)

The British Foreign Office, from the Foreign Secretary down to the legation in Naples and Gosslett himself, completely misread the Calabrian situation and fully believe that the man demanding the ransom truly is the dangerous “cut-throat”, Stoppa. Later, when he has accomplished his mission and paid the ransom, Gosslet returns to England and sets about explaining Calabria to the English (much in the manner of English travellers to Ireland):

During all this I wrote, I may say, from morning till night. At one time it was my Blue Book; at another I took a spell at stories of robber life. I wrote short poems,—songs of the brigands I called them. In fact, I dished up my highwayman in a score of ways, and found him good in all. The portmanteau which I had brought out full of gold I now carried back more closely packed with MSS. I hurried to England, only stopping once to call at the Legation, and learn that Mr. St. John had returned to his post, and was then hard at work in the Chancellerie. When I arrived in London, my report was ready; but as the ministry had fallen the week before, I was obliged to rewrite it, every word. Lord Muddlemore had succeeded my patron, Lord Scatterdale; and as he was a strong Tory, the brigands must be Bourbons for him; and they were so. I had lived amongst them for months, and had eaten of their raw lamb and drunk of their fiery wine, and pledged toasts to the health of Francesco, and “Morte” to everybody else. What splendid fellows I made them! Every chief was a La Rochejaquelin; and as for the little bit of robbery they did now and then, it was only to pay for masses for their souls when they were shot by the Bersaglieri. My Blue Book was printed, quoted by the “Times,” cited in the House; I was called “the intrepid and intelligent witness” by Disraeli; and I was the rage. Dinners fell in showers over me, and invitations to country-houses came by every post. (*Ibidem*, 43-44)

Not long after his return, Gosslett comes to realise that he has been utterly deceived. He is invited by Mr. St. John to visit him and, to his horror, finds that his host had pretended to be Stoppa. In other words Gosslett and the entire foreign legation had been set up and conned, not by an Italian but by a member of their very own delegation in Naples. As was often the case, Lever's fiction flirts with fact. The choice of the name "Stoppa" for the brigand cut-throat recalls Enrico Stoppa (1834-1863) who was known as "Lo Sparviere della Maremma". He was infamous for kidnappings, extortions, and murders (*ibidem*, 10) around the area of Orbetello between 1853 and 1863 and escaped conviction for a long time because locals were always too terrified to testify against him. Lever takes his name and the dark shadow of his reputation and relocates them in Calabria, another hotspot for brigandage and one where the kidnapping of Englishmen was common in the 1850s and 60s. In doing so, Lever was participating in what Niall Whelehan describes as the "proliferation of pejorative images of the *mezzogiorno*" which intensified following the creation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861 and the spread of brigandage. This was a decisive period in the shaping of relations within Italy, the "first massive encounter between north and south", and one where stereotypes about the *mezzogiorno* distorted the views of political and military officials (2015, 7).

But he was also drawing attention to what did actually happen to a number – officially 14 – of English travellers in Southern Italy. Most prominently, William John Charles Möens recalled his ordeal in his bestselling memoir *English Travellers and Italian Brigands. A Narrative of Capture and Captivity* (1866). This told the true story of two English travellers – Möens himself and the Rev. John Cruger Murray Aynsley – who were captured and held for ransom in Campagna in 1866; Aynsley was released to procure the ransom while Möens had to wait several months in captivity until the sum was paid. "News of their kidnap spread like wildfire and became the main topic of conversation for all foreigners in Italy" (Weindling, Colloms 2012, n.p.). But perhaps of more relevance to Lever was the story of the Marquis de Leuville. In June 1865, two letters were printed in the *Times*; the first was by de Leuville's father-in-law John Sedgwick which announced "Young Artist taken by Brigands" (referring to de Leuville) and cautioned travellers against visiting Italy. It cited de Leuville's own letter to Sedgwick asking him to send money to have him released. Sedgwick duly sent money but gradually it transpired that De Leuville had invented the whole story in order to get himself out of financial difficulty: "English artists from Rome laughed merrily over the tale, and made no secret of there being 'a wholly different version of the affair'" (*ibidem*). Thus, not for the first time, Lever plucked a story out of contemporary news but used it to comment on perceptions of Italy in England and to turn a stereotype about violent Italian brigands on its head by instead exposing the dishonesty of a young Englishman and the gullibility of the English Foreign Office.

All of this reveals the shakiness of even the great British Foreign Office in reading situations around the world with Italy and Ireland almost appearing in parallel. The Irish elements in the *Confessions* of the English Gosslett, who, like Lever, is a man always struggling for money and for a position, are seen in chapter two entitled “Confession the Second. As to Love”. Here he is sent to Donegal to relatives on his mother’s side. Like many a real and fictional English traveller to Ireland, Gosslett confesses “I was not, I shame to own, much better up in the geography of Ireland than in that of Central Africa, and had but a very vague idea whither I was going” (Lever 1868, 68).

Throughout this story Lever plays with the English manner of viewing the Irish in stereotypical terms when describing an encounter with an Irishman (almost in a rewrite of much of his own earlier material):

I passed a restless, feverish night, canvassing with myself whether I would not turn back and leave forever a country whose first aspect was so forbidding and unpromising. What stories had I not heard of Irish courtesy to strangers,—Irish wit and Irish pleasantry! Was this, then, a specimen of that captivating manner which makes these people the French of Great Britain? Why, this fellow was an unmitigated savage! (*Ibidem*, 73)

The final story tells of Gosslett in Germany where he has somehow been hired to run “an hydropathic establishment on a small river, a tributary of the Rhine,—the Lahn”. He is pleased to find out that

[...] my duties were to be pretty much what I pleased to make them. My small smattering of two or three languages—exalted by my uncle into the reputation of a polyglot—had recommended me to the “Direction;” and as my chief function was to entertain a certain number of people twice or thrice a week at dinner, and suggest amusements to fill up their time, it was believed that my faculties were up to the level of such small requirements. (*Ibidem*, 111)

The entire collection plays with the question of double identities and shams, thus mirroring in a sense Lever’s own, by now inevitable, doubleness, his being caught between Europe or better Italy and Ireland and his own sense that the one would also function in his writings as a mirror-image, however distorted, of the other.

Lever’s 1865 novel, *Tony Butler* is, in many ways, another exemplary text for any understanding of the Irish-European or, perhaps better, the Irish-Italian tandem adopted by Lever. At the centre of the book is Butler himself, a young Northern Irish man, whose father served with distinction in the British military. He and his mother survive on the late father’s modest pension before Butler sets off to make his fortune in London, managing to get work in the British Foreign office as a “messenger” sent with important post to

the legation in Naples, a city which is under revolt at the time. While the plot is typically long, a little torturous and contrived, and as such very much in keeping with its genre, the treatment of the events in Italy – around the time of Garibaldi's successful attempts to overthrow the Kingdom of Naples in 1860 – is uniquely broad and pertinent. Lever had been in a perfect position to observe almost two decades of constant flux in Italy and to filter elements of the changing historical picture into his fiction, in particular into *Tony Butler*. As Downey wrote:

During the first fourteen or fifteen years of Lever's residence in Florence, Italy had been in the melting-pot. The Tuscan Revolution of 1848, the defeat of the Sardinians, and the abdication of Carlo Alberto in the following year, the earlier struggle of Garibaldi, the long series of troubles with Austria (ending in the defeat of the Austrians), feuds with the Papal States, insurrections in Sicily, the overthrow of the Pope's government, the Neapolitan war, and, to crown all, triumphant brigandage, had made things lively for dwellers in Italy. The recognition by the Powers of Victor Emanuel as king of United Italy promised, early in 1862, a period of rest; but the expectations of peace-lovers were shattered, for the moment, by Garibaldi's threatened march upon Rome. His defeat, his imprisonment in the fortress of Varignano, and his release, inspired hopes, well-founded, of the conclusion of the struggles (largely internecine) which had convulsed New Italy. (1906, II, 28)

This overthrow of Naples was one of Garibaldi's greatest victories and it was the crucial event that transformed Italian unification from dream to reality. In May of 1860, Garibaldi landed in Sicily with a volunteer force of just over 1000 soldiers (the famous "mille") and took the city of Palermo in just two weeks, overcoming an opposing army of more than 20,000 regulars. In August of the same year Garibaldi crossed to the Italian mainland, and rapidly defeated the Neapolitan army before taking Naples itself within the month. Garibaldi's successful campaign rapidly became the stuff of legend and defined a period of the nineteenth century because of his undoubted military genius and the manner in which he represented and gave substance to the rising call of nationalist aspiration in a Europe that was witnessing the hurried decline of the old dynasties and power systems. That the conservative Anglo-Irish Lever, traditionally seen as an enemy of nationalism – at least of Irish nationalism – would choose to make the Garibaldi narrative so dominant in the novel might seem extraordinary and it is difficult to read the sections about Garibaldi without also keeping in mind a possible Irish parallel: Butler enlists and fights for Garibaldi's cause along with his friend, Rory Quinn, who had originally gone to Italy as part of the Irish brigade fighting on the other side for the Papal States. But we should be careful. As the undisputed leader behind the movement to unite Italy in the nineteenth century, it would be easy to imagine that Garibaldi was a universally liked

figure. Far from it in Ireland at least. To put things very simply, Irish Protestants tended to support Garibaldi while Catholics condemned him because of his anti-clericalism and because they were loudly encouraged to do so by Church leaders marshalled by Cardinal Cullen of Dublin, who, answering Pius the ninth's call for help, went so far as to organize the formation of a battalion to fight in the defence of the Papal States in 1860. What began as a Catholic movement was soon hijacked by Irish nationalism. As Anne O'Connor has written, "denigration of Garibaldi became a badge of Irish nationalism" (2010, 401). Irish public opinion was deeply surprised by English support for Garibaldi and for Italian Unification in general, particularly in the light of its denial of similar Irish demands.

The formation of the Irish brigade in 1860 was greeted with annoyance among Italians. Clearly in these years, Irish and Italian nationalisms did not speak a common language. Mazzini was deeply ambivalent towards Ireland and believed the country needed better rule, not Home Rule. There was a similar lack of sympathy from Gioberti and Cavour who saw Ireland as a problematic "region" of Britain rather than a potential nation. Presumably, Lever, in his diplomatic role contributed to the formation of such opinions among Italian leaders. But he also attempted to influence British opinion with regard to Garibaldi and, following his release from Varignano in 1862 (after Aspromonte):

Lever naturally sought out his distinguished Spezzian neighbour, and one morning he had the pleasure of entertaining him at breakfast. It was said that the British Minister at Florence was eager that the Italian patriot should be disabused of the favourable impressions he was supposed to entertain of the Irish revolutionary movement. The Vice-Consul at Spezzia [*sic*] found it necessary to explain to his guest that any overt expressions or acts of sympathy with Fenianism would be certain to alienate English sympathies. Garibaldi seemed to be somewhat surprised at this. He looked on England as a nation eager to applaud any patriotic or revolutionary movement. Lever is said—the authority is Major Dwyer—to have been unable to comprehend how a man so ignorant and childish as Garibaldi could have attained such vast influence over a people, and could have won such general renown. (Downey 1906, II, 28)

This, in all likelihood, is not an altogether reliable account of Lever's opinion of Garibaldi. A fuller account is to be found in Lever's *Cornelius O'Dowd* volume of essays (all of which had earlier appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*). O'Dowd can be safely said to represent Lever's own ideas in this somewhat rambling book which is a cross between the short story and the essay, between fiction and fact. Rather like Lever himself, O'Dowd is insecure about his identity defining himself as "a bashful Irishman" before referring just lines later to "we English" (Lever 1864, 8). Not that this holds him back from expressing forthright views. The first essay on Garibaldi in

the collection is actually an amusing take on his followers or as he prefers, his “worshippers”. It begins with another beautiful evocation of Italian landscape, something of a constant in Lever’s writings:

The road from Genoa to Spezia is one of the most beautiful in Europe. As the Apennines descend to the sea they form innumerable little bays and creeks, alongside of which the road winds—now coasting the very shore, now soaring aloft on high-perched cliffs, and looking down into deep dells, or to the waving tops of tall pine-trees. Seaward, it is a succession of yellow-stranded bays, land-locked and narrow; and on the land side are innumerable valleys, some waving with horse-chestnut and olive, and others stern and rock-bound, but varying in colour from the bluish-grey of marble to every shade of porphyry.

For several miles after we left Genoa, the road presented a succession of handsome villas, which, neglected and uncared for, and in most part untenanted, were yet so characteristically Italian in all their vastness—their massive style and spacious plan—as to be great ornaments of the scenery. Their gardens, too—such glorious wildernesses of rich profusion—where the fig and the oleander, the vine and the orange, tangle and intertwine—and cactuses, that would form the wonder of our conservatories, are trained into hedgerows to protect cabbages. (*Ibidem*, 43-44)

O’Dowd goes on to describe how his companion points out local landmarks connected with Garibaldi including the Villa Spinola from which he set sail on his expedition to Marsala: “Wandering on in his talk from the campaign of Sicily and Calabria, my companion spoke of the last wild freak of Garibaldi and the day of Aspromonte, and finally of the hero’s imprisonment at Varignano, in the Gulf of Spezia” (*Ibidem*, 44) Lever is amused at the “shoals” of followers that come to pay homage to Garibaldi: “Steamboats and diligences were crammed with them, and the boatmen of Spezia plied as thriving a trade that summer as though Garibaldi were a saint, at whose shrine the devout of all Europe came to worship” (45). None would be turned away, despite the General’s poor health. Lever’s principal story is about “a party of English ladies” or better “a deputation!” that had come from “the Associated Brothers and Sisters of Freedom—from the Branch Committee of the Ear of Crying Nationalities—” (47) and who insist on seeing the great man, refusing to take no for an answer with the result that Garibaldi’s minders decide to use a substitute, Ripari, one of his medics, who will receive them in his place:

Ripari, one of the most faithful and attached of all his followers, and who bore that amount of resemblance to Garibaldi which could be imparted by hair, moustache, and beard of the same yellowish-red colour, and eyes somewhat closely set. To put the doctor in bed, and make him personate the General, was the plan [...] To the half-darkened room, therefore, where Ripari lay dressed in his habitual red shirt, propped up by pillows, the deputation was introduced. (*Ibidem*, 49)

The plan works to perfection as the “sight of the hero” is too much for one of them:

One dropped, Madonna-wise, with hands clasped across her bosom, at the foot of his bed; another fainted as she passed the threshold; a third gained the bedside to grasp his hand, and sank down in an ecstasy of devotion to water it with her tears; while the strong-minded woman of the party took out her scissors and cut four several locks off that dear and noble head. They sobbed over him—they blubbered over him—they compared him with his photograph, and declared he was libelled—they showered cards over him to get his autograph; and when, at length, by persuasion, not unassisted by mild violence, they were induced to withdraw, they declared that, for those few moments of ecstasy, they’d have willingly made a pilgrimage to Mecca. (*Ibidem*, 49-50)

Knowing Lever, there was likely to have been a modicum of truth behind this story. Its strength, however, lies not in its authenticity but in his deft, humorous touch, which effortlessly makes fun of the English ladies and quietly undermines their devotion to Garibaldi. Lever’s own opinion was balanced and realistic as might be expected from a diplomat. In his essay entitled “Garibaldi”, O’Dowd confesses that had it not been for Carlyle “I might have been a bit of a hero-worshipper myself”. He continues, once more concentrating on Garibaldi’s followers:

The grand frescoes in caricature of the popular historian have, however, given me a hearty and wholesome disgust to the whole thing; not to say that, however enthusiastic a man may feel about his idol, he must be sorely ashamed of his fellow-worshippers. “Lie down with dogs, and you’ll get up with fleas,” says an old Irish adage; but what, in the name of all entomology, is a man to get up with who lies down with these votaries of Garibaldi? So fine a fellow, and so mangy a following, it would be hard to find. (*Ibidem*, 123-124)

O’Dowd’s task, having underlined “the stupid incongruity between Garibaldi and his worshippers” is to hone in on the Garibaldi’s physical and psychological qualities, which he does without inhibition:

It is not easy to conceive anything finer, simpler, more thoroughly unaffected, or more truly dignified, than the man himself. His noble head; his clear, honest, brown eye; his finely-traced mouth, beautiful as a woman’s, and only strung up to sternness when anything ignoble or mean had outraged him; and, last of all, his voice contains a fascination perfectly irresistible, allied, as you knew and felt these graces were, with a thoroughly pure, untarnished nature. The true measure of the man lies in the fact that, though his life has been a series of the boldest and most daring achievements, his courage is about the very last quality uppermost in your mind when you meet him. It is of the winning softness of his look and manner, his kind thoughtfulness for others, his sincere pity for all suffering, his gentleness, his

modesty, his manly sense of brotherhood with the very humblest of the men who have loved him, that you think: these are the traits that throw all his heroism into shadow; and all the glory of the conqueror pales before the simple virtues of the man. (*Ibidem*, 124-125)

Lever's portrait is unusually straightforward and its purpose, first and foremost, is to explain the qualities that brought Italians to follow him with such ardent affection. It is not so much a picture of a great military leader but of Garibaldi as a "thoughtful, silent, reflective man" and as a man of his word "who could so magnetise his fellow-men as to associate them at once with his nobility of soul, and elevate them to a standard little short of his own" (*Ibidem*, 133). He describes the simple dinner he attended at Caprera. He was impressed by the humble hospitality and by the absence of political talk from the table. O'Dowd discounts "the conversations reported of him by writers" (129) and lauds instead his capacity to listen: "He rarely spoke himself, but was a good listener – not merely hearing with attention, but showing, by an occasional suggestion or a hint, how his mind speculated on the subject before him" (126). O'Dowd's analysis is that Garibaldi's simplicity is what made him so powerful, and he says that "greater intellectual ability" would have rather "detracted from" his "power as a popular leader":

I myself feel assured that the simplicity, the trustfulness, the implicit reliance on the goodness of a cause as a reason for its success, are qualities which no mere mental superiority could replace in popular estimation. It is actually Love that is the sentiment the Italians have for him; and I have seen them, hard-featured, ay, and hard-natured men, moved to tears as the litter on which Garibaldi lay wounded was carried down to the place of embarkation. (*Ibidem*, 129)

Ultimately, in O'Dowd's estimation, the "bold buccaneer" Garibaldi succeeded because, as Cavour immediately spotted, he was the one who could "move the national heart" and who, at the same time would not "dissever the cause of liberty from the cause of monarchy" (*Ibidem*, 130). In the end, Lever's judgment as voiced through his mouthpiece is acutely political and nuanced and shows a blend of the diplomat's shrewd eye for the political and the fiction writer's sharp pen:

It might be possible to overrate the services Garibaldi has rendered to Italy – it would be totally impossible to exaggerate those he has rendered the Monarchy; and out of Garibaldi's devotion to Victor Emmanuel has sprung that hearty, honest, manly appreciation of the King which the Italians unquestionably display. A merely political head of the State, though he were gifted with the highest order of capacity, would have disappeared altogether from view in the sun-splendour of Garibaldi's exploits; not so the King Victor Emmanuel, who only shone the brighter in the reflected blaze of the hero who was so proud to serve him. (*Ibidem*, 131)

And yet, behind all Garibaldi's success, Lever sees the manoeuvring hand of the wily Cavour. It was he who, "behind the scenes, pulled all the wires; and these heroes - heroes they were too- were but his puppets" (*Ibidem*). Until Cavour died in 1861, that is. The article finishes with warm praise for Garibaldi the man if not for his politics:

All honour, therefore, to the man—not whose example only, but whose very contact suggests high intent and noble action. All honour to him who brings to a great cause, not alone the dazzling splendour of heroism, but the more enduring brightness of a pure and unsullied integrity! Such a man may be misled; he can never be corrupted. (*Ibidem*, 133)

In his letters, Lever expressed his opinion that if Italian Unification had to happen should have happened in the early 1860s and commented: "How miserably the Italians lost their opportunity not backing up Garibaldi and making Rome their own at once" (Downey 1906, II, 207). There is a sense of *realpolitik* in this. Lever learned through observation in Italy that sometimes political action and change can take on a dynamic that can be perhaps resented and resisted but which ultimately cannot be stopped. Back in 1847 in his strange and dark book *Horace Templeton*, he had seen the unification of Italy as impossible (in a description which still speaks today to the fact that Italy continues to be less than the sum of its distinct parts:

When thinking of Italian liberty, or Unity, for that is the phrase in vogue, I am often reminded of the Irish priest who was supposed by his parishioners to possess an unlimited sway over the seasons, and who, when hard-pushed to exercise it, at last declared his readiness to procure any kind of weather that three farmers would agree upon, well knowing, the while, how diversity of interest must for ever prevent a common demand. This is precisely the case. An Italian kingdom to comprise the whole Peninsula would be impossible. The Lombards have no interests in common with the Neapolitans. Venice is less the sister than the rival of Genoa. How would the haughty Milanese, rich in every thing that constitutes wealth, surrender their station to the men of the South, whom they despise and look down upon? None would consent to become Provincial; and even the smallest states would stand up for the prerogative of separate identity. (Lever 1894, 391)

Twenty years later, Lever would see that Italian Unity had indeed been realised and this would be a lesson the relevance of which for Ireland he would gradually come to work out in his final novels. Writing about his final novel, *Lord Kilgobbin*, Richard Haslam claims that the many references "to political events in Greece, Crete, Turkey, Italy and Austria, all of which echo and comment upon Irish upheavals, suggests that in this, his final novel, Lever had begun to place Ireland in a broader European context, one which reflected the dismantling of ancient landowning traditions and the emergence of a new and

ambitious class eager to gather up and redistribute the fragments” (Haslam 1991, 78). This process of placing Ireland in a European context was a longer one which began in earlier works with his admonishments of Irish landlords for not facing up to their duties. What finally happens in *Lord Kilgobbin* is that he finally steps beyond bemoaning the failures of the Ascendancy and starts allowing himself to consider the situation from the other side. In *Cornelius O’Dowd*, speaking of the “Turin Chamber” and its failure to be effective in the country he lamented that “the Italians are far more eager to learn what is said in the French Parliament than in their own” (Lever 1864, 23) before comparing this situation with an Irish equivalent: “I remember an old waiter at the Hibernian Hotel in Dublin, who got a prize in the lottery and retired into private life, but who never could hear a bell ring without crying out, ‘Coming, sir.’ The Italians remind me greatly of him: they have had such a terrible time of flunkeyism, that they start at every summons, no matter what hand be on the bell-rope” (*ibidem*). But what Lever lived to see was that the Italians did form their unified State, did come into their own and if they could overcome “flunkeyism” perhaps the Irish could too. Thus if a whole series of Dukedoms and minor Kingdoms could come tumbling down in quick succession then what had been for most of his life the mere hypothesis of the end of the Anglo-Irish world could now too be contemplated and his deeply engrained, conservative perspective on Ireland reversed. No longer was only an end in sight but he also perhaps began to intuit the beginning of a new world – as imagined by the Fenians – that he could finally allow himself to contemplate if not endorse.

The case of Italy played a central role in Lever’s facing up to the writing on the wall at home. Lever’s capacity to see the value and integrity in Garibaldi, a man whose politics he did not endorse, would inform his own later fiction in which he would not shy away from seeking to understand a Fenian leader, whose politics he deplored, but whose integrity he undoubtedly came to value. Thus, in *Lord Kilgobbin*, he can have Nina Kostalergi fall for Daniel Donogan, revolutionary head of the Fenians and be genuinely touched and impressed by the integrity and constancy of his nationalist beliefs.

It was Italy, therefore, that brought about the belated change in Lever, writer and diplomat, and led him to finally examine scenarios for Ireland that he had hitherto refused to countenance. It was almost as in *Lord Kilgobbin*, the work he described as “essentially Irish” (Downey 1906, II, 218) and his last “chance of finishing creditably” (254), that Lever finally answered for himself the question he had Meg Dodds (presumably Mrs O’Dowd as she is elsewhere referred to in the text) put to O’Dowd some years earlier in *Cornelius O’Dowd*:

“What for no?” as Meg Dodds says; but I can’t help thinking there are no people in Europe so much alike as the Italians and the Irish; and I ask myself, How is it that every one is so sanguine about the one, and so hopeless about the other? Why

do we hear of the capacity and the intelligence of the former, and only of the latter what pertains to their ignorance and their sloth? Oh! unjust generation of men! Have not my poor countrymen all the qualities you extol in these same Peninsulars, plus a few others not to be disparaged? (Lever 1864, 58)

One of the last things that Lever wrote was a new preface to *The Martins of Cro' Martin* and, having commented on the sufferings endured during the Famine, he concludes with an augury that he knew well he would not live to see but which suggests that he had despaired of "English governance of Ireland". As he asked his friend Blackwood in 1866: "When will you Saxons learn how to govern Ireland?" (Downey 1906, II, 158) intuited change for the country on a par with the big changes he had witnessed throughout a lifetime in Italy: "If a nation is to be judged by her bearing under calamity, Ireland—and she has had some experiences — comes well through the ordeal. That we may yet see how she will sustain her part in happier circumstances is my hope and my prayer, and that the time be not too far" (Lever 1872b, 4). That new Ireland would not be his nor would it have been a time or a place he would have felt at home in but from his vantage point at the other side of Europe on the Adriatic seaboard he saw it coming.

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“From Cork [...] to St. Peter’s Cupola”: The Idea of Italy in the Writings of Francis Sylvester Mahony

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Abstract:

This article reconsiders the comparativist aesthetic of Francis Sylvester Mahony’s “Prout Papers” in relation to the direct cross-comparisons of Irish and Italian circumstances in his later Roman journalism, emphasising the importance of Italy to the two works he published in book form. It traces the development of Mahony’s thoughts on Catholic identity and nationalist politics in his Italian writings. The decentred perspective on contemporary Ireland provided by his commentaries on Italian affairs is used to discuss Mahony’s interest in ‘doubleness’, focussing especially on his sometimes provocative efforts to arrive at political understanding through the dialectical examination of opposed viewpoints.

Keywords: Anglo-Irish Literature, Father Prout, Francis Sylvester Mahony, Italy, *The Daily News*

On June 26 1851, the Cork-born wit, essayist, and journalist, Francis Sylvester Mahony (1804-1866) appeared in London before a parliamentary select committee on the law of mortmain. Called to provide expert testimony on the workings of ecclesiastical law in the Papal States, he drew upon the extensive knowledge of Italian affairs he had acquired as Rome correspondent for the London *Daily News*. A Roman Catholic priest who had long since ceased regular exercise of his clerical duties, he was singularly well qualified to chronicle for his liberal British Protestant readership the momentous events that would culminate in the formation of the Roman Republic in 1849. Mahony was “essentially the right man in the right place” (Mahony 1876, vi), his intimate knowledge of the politics and culture of the peninsula predating his belated entry into the journalistic profession in the mid-1840s. Outlining for the committee his close association with Italy, he claimed to have been resident there “during the reign of Leo 12th, Pius 8th, Gregory 16th, Pius 9th,

since the year 1821 up to the present period; and I have visited it almost annually, excepting since the late sad reaction and its results" (UK Parliament 1851, 386-387) – a reference to the forced restoration of Papal Authority in 1850. Originally domiciled in Italy as a 'scholastic' of the Jesuit order, and subsequently as a clerical student of the Sapienza, he further claimed to have visited the country as "companion on several occasions to wealthy young English or Irish gentlemen" (*ibidem*, 387). His classical training under Jesuit educators in Ireland, France, and Italy instilled in him a lifelong respect for both ancient and Christian Rome. He would later ascribe his "wonderful familiarity with Latin" to having "lived in an atmosphere of it" (Mahony 1876, 7) as a young pupil. It was this exceptional facility with ancient and modern continental languages that underpinned his first success as "Father Prout", the mock scholarly persona he adopted for his essayistic contributions to *Fraser's Magazine* in the mid-1830s. His early reputation was founded on the idiosyncratic combination of serio-comic classical learning and pungent politico-cultural comment that typified his compositions for this progressive Tory and staunchly Protestant London periodical. His Prout essays were collected and republished as *The Reliques of Father Prout* in 1836, and met with immediate success, establishing Mahony's name in metropolitan literary circles as a cosmopolitan *littérateur* known, it was said, "from Cork to Constantinople [...] from Paris to St. Petersburg [*sic*] [...] from Paul's Cross to St. Peter's Cupola" (Rattler 1847, 443).

Mahony's enduring interest in Italy was one of the connective threads that bound together his early periodical career and his later journalism. But it was also an aspect of his writings that would undergo radical change over the course of his correspondence for *The Daily News*. That he had been interviewed by a parliamentary select committee for his views on Italian affairs gives some indication of the weight and respect which his Victorian contemporaries accorded his Roman journalism (now largely forgotten in modern accounts of his writing career). Nonetheless, the same committee meetings saw Mahony closely questioned on the precise nature of his clerical status, his attempted use of 'private documents' as supporting evidence, and his accusations of corruption against Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, who would later attend in person to refute Mahony's allegations as "one tissue of untruths, every word of it" (UK Parliament 1851, 398-399, 548). A pugnacious, controversial figure, with a reputation for literary feuding compounded by a public spat in 1842 with the popular historical novelist, William Harrison Ainsworth, Mahony was a Catholic outsider in literary London unafraid to test Victorian sensibilities by challenging religious and political boundaries. The present article will reassess Mahony's Italian writings – principally, his two-part "Songs of Italy" series for *Fraser's Magazine* and his Roman journalism for *The Daily News* – in order to trace his journalistic re-interpretation of the key religious and political components of his trademark Catholic un-

ionism: an unorthodox authorial stance, in contemporary Irish terms, that would later see his literary productions denounced by some commentators as anomalous or even ‘shameful’. It will re-examine, too, the evolution of his work from the comparatively muted treatment of Catholic political themes in the Tory Protestant context of *Fraser’s Magazine* to his impassioned reports on the emergence of a highly politicised Italian Catholicism during the early papacy of Pius IX. His characteristic attraction to political ambiguity and cultural complexity will be investigated in relation to his journey from the conservative classicist of the “Prout Papers”, who used the signature theme of ancient Rome as a cultural counterweight to the forces of change at work in 1830s Britain and Ireland, to the committed, pro-nationalist political commentator of the Roman letters who was willing to revisit his unionist politics in light of fast-moving developments in 1840s Italy.

1. “*The Songs of Italy*”

Published successively in the February and March 1835 editions of *Fraser’s Magazine*, “The Songs of Italy” series, along with the four-part “Songs of Horace” and the four-part “Songs of France”, formed part of an extended cross-cultural discussion in the “Prout Papers” of the song and ballad history of continental Europe. Accompanying as they did Mahony’s own renderings of and original contributions to Anglo-Irish folk balladry, the selection of Italian songs presented here was part of the learned Father’s ongoing efforts “to compare and collate the Tipperary bagpipe with the Cremona fiddle; to remember the forgotten and attend to the neglected ballads of foreign nations; and to blend in one harmonious system the traditionary songs of all men in all countries” (Mahony 1860 [1836], 317). This last stated ambition allowed the Cork-based Father Prout to ironically leap frog the influence of the literary metropolis by using foreign song “to break the monotonous sameness of modern literature [...] [and avoid] the hackneyed barrel-organs that lull and stultify the present generation” (*ibidem*). Although clearly of a piece with the jaded post-Romantic aesthetic of *Fraser’s Magazine*, Mahony’s apparent preference for foreign song over tired British literary convention is complicated somewhat by his accompanying description of the conservative unionist Prout’s “singular theory, viz. that the true character of a people must be collected from their ‘songs’” (*ibidem*) – a commonplace notion of early nineteenth-century cultural nationalism, and one which formed the background to Mazzini’s and Young Ireland’s programmes of national renewal. While this may explain the appeal of Prout’s balladry to the Romantic nationalism of Young Ireland – Charles Gavan Duffy, for example, included Mahony’s popular Cork anthem, “The Bells of Shandon” in *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* (1845) – it does not, however, reflect any direct endorsement of national ambitions. Indeed, the opening paragraphs of “The Songs of Italy”

scorn the “literary orgies” (319) and “playing the devil” (318) of Lady Morgan in her Italian writings, the most notable of which was her ‘masterwork’ *Italy* (1821), an important Risorgimento precursor text that helped influence “British (and, consequently, also Irish) public opinion in favour of Italy’s aspirations to cast off foreign rule” (Badin 2014, 207). Loath to discuss Lady Morgan’s campaigning on behalf of unification in her Italian works (concisely denounced by him as “the vilest and most unjustifiable invasion of Italy”, 318), Mahony indulges instead in ad hominem abuse, expressing a familiar Fraserian condescension towards female authorship.

Nonetheless, it is this very interplay of competing perspectives, be they colonial or metropolitan, national or cosmopolitan, Romantic or post-Romantic, that imbues the “Prout Papers” with their characteristic open-endedness. Like “old Prout” himself, the prevailing ‘genius’ of these essays is “‘Protean’ and multiform, delighting to make [its] [...] appearance in a diversity of fanciful shapes” (Mahony 1860 [1836], 316). Accordingly, the first essay in the Italian series rehearses once again the seriocomic accusation of unacknowledged literary borrowings made famous in “The Rogueries of Thomas Moore”, where Mahony had satirically undermined the nationalist verse of “The Bard of Erin” by inventing foreign-language ‘originals’ for a number of his “Melodies”. Moore’s illicit ‘appropriations’ are here illustrated by some quoted lines from Petrarch’s *Canzoni*, which are subsequently compared to classical sources in Quintus Curtius and Silius Italicus, thereby relativising, in another familiar textual irony, both the modern ‘copy’ and the supposed authoritative original. Other recognisably ‘Proutean’ elements include his interpolation of incongruous Irish references into his translations from the Italian poets, his mock revelation of the role of the Irish monks of Bobbio in Dante’s pioneering decision to compose the *Divina Commedia* in the vernacular, and, more generally, his inveterate digressiveness, learned allusiveness, and vitriolic denunciations of the Catholic nationalist leader, Daniel O’Connell.

Yet, despite the obvious affinities with Prout’s “classical namesake” (*ibidem*), Mahony is keen to emphasise the underlying consistency of his central protagonist, stressing, in an untypical move, his “candour and frankness, his bold, fearless avowal of each inward conviction, his contempt for quacks and pedants, [and] his warm admiration of disinterested patriotism and intellectual originality [...] recognised throughout his writings” (*ibidem*). Partly a jibe at the “begging-box” of O’Connell (*ibidem*), his endorsement of “disinterested patriotism” had also been an issue in the preceding series, “The Songs of France”, where Mahony had translated and explored the politically radical verse of prominent French Romantic figures like Victor Hugo and Pierre-Jean de Béranger, offering a striking instance of his willingness to enter into dialogue with opposed political viewpoints. Thus, while censuring, for example, the “failings and errors” of the youthful Béranger, he nonetheless praises the “frankness, single-heartedness, and candour” of a poet who

was unquestionably of “*the people*” and never “sought to convert his patriotism into an engine for picking the pockets of the poor” (*ibidem*, 299), thus closely anticipating his comments on the constant, unvarying qualities of the Prout character in the later Italian series. In other words, Mahony frames “The Songs of Italy” in a manner that serves to emphasise consistency and identity of character over the troubling complexity that politically unorthodox authorship might elsewhere have suggested for his Fraserian readership.

Accordingly, Prout, alone in his Watergrasshill “mountain-shed”, turns to youthful recollections of his sojourn in the Italian states as a form of respite from “all the boisterous elements of destruction hold[ing] a ‘radical’ meeting on yonder bog” (*ibidem*, 319). Equally importantly, in a marked departure from “The Songs of France”, Mahony deliberately confines his study of Italian song to a pre-Romantic era when

Alfieri had not yet rekindled the fire of tragic thought; Manzoni had not flung into the pages of romantic narrative a pathos and an eloquence unknown to, and undreamt of, by Boccaccio; Silvio Pellico had not appalled the world with realities far surpassing romance; Pindemonte had not restrung the lyre of Filicaia. (*Ibidem*, 321)

Significantly, then, while not seeking to “undervalue” (*ibidem*) the accomplishments of these key figures in the neoclassical/Romantic revival of national feeling (Walsh 2014, 110) which helped pave the way for Giobertian nationalism and Mazzinian Republicanism – two central preoccupations of Mahony’s Roman journalism – Prout makes clear that his cross-cultural comparisons of European literature in the “Prout Papers” do not extend to contemporary Italy. No mention is made, therefore, of the vital literary “re-awakening” (Baldoli 2009, 176) of ideas of national destiny in the theatre of Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803); nor does he ponder the guarded Christian Romanticism of Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873) as conveyed in his coded attack on Austrian oppression in *I promessi sposi* (1827); nor indeed does he elaborate on the sufferings of Silvio Pellico (1789–1854) in *Le mie prigioni* (1832), a dignified portrait of the author’s brutal incarceration in the Austrian prison system. Viewed from an Irish perspective, where Moore’s literary nationalism had given memorable voice to longstanding native resentments, Romantic narrative was invariably seen as a possible conduit for messages of political dissidence. Any overt discussion of anti-imperial cross-currents or potential politico-cultural analogies between mid-1830s Irish and Italian circumstances is therefore neatly sidestepped by Mahony, wary perhaps of pointing up for his Fraserian audience common separatist grievances or nascent liberal-democratic initiatives for the politicisation of the impoverished Catholic lower classes.

Instead, like many of the Italian authors cited above, Prout reaches back to the beginning of the vernacular tradition, drawing upon his superior knowledge of Catholic literary history to concisely survey for a Protestant

readership the prevailing qualities of Italian song. Released, it seems, from the burden of political commentary, Prout the elderly Catholic priest is now free to expatiate on the songs of Petrarch, for whom he feels a certain “partiality” as one who “belonged to ‘my order’” (Mahony 1860 [1836], 323). An uncharacteristic tone of reverential eulogy, noticeably distinct from the more subversive tenor of other essays, pervades his analysis of and translations from the verse of Petrarch, especially the *Canzoni*, “the model and the perfection” (*ibidem*), in his view, of love poetry. Petrarch’s celebration of what is termed his “Platonic” (324), unrequited affection for Laura has, for Prout, a religious significance rooted in the subtle admixture of piety and poetry that distinguished the rhyme of “the father of Italian song” (346):

Relenting, on my grave,
 My mistress may, perchance,
 With one kind pitying glance
 Honour the dust of her devoted slave [...]
 And while for me her rosary she tells,
 May her uplifted eyes
 Win pardon from the skies,
 While angels through her veil behold the tear that swells! (*Ibidem*, 326)

His eloquent translations of Petrarch’s lyric poetry convey a sense of the “exalted excellence and cherished purity” (*ibidem*, 346) of Laura, enshrining in solemn, heartfelt language the view of her as both an idealised source of poetic inspiration and a quasi-religious paragon of virtue. His earnest rendering, for instance, of Laura’s continuing posthumous significance for the grieving Petrarch in “the last major encounter poem” (Hainsworth 2014, 167), “Quando il soave mio fido conforto”, even goes so far as to portray her as “spiritualised into an angelic essence” (Mahony 1860 [1836], 367) – a not uncontentious view, in an early nineteenth-century context, that strongly contrasts, for example, with his Fraserian colleague Thomas Carlyle’s deflationary judgement of Petrarch’s muse as merely an artful “little coquette” (1822).

Genuine religious feeling also suffuses his loose translation of Michelangelo’s famous sonnet, “Giunto è già ‘l corso della vita mia”, which, in Mahony’s version, explicitly defends the solemn function of art:

Yet why should Christ’s believer fear,
 While gazing on yon image dear? –
 Image adored, maugré the sneer
 Of miscreant blasphemer.
 Are not those arms for me outspread?
 What means those thorns upon thy head? –
 And shall I, wreathed with laurels, tread
 Far from thy paths, Redeemer? (*Ibidem*)

Petrarch, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Tasso, Raphael, Sannazaro, Bembo, Brunelleschi, and many other “imperishable names”, are all lauded as displaying an “unfeigned devotedness to the doctrines of Christianity” (*ibidem*). Rapid advances in print technology in the early nineteenth century had seen the periodical press become a modern ‘pulpit’ which provided a powerful forum for the dissemination of often tendentious opinion on the still intertwined arenas of religion and politics. Obligated to negotiate the strongly-held Fraserian ethos of “Church and State” Protestant Toryism, Mahony adopted ecumenism as one of the guiding principles of his early writing career. Hence the recurrent emphasis in “The Songs of Italy” on ‘Christian’ subject matter, encapsulated in his bold statement “of the incontestable truth, that the poet who would suppress all reference to Christian feeling has voluntarily broken the finest chord of his lyre” (*ibidem*). Yet, crucially, despite the seeming anomaly of Father Prout’s inclusion in *Fraser’s Magazine*, Mahony nowhere disavows his Catholic identity. On the contrary, he trumpets Prout’s religious difference, arguing strenuously for the cultural depth and richness of the Catholic literary tradition, while ensuring, all the while, that he does not directly offend Protestant sensibilities. If, on the one hand, this strategy sees him actively avoid religious controversy, it also clearly involves Mahony in a form of dualistic thought that requires him to see the world from both Protestant and Catholic perspectives simultaneously, so reinvoking the heterogeneous aspects of the Prout character he ostensibly set aside in contemplating the pre-Romantic Italian song tradition.

Furthermore, despite Mahony’s stated intentions, a sense of Italian politico-cultural separateness also re-emerges from his particular selection of representative Italian song. His value as a guide to Catholic literary culture is made readily apparent in his treatment of lesser known Italian poets, many of whom were largely unfamiliar to an English-speaking Protestant readership. Translations from canonical poets like Petrarch and Dante are accompanied in the Italian series by brief discussions and verse interpretations of more obscure figures such as Jerome Vida (1485?-1566), Claudio Tolomei (1492-1556), Vincenzo da Filicaja (1642-1707), Benedetto Menzini (1646-1704), Alessandro Guidi (1650-1712), Giovan Battista Felice Zappi (1667-1719), Jacopo Vittorelli (1749-1835), and Giulio Cesare Cordara (1704-1785), among others. Thomas Davis singled out this aspect of Mahony’s work for consideration when criticised by O’Connell for “praising writers not entitled to be praised” (Duffy 1880, 169). Catholic exoticism undoubtedly played a part in sustaining general early-nineteenth-century British interest in Italian themes; however, fashionable Italophilia, which looked to Rome “as the cradle of civilisation”, would eventually yield to the impression that British Romanticism, in its selective reimagining and idealisation of the peninsula, had ultimately failed to see beyond the veil of appearances (O’Connor 1998, 20-22, 36-37). Something of this is caught in Mahony’s condemnation of the

“barbarian” (Mahony 1860 [1836], 318) cultural invasions of Lady Morgan, Leigh Hunt and Samuel Rogers, as well as in Prout’s negative comparison of Moore and Byron’s modern articulation of “mere animal passion” (323) with Petrarch’s idealised depiction of love – the difference, for him, between aesthetic excellence and its simulacrum.

If, by contrast, his post-Romantic narrative attempted to go closer to the heart of the culture, it did so, as Davis’s comments suggest, by collating from disparate Italian songs a sense of religio-cultural separateness that also had political implications. Importantly, Prout, for whom “Poetry is the nurse of freedom” (*ibidem*, 352), commends the patriotic verse of Petrarch and hails the efforts of those who “sung the anthem of independence” (330). His interpretation, for instance, of a poem by Filicaja here entitled “Alla Patria” sees the speaker address a feminised, “prostrate Italy”:

The fatal light of beauty bright with fell attraction shone,
 Fatal to thee, for tyrants be the lovers thou hast won!
 That forehead fair is doom’d to wear its shame’s degrading proof,
 And slavery’s print in damning tint stamp’d by a despot’s hoof! (*Ibidem*, 331)

The allegorisation of national suffering, and the heightened language of “shame”, “slavery”, and “tyranny”, clearly recall the tropes and terminology of Moore’s mournful nationalist lamentations in the “Melodies” on Ireland’s fallen state. Yet, the significance of such parallels resides less in what they apparently say about a residual Catholic nationalist sympathy embedded in Mahony’s translations, than in the complex dialectic they reveal in “The Songs of Italy” between Catholicism and Protestantism, conservatism and nationalism, and Romanticism and post-Romanticism. A comparative study of national song, in which an eccentric Irish priest explicitly set out to find the “true character of a people” in their verse tradition, the Italian series was compelled to address the generative power of Italy as a political metaphor from an Irish (as opposed to a British Romantic) viewpoint. Despite Mahony’s seeming retreat into the cosmopolitan literary past, such cross-cultural comparisons would, in the hands of the ‘multiform’ Father Prout, invariably come to broach ‘dangerous issues’ common to Irish and Italian experience, “such as the meaning of national identity, the loss of dignity under foreign occupation, the right to rebel and shake off the oppression of that same foreign power” (Badin 2013, 132). It was these very issues that would push Mahony’s thinking on Irish-Italian parallels in new and unexpected directions in his Roman correspondence of the following decade.

2. “*Don Savonarola*”

In the Italian series, Mahony had set out to celebrate the literary culture of Italy. One important consequence of this was that Prout’s enthusiastic nar-

rative managed to avoid stock Romantic notions of the superiority of modern Britain, and was notable in its refusal to impose an improving metanarrative on contemporary Italian squalor and deprivation. Stranded, unlike his British counterparts, among an ‘ignorant’, restive peasantry, Prout used the idea of Italy to fulfil a positive, multi-purpose role in his scholarly writings. Italian culture provided the elderly cleric with an enduring model of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic perfection, drawn from ancient Roman, Christian, Petrarchan, and Renaissance sources, which he could quietly contemplate amid the social unrest and political upheaval of post-Emancipation Ireland. Commissioned, however, in late 1845 to contribute Italian letters to Charles Dickens’s newly-founded newspaper, *The Daily News*, Mahony was forced to revisit the guiding ideal of Italy enshrined in his Prout writings, revising his views to take account of developments in pre-revolutionary Rome. Mahony would later invite Dickens to edit and introduce a collected volume of his Roman journalism – covering the period from January 31 1846 to June 18 1847 – but, perhaps suspecting a commercial motive, his former editor demurred in favour of a preliminary ‘notice’. On its eventual publication as *Facts and Figures from Italy* (1847), the correspondence was prefaced by a perfunctory, single-sentence statement from Dickens tersely asserting the formal literary relationship between the two authors: “Having engaged the Father who signs himself ‘D.J. SAVONAROLA’ to enter on this correspondence, it only remains for me to say these *are* his Letters”. The italicised “*are*” said something of both the aforementioned reputation Mahony had acquired as “a wild dissolute character” (Macready 1912, II, 370) and the famously mercurial nature of the author of the “Papers Papers”, who had now taken on the guise of an elderly Sardinian monk, “Don Jeremy Savonarola”. As was his wont, Mahony retaliated by interpolating additional paragraphs in his opening letter from Rome criticising Dickens’s largely apolitical, ‘impressionistic’ (Tomalin 2011, 166) travelogue, *Pictures from Italy* (1846) for having “simply *daguerrotyped* the glorious landscape, the towered cities, and the motley groups” (Mahony 1847, 18). Offering only faint praise for a “pleasant” (*ibidem*) work, Mahony, in other words, used the opening paragraphs of his first book publication since the *The Reliques* to align Dickens – whose “glance”, he declares, “was but transitory” (*ibidem*) – with the Romantic travellers he had castigated in the “Prout Papers”.

If, however, the contrasting goal of Mahony’s narrative was to employ an insider’s perspective to “penetrate [...] [the] darker objects” of “our peninsular politics” (*ibidem*), or to generate greater socio-economic depth in his reports, it was not immediately apparent from the fictive preface to the collected letters. In this extended allegory, Mahony presents himself in the persona of a descendant of Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), the controversial Italian Renaissance campaigner against corruption. A perceived forerunner of Martin Luther, the “sainted Jeronymo” (1) provoked radically different reactions

among mid-nineteenth-century writers, ranging from those who saw him as a Catholic martyr and fearless advocate for social and ecclesiastical reform to those who dismissed him as “a half-crazed person, an imposter, and a knave” (Rattler 1847, 445). In the opening allegorical narrative, Anglo-Irish history is reimagined under the rubric: Sardinia-Ireland, Piedmont-England, Savoy-Scotland, and mined for suggestive analogies. Mahony demonstrates considerable ingenuity in tracing parallels in the respective histories of Italy and Ireland, throwing an unorthodox light on the pieties of Catholic nationalist history, while directly politicising the suggestive cross-cultural comparisons of “The Songs of Italy”. Predominantly unionist in outlook, the preface allegorises the degradation and violence of the native Sardinians, who “sedulously neglect every single department of local, individual, or national amelioration” (Mahony 1847, 8). Their “favourite political economy”, as recorded by *Gli annali dei quattro maestri*, “consisted in cutting each other’s throats” (6). The Anglo-Irish, or “loyal adherents of the Court of Turin” (8), who make up “most of the intelligent, great part of the commercial, and nearly all the landlord class” (*ibidem*), engage in an acidulous “battle of the Citrons” with the opposing “immaculate” Catholic Sardinian faction, resulting in “the common interests of both going to the juice” (10). That “just and honest” figure, “John Taureau” (9) observes their “debilitating internal squabble” (10) from afar, incessant Sardinian infighting being cited as the sole reason preventing the “upright and fair-play-loving” (9) citizens of Turin from lifting the penal laws. In one sense, then, Mahony harnesses the same unexamined notion of Italian alterity conveyed in books like *Pictures from Italy* to rephrase the seemingly intractable “Irish question”, arguing, in a relentlessly negative analysis, for a common idea of the Catholic Irish/native Sardinians as unreformable peoples incapable of practical self-governance.

Mahony’s sustained act of Italian ventriloquism is made convincing for the reader by the depth of feeling that underscores the Irish analogy. Nevertheless, as Ireland and Italy are threaded closer together in his writings, fact and fictional retelling move further apart. Although framed as the preface to a work titled *Facts and Figures from Italy*, his introductory polemic does not adhere strictly to the historical record, as can be seen, for instance, in the portrayal of the O’Connell character, “Dandeleone” – a name suggestive of both leonine qualities and the common dandelion. Mahony represents the “vulgar” (*ibidem*, 11), “brawling” (10) methods of O’Connell as instrumental in delaying Emancipation by fifteen years, claiming, without adducing any supporting historical evidence, that the matter would otherwise have been settled in 1814 through a “quiet interchange of mutual concession” (*ibidem*) overseen by the middle and upper classes. Similarly, in another dubious re-reading of recent historical events, the eventual achievement of Emancipation is attributed to “Gormano Mahon” (Charles James Patrick Mahon, 1800-1891), who is portrayed as “forc[ing]” (14) Dandeleone to elect him as

representative for the “Clara” constituency. Significantly, Don Savonarola is depicted as one of the few who truly understands the objective implications of Dandeleone’s career, having spent his youth with his Benedictine brethren working on “that unrivalled storehouse of history [...] in which every doubtful matter is sifted by reference to authentic records” (11), *L’art de vérifier les dates* (1750) – in fact, a chronology censured for its Jansenist bias, the title of which, according to one critic, should have read “L’art de vérifier les dates et de falsifier les faits”.

Unlike Father Prout, Don Savonarola is presented as a direct participant in public affairs through his spirited opposition to the O’Connell figure. The preface afforded the then forty-two-year-old Mahony a forum to take a fictionalised look back on his literary career, and to claim a position amongst those who sought to prevent Dandeleone’s alleged efforts to profit from the separation of the masses from the gentry. Dandeleone’s skilful manipulation of newspaper opinion consolidates his public position, forcing a response from Don Jeremy, whose “bile” (*ibidem*, 15) is roused by the shameless avarice of “Dan” (a reference to “The O’Connell Tribute”) and his refusal to support a poor-law provision – two of the recurrent bugbears of the “Prout Papers”. Inserting himself in this allegorised history, Mahony states: “For years, as long as it lasted, Jeremy mixt up with all his literary effusions, a continued onslaught on this beggary” (*ibidem*). In reality, Mahony’s “continued onslaught” had been mainly confined to the Prout era of 1834-1836, and was only resumed in earnest with his re-emergence as a newspaper journalist in 1846. Mahony’s ambivalence towards O’Connell/Dandeleone – strongly critical of his destructive political influence but temperamentally incapable of disregarding the scale and status of his fellow Irishman’s achievements – is indirectly registered in his seeming need to advert to how Dandeleone “maligned *him* in a ‘speech of the day,’ at the Corn Exchange” (*ibidem*), with an accompanying footnote temporarily setting aside allegory to reference contemporary Irish newspapers. Although readers of the allegorical narrative might be forgiven for interpreting the Don Jeremy-Dandeleone exchange as a clash between two central figures in the formation of national opinion, this sole recorded reference to Mahony by O’Connell served only to underline the former’s minority status as one of a panoply of anti-O’Connellite critics in the British press.

A bridging text between the “Prout Papers” and Mahony’s Roman journalism, the preface derives part of its interest from the modified understanding it displays of the main forces at play in Irish society. Remarkably, Mahony’s Prout essays of the mid-1830s make almost no direct mention of Catholic Emancipation, much less the aforementioned involvement in this process of the middle and upper classes, a fact that surely owed something to the sectarian political opinions of his Cork-born editor, William Maginn. Whereas in the “Prout Papers” Mahony had variously criticised O’Connell as an arch-beggar, a demagogue, or a scheming Catholic landlord, the pref-

ace provides a more nuanced account which sees the middle classes emerge in his writings as a concrete political force and a potential engine of change. Most surprisingly, perhaps, Mahony now appears to regret that O'Connell/Dandeleone had not joined his "native vigour and activity" (*ibidem*, 12) with the gentry, barristers, merchants, and landowners in winning Emancipation earlier. Fraserian anti-O'Connellite polemicising is superseded by a more complex and panoptic portrait of the interconnection between the peasant masses, the Catholic and Protestant middle classes, the gentry and the aristocracy. In addition, although his anti-O'Connellite critiques in *Fraser's Magazine* had self-consciously included Catholics among the landed classes, he now almost exclusively identifies landlordism with the Anglo-Irish – a significant development in understanding the condemnatory reports on Roman agriculture that follow. As we shall see, these modified opinions are not strictly the result of developments in Anglo-Irish affairs in the intervening decade but derive, too, from the observations of pre-revolutionary Roman society recorded in his *Daily News* correspondence. As the preface draws to a close, Don Jeremy's unpopular political views compel him to relocate to Turin (Mahony had, in actuality, already moved to London when he composed the "Prout Papers"), where he keeps up a campaign in the Piedmontese press of "constant hostility" (15) to Dandeleone which is given added urgency by "a rot among the chestnuts" (16).

3. *Letters from Rome*

The reader now turns to Mahony's Italian correspondence, the first section of which is retrospectively titled "The Fag End of an Old Reign". Throughout these early letters, Mahony methodically documents instances of misgovernance, economic backwardness and a "'balance of trade' [...] awfully against the Pontifical dominions" (*ibidem*, 32). Using information gleaned, he emphasises, from official documents "not of easy access" (*ibidem*), Mahony, the Catholic insider, delivers a despairing account of the unreformed condition of native agriculture and industry under the conservative government of Pope Gregory XVI. According to his wide-ranging analysis, basic items such as wool, cotton and silken tissues, iron, brass, tin, lead, zinc, crockery, books, wax, honey, cheese, butter, olive oil, corn, gums, resins, fruits, sugar, wines, and fish, are all imported unnecessarily to the detriment of "this benighted land" (45). He notes, incidentally, that "The *Fisheries* are in as miserable a state of neglect as in Ireland" (43); but in what is, in fact, a Famine-era text, no direct mention of Irish economic distress is strictly necessary. Rather the interplay between the paratextual allegorical preface and the more traditional reports that constitute the main body of *Facts and Figures from Italy* pushes Irish comparisons to the fore in this opening section of Mahony's journalism. Pointed allusions to the "incapacity" (42), "laziness" (*ibidem*), and "beggary

indolence" (32) of the Roman population also mirror the Irish-Sardinian comments of the preface, but with the crucial difference that the letters attribute the retrograde conditions of Rome to ecclesiastical mismanagement rather than the shortcomings of indigenous character. Conservative reluctance in the "Prout Papers" to tamper with time-honoured practices is replaced by a campaigning reformism in his correspondence for the *Daily News* – a publication that had been specifically envisaged as a pioneering Liberal daily newspaper.

Thus, while he states that "The declamations of Young Italy may or may not be all froth" (*ibidem*, 39), a sceptical reference to Mazzini's attempts to turn the discourse of Italian Romanticism fleetingly referenced in the "Prout Papers" into concrete political action (Riall 2008, 167-186), the more factual approach adopted by Mahony in his correspondence cannot, he feels, be gainsaid "in the fashion of rhetorical flourishes" (Mahony 1847, 39). Direct and frequent reporting of Church exclusion of the "middle classes, the *proletaires*, and operatives" (*ibidem*), accomplished, so he argues, with the active collusion of a corrupt aristocracy, builds cumulatively in his journalism to a chronicle of ecclesiastical incompetence. Economic recession, brought on by persistent crop failures in the mid-1840s, further underlined the inadequacies of Roman clerical rule, confirming, for many, the common perception of the papal regime as the embodiment of "all that was worst about the government of Restoration Italy" (Laven 2000, 62). Yet, notwithstanding the acknowledged failings of papal maladministration, Mahony, in similar fashion to Mazzini's self-conscious attempts to tap into pre-existing Romantic narratives, draws upon the dialectical relationship already in place between imperial Britain and pre-unification Italy. Annemarie McAllister has described Victorian Anglo-Italian relations as an ongoing process of "antagonistic identification" (2007, 1), whereby the political tumult of mid-century Britain was reined in through counter efforts to externalise the representation of revolutionary forces. According to McAllister, Italy had an important role to play "in the emerging English narrative of construction of national identity by exclusion" (2). Notions of British imperial order were buttressed by the contrasting socio-economic chaos of subordinate nations like Italy and Ireland. Newspaper reports on the progress of Italian independence in the Papal States served the dual purpose of promulgating the spread of political liberalism on the continent, where the unleashing of dangerous revolutionary energies might be channelled to positive ends, while consolidating national identity at home. British readers of *The Daily News* were, in effect, being asked to simultaneously endorse domestic order, dissociate themselves from Roman retrogression, and identify with strategic efforts to weaken Austrian absolutist power.

An element of anti-Catholicism (or at least anti-clericalism) was evident in this dialogic process, as can be seen, for example, in two separate review articles of *Facts and Figures from Italy* in the conservative Protestant *Dub-*

lin University Magazine, both of which focus on the predominantly negative preface and first section of *Facts and Figures from Italy*, largely to the exclusion of the much more positive alignment of Catholicism and political reform portrayed in the second section (Rattler 1847, 442-452; Anon. 1848, 57-74). Anti-clerical in its depiction of ecclesiastical politics – though not anti-Catholic – the opening portion of Mahony’s letters drew its liberal Protestant readership into a seemingly familiar dialectic, only to complicate matters somewhat in the succeeding section, “The Bright Dawn of Better Days”, which enthusiastically details the comprehensive reform programme set in motion after the election of Pius IX. Here Mahony remoulded the self-fashioning ‘English’ narrative of affiliation and exclusion to link Irish and Italian circumstances, shrewdly ensuring a more sympathetic reception for Irish Catholic concerns. However, the rapid movement of Rome into the vanguard of progressive reform also propelled him towards a reconsideration of his role as an Irish Catholic author in the British literary marketplace. Limited in his Prout writing to endorsing Catholic literary culture while repeatedly repudiating O’Connellite nationalism, Mahony now began to embrace the freeing possibilities made available to him by the sudden advancement of revolutionary hopes in the Papal States. His precise, succinct, and clear-eyed evocations of the new political dispensation in Rome were coloured by a novel tone of unabashed enthusiasm, introducing into his descriptions of the attempted reconciliation of “Catholic orthodoxy to principles of freedom, progress, and nationhood” (Soldani 2001, 63) an element of exoticism which had been consciously resisted in Prout’s Italian essays and his initial Roman journalism. Unfettered by the perceived need to constantly reiterate his unionist credentials, he found in his pro-papal journalism a viable means of reconciling his religious and political identities not hitherto possible in his ‘anomalous’ Catholic unionist texts.

As he eagerly set down his views on the unprecedented phenomenon of a reformist papacy, Mahony diligently assembled the emerging facts on an assortment of progressive initiatives, pushing for a measured pace of change. Thus, for instance, he wholeheartedly welcomed the expansion of the press and growth of “a freshly created reading public” (1847, 142), applauded the introduction of a land tax on “leviathan landholders” (196) and the removal of an inequitable and “oppressive” (144) grist tax on corn, noted approvingly the industriousness of the railway board and the establishment of gas works (220), and made a telling comparison of the “effete aristocracy”, who sustained “five-sevenths of the whole population” through agriculture, with the predominantly Protestant “spendthrift squirearchy who have been for ages the curse of Ireland” (227). Mahony’s analysis details the tripartite nature of the political transformation of Rome, recording the separate class-based, socio-economic and national components of change in the three-year gestation period preceding the 1849 Roman revolution. The version of pre-revo-

lutionary events presented in his first-hand account tallies closely with the findings of modern scholarship. Nonetheless, the persistent need to advert to the dangers of “reactionary efforts” (154), and to explain away all evidence of papal conservatism as traceable either to Austrian political intrigue or to Pius being kept in the dark by his ministers, points to Mahony’s efforts to construct an unqualifiedly reformist papacy for his readers, so advocating a patriotic ‘national’ interpretation despite his professed commitment to a strictly objective reporting of “facts and figures”.

In this respect, one of the guiding philosophical figures of his Roman journalism is Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-1852), whose neo-Guelphic proposal for a confederation of Italian states under papal leadership was outlined in *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani* (1843). Scattered references to the “witty” (Mahony 1847, 166) and “eloquent” (210) Abbé throughout Mahony’s reports of 1846 and 1847 praise the “patriotic theories” of the exiled Piedmontese cleric, whose “liberal views are yet combined with strict adherence to Catholic orthodoxy” (77). Building upon Manzoni’s Catholic Romanticism, Gioberti offered a compelling combination of religious devotion and Italian patriotism. His writings were tailored to appeal to the emergent middle classes, and to disaffected clergymen (such as Mahony) who had previously been moderate or conservative in political outlook. Mahony, the accomplished classicist, could not fail to have been stirred by the Giobertian conception of a resurgent Rome, transformed from Byron’s “chaos of ruins” to a symbolic paradigm of patriotic aspirations – as seen, for example, in his robust comments on Austrian military movements on Italian soil in August 1847: “the popular blood is up, and the old Roman spirit evoked after the slumber of centuries. Guerrillas, more formidable than scourged the armies of Napoleon out of the Sierras, would annihilate the whole Vandalry of Vienna” (*The Daily News*, August 27, 1847). Indeed, Mahony’s Italian views merged the ecclesiastical, liberal-national, and millenarian strands of Giobertianism, yet, crucially, were noticeably more strident in rejecting the Austrian presence in the Papal States. The aforementioned class-based, socio-economic and national elements of the revolution all had Irish parallels in Mahony’s reports, which amounted, as in his trenchant remarks on the misguided conacre system, to an indirect portrait of misgovernment in Ireland amid the calamity of mass starvation. One should recall here the dialectical character of Mahony’s thought, his firm and unswerving anti-Austrianism, for instance, ultimately manifesting itself in a blurring of the boundaries between the twin poles of Roman reform and revolution. Just as Mahony had tapped into a pre-existing Anglo-Italian dialectic, framing Pius’s reformism as a third way between the opposing extremes of liberal Protestant Britain and the ultraconservatism of Pope Gregory XVI, so too did the liberal middle-class nationalism of Young Ireland offer an appealing alternative to the opposing extremes of strict unionism and O’Connellite nationalism.

Yet, whereas Mahony's correlation of the ills of Irish and Italian landlordism are unambiguous, building common cause among marginal European communities, the frequent absence of direct, unequivocal statements on Irish nationalism mean that the depth and extent of his Young Ireland sympathies are more difficult to gauge. Imperial 'thesis' and 'nationalist' antithesis are clearly posited, yet the prospect of a putative 'synthetic' resolution remains stubbornly elusive. What is clear, nonetheless, is that the tendency towards polarising extremes in Mahony's political commentary pushes his analysis further down radical paths than a more measured style of argumentation might otherwise have permitted. In other words, the overriding need to reject O'Connellite nationalism made him more sympathetic towards its opponents. If Mahony, for instance, repudiates Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell's "hopeless endeavour to create an independent Ireland" (Mahony 1847, 253), he does so while ridiculing O'Connell as one of those leaders who "confine their aspirations against the Saxon to mere talk" (*ibidem*). An accompanying unsourced quotation, citing the need of an independent Ireland to "Right her wrongs in battle line" (*ibidem*), is in fact a direct reference to a polemical piece from the *Nation* which had been publicly censured by O'Connell as a treasonous example of separatist rhetoric, in a speech that reasserted his own commitment to the principle of non-violence (*The Tablet*, September 5, 1846). Nevertheless, Mahony's satiric gibe at O'Connell serves, in effect, to ally Gaelic Ireland with Young Ireland in a patriotic tradition of military resistance, his allusion to the "Saxon" enemy invoking the heated, anti-English rhetoric found, most notably, in Thomas Davis's militant poetry. The central project of Davis's career, "to lift the English rule off Ireland and give our country a career of action and thought" (Mulvey 2003, 171), is echoed in Mahony's contention that the recently deceased Young Irelander was the first who "turned the youthful intelligence of Ireland into pathways of manly independence and self-respect" (231). Though Irish separatism may have been a "hopeless endeavour", it was not necessarily an unjustifiable one.

Interestingly, when Mahony came to report on Father Ventura's famously pro-democratic Roman funeral oration for O'Connell, he interpreted its allegedly seditious sentiments in a positive light as raising the "thermometer of popular self-reliance" and alerting Romans to "their power and [...] position in the eyes of Europe" (1876, 462). Marta Ramón observes that "for Irish nationalists, Italy was fundamentally an alternative battleground" (2014, 177); and Michael Huggins has further argued that there was a generic and "ideological connection between Young Ireland and Young Italy" (2015, 35). Remarkably, however, it was the once conservative "Father Prout" who was willing to travel further down radical lines than either O'Connell, who was wrongfooted in the twilight of his political career by Pius's flirtation with revolution, or the *Nation* (after John Mitchel's resignation), which cautiously avoided the charge of anti-clericalism by opting out of active support for

radical democracy in the wake of Pius's anti-revolutionary Papal allocution of April 1848. This latter development was lamented by Mahony and others as marking the beginning of the departure of the Catholic Church from the Risorgimento. Nonetheless, later reports in the *Daily News* go on to praise the "sublime spectacle" (*The Daily News*, August 8, 1848) of Mazzini's voluntary refusal of the role of dictator in Milan in August 1848, and Mahony would make no effort to condemn the brutal assassination by democratic extremists of "that obnoxious politician" (*The Daily News*, November 28, 1848), Pellegrino Rossi, Pius's unpopular chief minister who had belatedly attempted to apply Giobertian principles in Rome. Despite what had been his near hero-worship of Pius, Mahony greeted the flight of the Pope to Gaeta on November 24 1848 with a similar sense of equilibrium:

I have not now the slightest apprehension of any evil results [...] [A]s far as the City of Rome and territory subject to the present constitutional government of this country are concerned, the absence or presence of the monarch will have little or no effect. The unanimity with which the middle classes and the lower orders agree to support the authorities, is an unmistakable symptom and guarantee of social order. The high aristocracy of the clerical and secular class have neither sympathy with, nor support from, those who rank under them. (*The Daily News*, December 11, 1848)

In other words, faced with irrefutable evidence of the "retrograde tendency [...] of one who reigned paramount in the hearts of the people" (*The Daily News*, December 1, 1848), Mahony chooses a secular anti-aristocratic, pro-revolutionary stance over his Catholic affiliations, even claiming in his evidence before the select committee on the law of mortmain to "having frequently assisted at the deliberations" (UK Parliament 1851, 504) of the Roman Assembly that prefigured Mazzini's Republican Rome.

Whether it had, in fact, been sincere eulogy or strategic political interpretation (or, more likely, a combination of both), his uncharacteristic romanticisation of Pius was replaced by a post-revolutionary disenchantment with politicised Catholicism. The bitterness of his feelings towards Pio Nono was registered particularly in the loss of a unified religious and patriotic/nationalist identity which had provisionally reconciled the key dialectical relationships of centre and margin, Protestantism and Catholicism, and unionism and nationalism – the apparently irreconcilable extremes of contemporary Irish authorship to which the "Prout Papers" had been his idiosyncratic answer. Notwithstanding Father Prout's insistent defence of ecumenism, conveyed in his celebration of the riches of Catholic culture contained in Italian song, he would hereafter set aside the 'performative', self-dramatising Catholicism of Father Prout and Don Savonarola to take up the essentially Liberal Protestant identity of his final writerly incarnation as Paris correspondent for the London *Globe*. From the 'doubleness' of Father Prout and Don Savo-

narola, both of whom were represented as reaching beyond religio-political convention to re-explore the Protestant-Catholic divide, he would befriend the apostate Italian Catholic priest, Alessandro Gavazzi, and actively facilitate the translation and publication in the early 1850s of his proselytising, pro-Protestant attacks on the restored papacy (Hall 1990, 351-52; O'Connor 2015, 127-128). His subsequent career reflects the passing of a brief historical moment in early Victorian Britain that witnessed the fleeting elevation of his eccentric brand of Irish Catholic authorship. When viewed in long perspective, Mahony's evolution from the mercurial, shapeshifting diatribes of the conservative (if 'multilateral') Father Prout, to the pro-papal endorsement of advanced reform and anti-Austrian agitation of *Facts and Figures from Italy*, through into his eventual acceptance of secular Roman government in later articles for *The Daily News*, saw the idea of Italy form a core metaphor in his work for the understanding of Irish affairs. The shift in political gravity at Rome from past to future enabled him to set unionist and nationalist politics in dialogue once again, so facilitating his journey from conservative Catholic unionist to nationalist reformer and, finally, pro-Protestant Liberal commentator. It would ultimately allow him to work through the complexity of opinion that underpinned the symbolic power of Father Prout, an ecumenical figure emblematic of the seemingly irresolvable discord of mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, permitting him to eventually settle on the more consistent, if less politically searching and religiously versatile, character of his final journalism.

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Miscellanea

Luke Wadding and Irish Diplomatic Activity in Seventeenth-Century Rome

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Abstract:

The aim of this article is to provide a new assessment of the diplomatic role played by the most prominent Irishman in seventeenth-century Rome: the Franciscan Luke Wadding. Hitherto, the available analyses on Wadding have focused on his literary and theological activity, with the consequence that, with the exception of one old essay, the 'diplomatic' role he played for the Irish Confederates during the years from 1641 to 1649 has been neglected. Indeed, during this crucial period, he acted as the agent of the Irish Confederates at the papal curia, thus strengthening his role as the most influential Irishman in Rome. The article will illustrate how this appointment placed Wadding under growing pressure from Ireland, and how this led him to play a seminal role in shaping or influencing the decisions taken by the Holy See concerning his country.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Ireland, Irish Confederates, Rome, Wadding

1. The Beginning of Wadding's 'Diplomatic' Role

In his book *The Old English in Ireland*, Aidan Clarke asserted that Luke Wadding's capacity to understand the events in Ireland during the first half of the seventeenth century must have been limited because he left the country at an early age never to return (Clarke 2000, 24). After Clarke's critical assessment, Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin remarked how the real extent of Wadding's diplomatic activity in Rome has still to be demonstrated (Ó hAnnracháin 2006, 407).

Both these statements seem too simplistic since they do not do justice to Wadding's complexity. A quick glimpse at his career in Rome clearly reveals

an exceptionally gifted man who succeeded in obtaining and playing a series of prominent roles within the papal curia. Born in 1588 to a Waterford merchant family, Wadding entered the Irish College, Lisbon, in 1603. He joined the Franciscan order in 1604, entering the friary of the Immaculate Conception in Matozinhos, where he was ordained in 1613, teaching theology there until 1618 (Harold 1931, 1-17).

Following his arrival in Rome in 1618 as the official theologian of the Spanish embassy, Wadding had a meteoric career. Between the 1620s and 1630s, he was appointed chief compiler of the *Annales Minorum*, a general history of the entire Franciscan order since its foundation, and was also consultant of the Congregation of the Index, consultant at the Sacred Congregation “de Propaganda Fide”, the Roman ministry founded in 1622 to oversee missionary activity in Protestant and non-Christian regions, founder, in 1625, of Saint Isidore’s College, the first Irish Franciscan college in the city, and co-founder in 1628, with cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi (1595-1632), of the Irish College for the training of the secular clergy (Harold 1931, 63-65; Jennings 1953, 310-311)¹.

Given the prestigious roles to which Wadding was appointed, it is hardly surprising that, in October 1641, he was the first Irishman in Rome to be informed of the outbreak of the Ulster rebellion. Despite lacking a professional diplomatic background, Wadding soon displayed a commitment to supporting to the Irish cause by playing a dual role: reporting updated accounts of the military operations of the Irish insurgents, and lobbying Antonio Barberini (1607-1671), cardinal protector of Ireland, to fund the Irish cause and dispatch an agent to survey the situation. Wadding’s efforts resulted in cardinal Barberini’s agreeing in March 1642 to grant 12.000 crowns to the Irish insurgents for the purchase of artillery and ammunitions (Historical Manuscripts Commission, shortened in HMC Franciscan 1906, 109-111, 113-114, 127-129; Lenihan 2001, 51-53)².

The importance of Wadding’s role grew at the same pace as the Irish insurgents evolved into a proper political body. On 7 June 1642, a number of lay leaders and Catholic bishops met in Kilkenny to draw up an oath of association which paved the way for the formation of the Irish Confederates,

¹ Archivio della Sacra Congregazione “de Propaganda Fide”, Vatican City (hereafter APF), Acta 3, f. 1; Archivio Segreto Vaticano (hereafter ASV), Archivio Boncompagni-Ludovisi, Armadio IX, protocollo 317, part IV, no. 1, ff. 458-465; no. 2, ff. 466-469; for the different roles that Wadding had at Propaganda Fide, see APF, Acta 7, ff. 179v.-182r., 254v., 307-309; 10, ff. 79, 114, 156-158v., 160-162, 178v.-185, 199-201, 323-324; 12, ff. 154v.-159, 180-183; 16, ff. 9v., 108v.

² Luke Wadding to Antonio Barberini (January 1642), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Vatican City, Barberini Latini (hereafter BL), Ms 6,483, f. 4; Wadding to Barberini (February 1642), Rome, BAV, BL, Ms 6,485, f. 11r.

the birth of which was officially sanctioned by the general assembly held at Kilkenny from 24 October to 21 November 1642 (Ó Siochrú 1999, 42-44). Official recognition of Wadding's diplomatic role came about in early December 1642 when the Irish Confederates appointed him official agent and procurator for their affairs in Rome (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], II, 117-118). Wadding's appointment was part of the strategy of the council of the Confederates which established a network of agents at the main European courts in order to seek external recognition and support for their rebellion. The Confederate 'diplomatic corps' relied on a series of prominent Irish clerics who, in most cases, had been educated in continental Europe. Apart from Wadding, this diplomatic network included the Franciscan Hugh Burke in Brussels, his confrere Francis Magennis in Madrid, and the Jesuit Matthew O'Hartegan (1600-1666) in Paris (Ohlmeyer 1995, 91-95).

At a first glance, the establishment of this diplomatic network had two concrete advantages: the first was that it relied on a series of trustworthy clerics devoted to the Irish cause; the second was that they did not require the expensive means of support needed by professional ambassadors. Yet, at the same time, there was one major disadvantage concerning their non-professional status: they lacked practical experience in diplomacy (Frigo 1999; Onnekink, Rommelse 2011). In Wadding's case, this problem was compounded by Rome's distance from commercial routes linking Ireland with the Iberian Peninsula and Spanish Flanders; the city did not have an established Irish lay community whose members might funnel first-hand reports.

In its early stages Wadding's diplomatic activity seemed characterized by a sense of prudence that took into account his distance from Ireland. In the early months of 1642, he was the first Irish cleric in continental Europe to feel the need to dispatch a secret papal agent to Ireland in order to survey the situation and achieve union among the Irish rebels. Wadding initially put forward the appointment of Hugh Burke as papal agent because of his "authority and credit with the lord chiefs" (HMC Franciscan 1906, 129).

The position of papal agent was entrusted to Pierfrancesco Scarampi (1596-1656), an Italian Oratorian priest. Wadding was instrumental in his selection and appointment. Indeed in early March 1643, he wrote to Scarampi to invite him to come to Rome and prepare for his mission to Ireland³. Scarampi's mission to Ireland was also a further demonstration of Wadding's ability to use his influence in Rome to provide financial support for the Irish Confederates. A tangible example of this was the 30,000 crowns with which Scarampi arrived in Ireland and which Wadding had collected from the Barberini, Pamphilj, Spada and other Roman noble families (Meehan 1846, 73).

³ Wadding to Cardinal Antonio Barberini (4 March 1643), Rome, BAV, BL, Ms 6,485, f. 47r.

2. *A Difficult Task*

In the period 1643 to 1644, Wadding was exposed to growing pressure from the Irish Confederates who constantly appealed him to urge the papal curia to provide more and more financial and military support. Wadding also began to assist the Irish clerics close to or associated with the Supreme Council of the Irish Confederates who came to Rome (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], III, 99).

Wadding's mounting responsibilities were a direct consequence of the confidence that the Irish Confederates placed in Wadding. A clear example of this was the Confederates' appeal to Urban VIII (1568-1644), in mid-June 1644, asking him to confer the title of cardinal on Wadding. Their request was motivated by a "view to further advance the Catholic faith", and as a way of acknowledging the merits of Wadding who "has ever cherished the Irish with paternal affection" (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], III, 194). While this request might have strengthened Wadding's prestige in Rome, it brought no concrete benefits for the Irish Confederates. Indeed the capacity of Wadding to lobby for the Irish cause clashed with the costly war for the conquest of the duchy of Castro which drained most of the resources of the Holy See (Ó hAnracháin 1997, 103).

A noteworthy feature which characterized the Confederates' appeals and requests to Rome is that, apart from Wadding, they never sought to contact other Irish clerics who resided in the city where, by the early 1640s, there were two Irish colleges. Possibly their decision was influenced by the detachment displayed by the Irish clerical community in Rome towards the Irish situation. In the case of the secular seminary, which since 1635 had been under the control of the Jesuits, none of its residents played any role in Rome for the Irish Confederates. This contrasts with the fact that, since its outbreak, the Jesuit Superior generals had taken a keen interest in the Irish rebellion about which they were informed thanks to reports sent by members of the Order both at home in Ireland and in continental Europe⁴. Even the members of Saint Isidore's showed no interest in supporting the Confederates' appeals, or in increasing the level of Irish lobbying within the papal curia. Only of a few of the students trained at Saint Isidore's played a proactive role for the Irish Confederates. Yet their experiences were simply isolated attempts which developed outside Rome and the official diplomatic network of the Irish Confederates (HMC Franciscan 1906, 183, 194, 219).

⁴ Robert Nugent to Muzio Vitelleschi (24 March 1642), Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome (hereafter ARSI), Fondo Anglia, 6a, f. 12; Nugent to Vitelleschi (24 April 1642), ARSI, Fondo Anglia, 6a, f. 14; Matthew O'Hartegan to Vitelleschi (2 June 1642), ARSI, Fondo Anglia, 6a, f. 17; O'Hartegan to Vitelleschi (16 June 1642), ARSI, Fondo Anglia, 6a, f. 18; O'Hartegan to Vitelleschi (5 August 1642), ARSI, Fondo Anglia, 6a, ff. 20-24.

More broadly, the only significant change within the Irish diplomatic framework in Rome took place in mid-June 1644 when the council of the Irish Confederates appointed Edmund O'Dwyer, a secular priest, assistant to Wadding in order to help him "in promoting our affaires in the Courte of Rome" (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], III, 182-183). This appointment was made by the Confederates who simply fulfilled a request advanced by Wadding himself who deemed O'Dwyer a worthy and experienced cleric and who, since the early 1630s, had acted as Roman agent of the Connacht bishops (Jennings 1953, 606, 612-613). However this co-operation was short-lived because in the spring of 1645 O'Dwyer returned to Ireland following his appointment as bishop of Limerick⁵.

It is striking to note how, after O'Dwyer's departure, none of the most prominent members of the papal curia sought to provide another assistant to support Wadding. This clashed with the strategy of the Irish Confederates who, in late 1644, sought to increase their level of diplomacy in Rome and in the Catholic courts of Europe through the appointment of Richard Bellings (1613-1677) as their ambassador (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], IV, 69-70)⁶.

However Bellings' appointment, and in particular his diplomatic mission to Rome, in early March 1645, would be a source of strong disappointment for the Irish Confederates for two crucial reasons. The first was that Bellings did not succeed in convincing the Pope to grant the half a million crowns which the Confederates estimated necessary in order to win the war. Lack of evidence prevents an assessment of whether Wadding, who hosted Bellings at Saint Isidore's and presented him to the Pope, had any responsibility for the failed outcome of this mission (Bellings 1654, 128; O'Ferrall, O'Connell 1932-1949, I, 701). Despite Wadding's influence and prestige in Rome, the financial request put forward by the Irish Confederates was clearly excessive for the Holy See whose finances had dramatically worsened in the 1640s with a debt balance of more than 50,000 crowns (Reinhard 1984, 361).

The second reason which greatly disappointed the Irish Confederates was that, during Bellings's mission to Rome, Innocent X (1574-1655) decided to appoint as nuncio to Ireland Gianbattista Rinuccini (1592-1653), who had been archbishop of Fermo since 1625 (Kybal, Incisa della Rocchetta 1943-1946, I, 700-701; Ó hAnnracháin 2002, 82-113). The Pope's decision shocked Bellings. At the same time, it is difficult to gauge whether or not, and how, Wadding influenced Rinuccini's appointment. Given that he personally selected Scarampi, it seems natural to suppose that he was the logical promoter of the nunciature.

⁵ *Dataria Apostolica*, ASV, *Processus Datariae*, vol. 24, ff. 29r.-36v.

⁶ Supreme Council to Innocent X (23 November 1644), ASV, *Segreteria di Stato*, *Particolari*, 17, f. 389; Supreme Council to Cardinals of Propaganda Fide, APF, *Scritture Originali Riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali*, 143, f. 259rv.

However there are few sources which indicate that Wadding was instrumental in Innocent's choice and decision. The only two hints which might prove Wadding's influence on the nunciature's genesis come from Francis Harold (d. 1685) and O'Hartegan, respectively his nephew and cousin. In his biography of his uncle, Harold clearly stated that "Luke procured and obtained the honour of an apostolic nuncio" (Harold 1931, 126). O'Hartegan was, on the other hand, vaguer: he declared, in a letter sent to the Council of the Irish Confederates in mid-November 1644, that Wadding had informed him that "his Holiness hath a favour in readiness for you, and intends to add fare greater" (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], IV, 61-62). A further element which might reveal Wadding's potential influence emerges in the instructions given by the Pope to Rinuccini. The *incipit* of the papal document left no doubt that the key aim of Rinuccini was "to restore and re-establish the public exercise of the Catholic religion in the island of Ireland", thus demonstrating how the nuncio's mission had to reform the Irish Catholic church according to a Tridentine model (Ó hAnnracháin 1993, 78). Yet the supposed influence played by Wadding on the drafting of these instructions also revealed his isolation from Ireland. Wadding's distance from Irish opinion emerged in the "Istruzione", where he described Sir Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641), lord deputy of Ireland from 1632, in laudatory terms, a judgment which clashed with his broad unpopularity among Irish Catholics (Perceval-Maxwell 1994, 211-212; Clarke 2000, 124). The only certain role played by Wadding was to seek funding. Proof of his commitment were the 26,000 crowns he collected, half of the sum handed over to Rinuccini (Harold 1931, 126). A further demonstration of Wadding's commitment to providing a steady financial support for the Irish Confederates emerges in the plea that he addressed to cardinal Giulio Roma (1584-1652) in mid-December 1644. Wadding clearly stated that "it is time in which these 10,000 [crowns] will do and will be worth more than other 100,000 [crowns]". He concluded his letter exhorting the cardinal that "I return to beg His Reverence that he admit to His generous and Christian consideration these my pious and clear reasons and, by doing so, he will give example to others to imitate them"⁷.

In the early stage of the nunciature, the relationship between the nuncio and Wadding seems to have been smooth. The latter appreciated the way in which the former "had entered in these business with noble spirit", despite there having been "different opinions and a different language" (O'Ferrall, O'Connell 1932-1949, II, 208-209, 253). Equally the Irish Confederates con-

⁷ Wadding to Cardinal Giulio Roma (12 December 1644), Rome, Archivio Doria Pamphilj, Archiviolo, 196, ff. 328r., 328v., 329r., 329v.: "ch'è il tempo, nel quale questi 10.000 milia (?) faranno e valeranno piu che altri cento millia; Di nuovo torno a supplicar a v. Ra. Voglia admettere alla sua generosa e Christiana considerazione queste mie chiare e pie ragioni, e facci di maniera, che dia essemplio alli altri de imitarli".

tinued to trust Wadding in whom “implicit trust may be placed” (Bellings 1882-1891 [1641-1649], V, 357-358).

The implicit trust placed in Wadding meant that, in 1646, the Irish Confederates still hoped for substantial financial support from the Holy See. He clearly understood how this was crucial for supporting the Irish rebellion. Throughout that year he sought to collect all the funds which might be available from the Pope and Cardinal Camillo Francesco Maria Pamphili (1622-1666). Once again the level of funding obtained through Wadding’s intercession was outstanding if we consider that, by the end of November 1646, the Pope promised to send 75,000 crowns to Rinuccini (Aiazzi 1844, XXXV; O’Ferrall, O’Connell 1932-1949, II, 380)⁸.

3. An Unsuccessful Outcome

Wadding’s commitment to the Irish cause appeared indisputable but, from the second half of 1646, Rinuccini and his Gaelic supporters began to question his loyalty to the Irish Confederates. The early suspicions of the nuncio, who deemed Wadding a secret informer of James Butler (1610-1688), the Protestant earl of Ormond and chief commander of the royalist forces in Ireland, soon turned into open hostility (O’Ferrall, O’Connell 1932-1949, IV, 240). The accusations against Wadding grew exponentially and targeted him for Bellings’s unsuccessful mission to Rome in 1645, and for being the supposed promoter of a secret plot through which Owen Roe O’Neill (1590-1649), general of the Ulster army, would be named king of Ireland (Bellings 1654, 182-183; Aiazzi 1844, 419; O’Ferrall, O’Connell 1932-1949, III, 60-61; IV, 237).

These accusations, which are not supported by any evidence, were influenced by the context of disillusionment and disunity, which fragmented the Irish Confederates in Ireland. The lack of support promised by Innocent X, combined with the utter failure of Rinuccini to understand the need to deal with the Protestants, worsened the situation with the consequence that Wadding’s role as the Confederates’ agent in Rome lost importance (Corish 1976, 324; Ó hAnnracháin 1993, 84; Lenihan 2001, 99-107).

The Inchiquin truce of 1648 between the Irish Confederates and the English royalist forces and the subsequent censures of Rinuccini against those who agreed to the treaty brought Wadding’s diplomatic role in Rome to a drastic conclusion (Ó Siochrú 1999, 170-204). Indeed he was fully engulfed by the harsh criticisms of the nuncio who openly accused him of having inspired “with all trickery” a letter from cardinal Giulio Roma (1584-1652) critical

⁸ “Viaggio in Irlanda di Dionisio Massari”, APF, Miscellanea Varie, 9, ff. 290-293, 297.

of Rinuccini's censures (O'Ferrall, O'Connell 1932-1949, III, 685, 687). In 1648 Wadding was also accused, by friars supporting the nuncio, of being involved in a scheme, elaborated by Ormond and supported by Pierre Marchant, the Franciscan commissary general with responsibility for Ireland, to divide the Irish Franciscan province into two. Once again, lack of documentation hampers any assessment of Wadding's role: did he deliberately choose to plot against his country and the Irish Franciscan province (Gilbert 1879-1880, II, 220; O'Ferrall, O'Connell 1932-1949, IV, 53-54; Mooney 1957, 36-37)?

What is certain is that, despite the breakdown of the Irish Confederates and the chaotic situation brought about by Rinuccini's censures, Wadding continued to support the Irish cause. A tangible example of this was the animated appeal that he drafted to Innocent X, during the spring of 1648, and in which he asked for the continuation of papal support for the Irish rebels (HMC Franciscan 1906, 247). There is no evidence to demonstrate whether or not this appeal was actually delivered to the Pope who, by 1648, was no longer displaying any enthusiasm for, or interest in, the Irish scene (Ó hAnracháin 2002, 207-208).

The dissolution of the Irish Confederates and the unsuccessful conclusion of Rinuccini's mission in 1649 was the prelude to a gloomy period not only for the Irish Catholics at home, but also for Wadding in Rome where, from the late 1640s, he was no longer consulted on Irish affairs (Hynes 1932, 264, footnote 2). Furthermore, Wadding was also severely opposed at Saint Isidore's where a group of his confreres openly denounced him for Rinuccini's failure and for the disunity among the Irish Confederates. These accusations led to a rapid waning of Wadding's prestige in Rome. For his part, Wadding, in a letter written in 1654, simply stated that his activity had always been appreciated and that "all the works I did can testify it for me"⁹.

4. *Conclusions*

In conclusion, analysis of Wadding's diplomatic activity in Rome can be divided into two periods: the first from 1642 to 1645, and the second from 1646 to 1649. The first period was characterized by the steady relationships between the Irish Confederates and Wadding. During this phase, he made many efforts to promote the requests for financial assistance that arrived from Ireland. His commitment was revealed in his ability to collect 68,000 crowns in three years, a sum which no other Irish cleric in continental Europe succeeded in obtaining within such a short period. His devotion to the Irish cause met with the approval of the Irish Confederates who, during the

⁹ Wadding to Pedro Manero (23 August 1654), Rome, Archivio del Collegio di Sant'Isidoro, Section W 8, no. 9.

years from 1642 to 1645, always demonstrated their appreciation of Wadding's conduct and lobbying in Rome.

In contrast, the second phase of Wadding's diplomatic activity witnessed a quick deterioration in his relationship with the Irish Confederates. Lack of papal support, combined with inner divisions among the Irish Confederates, led Wadding into a situation which was impossible to manage and which drastically worsened following the arrival of Rinuccini in Ireland. While it was he who initially conceived the project of sending a nuncio, Wadding seems not to have had any role in the selection and appointment of Rinuccini, a prelate who, prior to his departure, had never had any contact with a Protestant (O'Connor 2008, 14-23).

Being the leading and most influential Irishman in Rome played against Wadding who, given his many tasks in the city, was embroiled in a dramatic and confused context in which he had to defend, simultaneously, both Irish and Roman interests. The fact that, in his diplomatic activity, he was not supported by other Irish clerics meant that Wadding was the only man in charge, and thus both the first to be praised and the first to be blamed. What might be questionable about his diplomatic activity is the way in which he acted, but not what he did: the latter was dictated by the genuine desire of a mature man to assist the mother country he had left as a child.

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Un interesse reciproco: lo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche tra Santa Sede e Irish Free State

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Abstract:

In 1930 the Holy See appointed Mgr Paschal Robinson Apostolic Nuncio to the Irish Free State. By establishing a nunciature in Dublin, Vatican diplomacy obtained an important ‘observation post’ in the heart of the English-speaking world. Thus the arrival in Dublin of the Nuncio turned out to be beneficial for the Irish government’s diplomatic relations. Investigation of this vital diplomatic exchange have been carried out in the Vatican Secret Archives where unpublished records are held.

Keywords: Diplomacy, Irish Diplomacy, Nuncio, Paschal Robinson, Vatican Diplomacy

Nei primi mesi del 1923, l’Irlanda era percorsa da una profonda lacerazione sociale e politica. Volgeva al termine, infatti, la guerra civile che aveva contrapposto i sostenitori del Trattato Anglo-Irlandese e governanti del neonato Irish Free State ai repubblicani del Sinn Féin capeggiati da Eamon De Valera, che si erano opposti alla partizione dell’isola e alla nascita del nuovo stato all’interno del Commonwealth britannico¹. Il conflitto, che si era concluso con la vittoria delle forze governative, aveva contrapposto due fazioni cattoliche destando l’attenzione e la preoccupazione della Santa Sede. La missione di Monsignor Salvatore Luzio, inviato in Irlanda da Pio XI per mediare tra le parti in lotta, si era rivelata un clamoroso fallimento, poiché

¹ Sulla guerra civile irlandese si rimanda a: Neeson 1973 [1966]; Williams 1966; Younger 1968; Hopkinson 1988; Kissane 2005; al più recente: Kelly 2013 e al saggio di Ferriter 2014.

il delegato papale era risultato invisibile al governo di Dublino, vicino alla vittoria e dunque non disposto a trattare con i nemici, ed era stato osteggiato persino dai vescovi irlandesi, preoccupati di perdere il forte potere politico e temporale che erano in grado di esercitare sull'isola².

Proprio gli strascichi della "missione Luzio" avevano comportato un raffreddamento delle relazioni tra il governo dello Stato Libero e la Santa Sede. Il Presidente dello Stato Libero William Cosgrave era un fervente cattolico e, a differenza del suo rivale repubblicano Éamon De Valera, godeva della stima e dell'amicizia della maggioranza dei vescovi irlandesi, i quali avevano simpatizzato per il partito di governo Cumann na nGaedhael fin dalla sua nascita (cfr. Murray 2000, 109). Nell'estate del 1923, a pochi mesi dal ritiro di Monsignor Luzio, il capo del governo irlandese si recò in Vaticano dopo aver preso parte alle celebrazioni per il tredicesimo centenario della morte di San Colombano di Bobbio. Non fu un caso che la prima uscita internazionale del Presidente dello Stato Libero fosse una visita ufficiale a Pio XI: se la fede cattolica costituiva un tratto identitario della cultura e della nazione irlandese, Cosgrave si sarebbe presentato al cospetto dell'autorità del pontefice come rappresentante dell'unica autorità di governo legittimo dell'Irlanda indipendente. In tal senso, la "missione" presidenziale ottenne un effettivo successo, se – come di fatto avvenne – Pio XI rifiutò, pochi mesi più tardi, l'udienza privata ai rappresentanti del Sinn Féin Conn Murphy e Donald O'Callaghan, che si erano recati a Roma per protestare contro l'operato dei vescovi irlandesi e del governo. I due inviati repubblicani furono affidati all'eloquenza del segretario della Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Monsignor Francesco Borgongini Duca, il quale, dopo tre colloqui, li congedò affermando che, "essendo il governo dello Stato Libero in Irlanda", la Santa Sede avrebbe considerato illecito "il prendere le armi per mutare con violenza l'ordine stabilito"³.

In una prospettiva di lungo periodo, i governanti dell'Irish Free State puntavano a creare le condizioni affinché la Santa Sede, superate le perplessità dovute al fallimentare esito della missione Luzio, riconoscesse ufficialmente lo Stato Libero attraverso uno scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche e

² Sulla vicenda e sugli esiti della missione di Monsignor Salvatore Luzio in Irlanda, si veda McCabe 2011 e sia consentito un rimando a Di Sanzo 2016.

³ Nota d'archivio – Mons. Francesco Borgongini Duca, *Colloqui con i signori Donald O'Callaghan, sindaco di Cork, e Conn Murphy, rappresentanti dei repubblicani irlandesi*, Archivio della Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari (d'ora in avanti AA.EE.SS.), Inghilterra, 160 (b) P.O., fasc. 11, ff. 44-47. Riguardo allo specifico riferimento all'uso della violenza per sovvertire l'ordine costituito, il segretario degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, nel corso dei colloqui, fece esplicita menzione del fatto che "il Santo Padre" aveva "constatato la evidenza anche nella Ruhr, e il governo tedesco" aveva "riconosciuto la ragionevolezza di tale condanna".

l'invio di un nunzio apostolico a Dublino; l'obiettivo a breve termine del governo era, invece, quello di chiudere la lacerante parentesi della guerra civile, limitando l'influenza che i repubblicani del Sinn Féin riuscivano ancora ad esercitare sulle comunità di emigrati all'estero e sul personale ecclesiastico dei collegi irlandesi di Roma, Parigi e Salamanca (cfr. Keogh 1986, 130). In tale direzione, assunse un'importanza strategica determinante la seconda visita di Cosgrave a Roma, nell'ottobre del 1925, in occasione del pellegrinaggio nazionale irlandese per l'anno santo. Alla guida di più di mille pellegrini, il Presidente rivolse un accorato discorso al pontefice, nel quale ottemperava in maniera assoluta alla richiesta di manifestazioni pubbliche di "riverenza e obbedienza" nei confronti della Chiesa, che Pio XI avrebbe invocato due mesi più tardi nel testo della *Quas primas*:

Humbly prostrate at the feet of your Holiness we, your Irish children, offer our loyal devotion and deep affection. We come from a land which has ever been faithful to the See of Peter. [...] In days of depression and in days of triumph we received consolation and encouragement from the Holy See. (*The Irish Catholic Directory*, 1926, 598)

Il Presidente dello Stato Libero aveva, ormai, compreso che la presenza a Roma del Rettore del Pontifical Irish College John Hagan – convinto sostenitore della politica repubblicana anche dopo gli esiti della guerra civile – avrebbe costituito un costante contrappeso rispetto a tutte le iniziative intraprese dal suo gabinetto in Vaticano. Per tale ragione, la visita al pontefice si configurò anche come l'occasione propizia per ridurre il *gap* in termini di visibilità e influenza internazionale che Cosgrave scontava nel confronto con il suo rivale De Valera⁴. Quest'ultimo, oltretutto, aveva trascorso un anno in prigione al termine della guerra civile e, alla sua scarcerazione – avvenuta nel luglio del 1924 – era profondamente invisato all'episcopato irlandese, ormai fermamente schierato sulle posizioni del partito Cumann na nGaedhael.

Nei primi mesi del 1924, la gerarchia dell'isola si presentava come un'entità in completa sintonia con il Cumann na nGaedhael, con il quale aveva inoltre intrapreso un costante confronto in merito alla legislazione su materie come l'educazione, il divorzio, la contraccezione e la censura (cfr. Murray 2000, 108-112). Tuttavia, una prima defezione in seno all'episcopato irlandese si registrò nel giugno del 1924, quando il *Freeman's Journal* – il quotidiano politicamente più vicino al partito di governo – riportò le dichiarazioni rese dal neo-consacrato vescovo di Clonfert, John Dignan. Questi, al momento della sua ordinazione, aveva osservato che “no one is satisfied with the present

⁴ Cfr. Collins 1996, 97 e, dal punto di vista di De Valera, Coogan 1993, 341. Per una ricognizione contestualizzata sul personaggio Cosgrave, si rimanda invece a Reynolds 1998, *passim*.

position, and I predict that the Republican Party is certain to be returned to power in a short time”⁵. L’eco delle affermazioni di Monsignor Dignan, che furono riprese da numerosi organi d’informazione, oltre a generare la reazione contrariata di numerosi prelati ‘filo-governativi’⁶, giunse sino in Vaticano. Lo stesso Gasparri si affrettò a richiedere al segretario della Sacra Congregazione Concistoriale, il Cardinale Gaetano De Lai, informazioni sul “senso esatto delle parole pronunziate dal Mons. Dignan, come pure sui precedenti personali del medesimo”, poiché – continuava il Segretario di Stato – le sue dichiarazioni erano “di natura puramente politica” e, per questo, avevano “richiamato l’attenzione del Santo Padre”⁷. Il responsabile della politica estera vaticana era preoccupato dall’evenienza che le dichiarazioni *pro-republican* del nuovo vescovo potessero determinare divisioni in seno alla Chiesa irlandese e, al tempo stesso, irritare la diplomazia britannica, che non avrebbe apprezzato un appoggio allo Sinn Féin da parte di settori dell’episcopato dell’isola. Il Cardinale De Lai, dopo aver ricevuto conferma delle parole pronunciate da Dignan, inviò a Gasparri una comunicazione in cui rassicurava la Segreteria di Stato del fatto che il prelado “avrebbe addotto al più presto scuse ufficiali alla Santa Sede, secondo il criterio ‘nemo in auditis condemnandus’”⁸. La rettifica richiesta non tardò ad arrivare in Vaticano e la vicenda si chiuse con una certa rapidità, ma il vescovo di Clonfert, che nel frattempo era diventato un riferimento per i cattolici repubblicani, ebbe modo di chiarire la sua posizione in una lettera inviata a Hagan, in cui confermava la sua sostanziale scelta di campo, affermando che “I felt that the ‘other side’ [il Sinn Féin] was badly treated and in all honesty and fair play, I felt bound to say a word on its behalf”⁹. In effetti, la vicenda del contestato discorso di ordinazione di Monsignor Dignan rinfocolava le polemiche intorno all’atteggiamento della gerarchia irlandese nei confronti degli attivisti e dei militanti del Sinn Féin. A questi, secondo il dettato della lettera pastorale del 22 ottobre 1922, erano rifiutati i sacramenti e, perciò, molti fra i *republicans* consideravano l’episcopato come “a mere wing of Mr. Cosgrave’s party”¹⁰. La questione assunse

⁵ “New Bishop’s prediction. The Future of Ireland”, *The Freeman’s Journal*, 2 giugno 1924.

⁶ Sia Keogh 1986, 129, sia Murray 2000, 164 citano, sulla questione, una lettera del 17 giugno 1924 di Seán T. O’Kelly a Monsignor Hagan, in cui l’esponente repubblicano raccontava che l’arcivescovo di Tuam, avendo appreso le parole di Dignan, aveva affermato: “after that I am finished consecrating bishops”.

⁷ Gasparri a De Lai, 16 giugno 1924, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 160 (b) P.O., fasc. 12, f. 61.

⁸ De Lai a Gasparri, 12 luglio 1924, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 160 (b) P.O., fasc. 12, f. 75.

⁹ Dignan a Hagan, 3 dicembre 1924, in Hagan Papers, riportato in Keogh 1986, 130.

¹⁰ *An Phoblacht*, 13 novembre 1925.

un'importanza tale da richiedere un intervento diretto della massima voce del movimento repubblicano, De Valera, che, nel maggio del 1925, inviò una lettera in Vaticano, indirizzata all'attenzione del pontefice. Il leader del Sinn Féin chiese esplicitamente un urgente intervento di Pio XI "against the unwarranted and bitterly partisan attitude of a great many of our Bishops and Clergy in political matters", avvertendo che il mancato interessamento della Santa Sede avrebbe generato "disastrous consequences", poiché ampie componenti della popolazione irlandese erano già allora inclini a credere "that the State policy of the Vatican was uniformly subserviant to England and hostile to Irish liberty"¹¹. L'appello di De Valera cadde, tuttavia, nel vuoto. La mancata risposta del Papa fu un chiaro segnale della scelta in favore dello Stato Libero compiuta in Vaticano. Pochi mesi più tardi, le parole di pubblica deferenza pronunciate da Cosgrave a Roma avrebbero sancito la definitiva attestazione dell'Irish Free State nella posizione di interlocutore privilegiato della diplomazia pontificia e la 'normalizzazione' della questione irlandese avrebbe trovato piena collocazione nella distensione post-bellica ispirata, su un piano diplomatico, dallo spirito di Locarno, originariamente interpretato da Pio XI che – come ha notato Emma Fattorini – "sembra[va] voler riparare i danni del dopo Versailles, suggerendo alle potenze di ancorarsi alla solidità dei principi cristiani piuttosto che agli equilibrismi diplomatici" (2007, 23).

1. Patrick McGilligan, Joseph Walshe e le relazioni con la Santa Sede

Nella seconda metà degli anni Venti, l'attività diplomatica dell'Irish Free State si intensificò notevolmente, sia da un punto di vista organizzativo-strutturale, sia sotto il profilo qualitativo. La crescita del dinamismo internazionale del governo Cosgrave coincise, nel 1927, con la nomina a Ministro degli Affari Esteri di Patrick McGilligan, un politico già abbastanza influente negli ambienti governativi e del Cumann na nGaedhael per aver guidato il Ministero dell'Economia e del Commercio dal 1924¹². Il nuovo capo della diplomazia irlandese fu promotore di un riordino di tutto il corpo diplomatico all'estero: legazioni e rappresentanze furono potenziate e riorganizzate; altre furono istituite o soppresse, in linea con i mutati interessi relativi al posizionamento internazionale dello Stato Libero. Fu in questo quadro, ad esempio, che si decise, sul finire del 1928, di stabilire una legazione e un consolato permanenti a Berlino, a capo dei quali fu nominato Daniel Binchy, fine giurista ed esperto di diritto internazionale; si optò, d'altro canto, per la soppressione dell'ufficio diplomatico di Bruxelles, considerato non più funzionale alla crescita del prestigio internazionale del Free State; nell'ottica

¹¹ De Valera a Pio XI, 9 maggio 1925, in AA.EE.SS., 160 (b) P.O., fasc. 12, ff. 82-83.

¹² Per un profilo biografico di Patrick McGilligan si veda Harkness 1979.

di migliorare le relazioni con altri Paesi del Commonwealth britannico, fu inviato un rappresentante in Canada; si procedette, infine, all'istituzione dei consolati di New York e Parigi e al potenziamento dello staff diplomatico a Ginevra, negli uffici della Società delle Nazioni¹³.

Ispiratore del nuovo corso fu il Segretario del Department of Foreign Affairs Joseph Walshe, che già negli anni precedenti, sotto i ministeri Duffy e FitzGerald, era stato protagonista con altri giovani funzionari della costruzione del primo ufficio di politica estera dell'Irish Free State. Convintamente legato al Cumann na nGaedhael e ostile alla possibilità di un avvento dei repubblicani al potere, Walshe riteneva che la diplomazia irlandese dovesse compiere un salto di qualità funzionale alla crescita dell'autorevolezza internazionale del governo Cosgrave. Tale risultato – secondo il diplomatico – sarebbe stato conseguito solo attraverso una riorganizzazione efficace dell'intero servizio estero, con il reclutamento di inviati di alto profilo, che svolgessero un ruolo di degna rappresentanza in quelle capitali e in quei centri di potere d'Europa e del mondo in cui si concentravano gli interessi dello Stato Libero (cfr. Keogh 1990, 67). La riorganizzazione della diplomazia sotto il ministero McGilligan seguì questi indirizzi: l'esigenza di inviare un console a New York, ad esempio, era dettata dalla necessità di costituire un presidio del governo dell'Irish Free State nella città statunitense che ospitava il maggior numero di immigrati dall'Irlanda (*ibidem*).

Il disegno di Walshe prevedeva, tuttavia, che il nuovo corso della diplomazia irlandese non sarebbe stato completo se non si fosse giunti all'instaurazione di relazioni ufficiali con la Santa Sede. Secondo il Segretario del Dipartimento degli Affari Esteri, infatti, lo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con il Vaticano avrebbe avuto un valore superiore rispetto a quelli conclusi con altri Paesi. Fervente cattolico e con un passato da gesuita, Walshe riteneva che l'avvio di relazioni ufficiali con la Santa Sede rappresentasse per l'Irlanda indipendente il suggello di una secolare tradizione di fedeltà e devozione nei confronti della Chiesa di Roma (*ibidem*, 69). Oltretutto, esistevano anche ragioni di ordine pratico che avrebbero giustificato la presenza di un delegato irlandese in Vaticano e il conseguente invio di un Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino: un rappresentante del pontefice nell'isola avrebbe accresciuto il prestigio internazionale dello Stato Libero e, al tempo stesso, avrebbe facilitato le relazioni tra il governo e l'episcopato che, nonostante le numerose convergenze d'intenti, erano state contraddistinte anche da alcune frizioni;

¹³ Department of Foreign Affairs Memorandum, 11 giugno 1928, McGilligan Papers, P 124/562a, Archives Department University College Dublin (d'ora in poi UCDA). Sulla riorganizzazione del servizio diplomatico irlandese seguita alla nomina di Patrick McGilligan Ministro degli Affari Esteri cfr. anche Keogh 1988, 31-36; sulle relazioni tra l'Irlanda e gli altri Paesi del British Commonwealth, oltre che sul ruolo svolto dai rappresentanti irlandesi in seno alla Società delle Nazioni, si veda Harkness 1969.

un inviato del Free State ufficialmente accreditato presso la Santa Sede avrebbe, inoltre, costituito un argine alle pressioni filo-repubblicane sulla Segreteria di Stato e sulla curia vaticana (cfr. Keogh 1995, 37). Più in particolare, Walshe riteneva che lo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche fosse l'unica soluzione al 'problema' della presenza a Roma del rettore del Pontifical Irish College John Hagan. Questi, infatti, oltre ad essere il principale promotore della diplomazia non ufficiale repubblicana, esercitava un'influenza determinante sulla politica dell'isola, mantenendo costanti contatti con i leader del Sinn Féin. Nel 1926, ad esempio, Hagan fu tra coloro che ispirarono la scissione in seno al movimento repubblicano e la storica entrata di De Valera e dei suoi seguaci nel Dáil Éireann sotto i vessilli del nuovo partito Fianna Fáil¹⁴. Gli attacchi di Walshe contro Hagan e la sua attività di *lobbying* antigovernativo erano diventati piuttosto espliciti nel luglio del 1927, quando il Ministro della Giustizia del gabinetto Cosgrave, Kevin O'Higgins, fu colpito a morte da un gruppo di fuoco dell'IRA. De Valera, che da pochi giorni aveva compiuto lo storico passo di entrare in parlamento, stigmatizzò l'accaduto definendo l'omicidio "inexcusable from any stand point"¹⁵, ma il diplomatico colse l'occasione per rivolgere la propria condanna contro quei vescovi che non offrivano un sufficiente supporto al governo e, soprattutto, contro quegli ecclesiastici che lavoravano per favorire un clima di divisione all'interno del Paese. Il riferimento ad Hagan era piuttosto chiaro e diventò ancora più esplicito nel testo di un memorandum prodotto per il Ministero, all'interno nel quale Walshe affermava, senza eufemismi, che "a Minister should be appointed to the Vatican and a Papal Nuncio sent to Dublin" poiché – continuava – "we have too many enemies in Rome – Irish and others – to allow that our interests to look after themselves any longer"¹⁶. Il Segretario del Dipartimento degli Affari Esteri individuava, dunque, nei "nemici a Roma" i responsabili di un sistematico attacco alla stabilità del governo irlandese, funzionale alla strategia del Fianna Fáil di De Valera.

Per tale ragione, in misura maggiore che per altre, nel corso del 1928 l'idea di uno scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche tra l'Irlanda e la Santa Sede entrò in maniera prepotente nell'agenda politica del governo Cosgrave,

¹⁴ Per una storia ragionata sul partito si rimanda a Whelan 2011.

¹⁵ Testo del discorso di Eamon De Valera, pronunciato il 10 luglio 1927 a Ennis, in Archivio Segreto Vaticano – Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Irlanda (d'ora in poi ASV – Arch. Nunz. Irlanda), busta 16, fasc. 12, f. 4.

¹⁶ Joseph Walshe Memorandum, 18 luglio 1927, McGilligan Papers, in UCDA, Box C5(B). Nello stesso memorandum, Walshe si esprime criticamente nei confronti dell'arcivescovo di Dublino Edward Byrne che aveva condannato l'assassinio di Kevin O'Higgins definendolo poco enfaticamente "a crime against Catholic piety". Secondo Walshe, una simile generalizzazione dell'accaduto rappresentava la rinuncia, da parte della Chiesa, a difendere la stabilità dello stato e la salvaguardia delle istituzioni.

fino a divenire un obiettivo di primaria importanza. McGilligan e Walshe consideravano le celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici, previste per il giugno del 1929, come l'occasione propizia per l'arrivo del Nunzio: la presentazione ufficiale del rappresentante pontificio nel corso di un avvenimento talmente significativo per la Chiesa irlandese avrebbe, infatti, accresciuto il prestigio del risultato conseguito dal governo.

Esistevano, tuttavia, alcune opposizioni alla presenza di un Nunzio Apostolico nell'isola, che avrebbero potuto sconvolgere i piani di McGilligan e Walshe. Prima di tutto quella di Hagan, motivata dal fatto che la costruzione di un canale di diplomazia ufficiale nelle relazioni tra Irlanda e Santa Sede avrebbe indebolito la sua influenza sulla Curia romana e, in conseguenza, privato i repubblicani di De Valera di una utile rappresentanza a Roma (cfr. Keogh 1986, 137-138). Allarmato, il rettore del collegio irlandese scrisse al braccio destro di De Valera, Seán T. O'Kelly, affinché la questione fosse discussa nel corso del congresso del Fianna Fáil, previsto per i primi mesi del 1929. Nonostante le voci circolassero in maniera insistente, evidentemente i repubblicani ritenevano poco probabile un rapido invio di un rappresentante diplomatico in Vaticano e, nella sua risposta ad Hagan, il vice di De Valera si disse "inclined to think there was very little likelihood of the Free State appointing anyone to Rome; one of the principal reasons for this" – argomentò O'Kelly – "was that they had no money"¹⁷.

La seconda opposizione che il governo Cosgrave avrebbe dovuto fronteggiare prima di stabilire relazioni diplomatiche con la Santa Sede era rappresentata dalla sostanziale contrarietà dei vescovi dell'isola all'arrivo di un Nunzio a Dublino, che si era palesata già in occasione della missione di Monsignor Luzio. A manifestare le maggiori perplessità nei confronti dell'idea di uno scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche era proprio l'arcivescovo della capitale Edward Byrne, il quale percepiva l'invio del Nunzio nella città come un attentato alla sua autorità pastorale¹⁸. Oltretutto, dopo la morte del Cardinale Primate Michael Logue, avvenuta nel novembre del 1924, i nuovi porporati di Armagh, Patrick O'Donnell e Joseph MacRory, avevano abbandonato la linea del predecessore, che all'inizio degli anni Venti si era detto possibilista rispetto all'idea di stabilire una nunziatura apostolica in Irlanda,

¹⁷ O'Kelly a Hagan, 6 marzo 1929, in Pontifical Irish College Archives, Hagan Papers, riportata in Keogh 1988, 37.

¹⁸ L'opposizione dell'arcivescovo di Dublino all'idea di stabilire una nunziatura apostolica nella sua città era stata chiara e netta sin dal 1922, quando i *rumors* sulla possibile designazione di un inviato papale in Irlanda avevano cominciato a circolare negli ambienti dell'episcopato irlandese. In tale occasione Byrne, in una lettera ad Hagan, conservata negli archivi del Pontifical Irish College di Roma (Hagan Papers) e citata da Keogh (1986, 86), scrisse: "a Nuncio or even a delegate here would cause us immense embarrassment. His ear would be always open to tittle-tattle of all kinds of Catholic and 'Cawtholic' cranks".

provocando malumori in seno alla gerarchia. Considerate le vedute di Papa Ratti in merito alla funzione dei Nunzi e dei Delegati Apostolici, i timori dei vescovi irlandesi erano ben fondati. Memore della sua ostica esperienza in Polonia, Pio XI attribuiva alla questione un'importanza determinante e – come ha sottolineato Giorgio Feliciani – riteneva che i compiti del rappresentante pontificio non dovessero limitarsi “alle relazioni diplomatiche con il governo”, ma avrebbero riguardato “anche l'episcopato locale” (2010, 76). Il 10 giugno 1926, la Plenaria mista delle Congregazioni Concistoriale, degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari e del concilio aveva offerto un'indicazione inequivocabile in merito allo svolgimento delle conferenze generali dei vescovi, deliberando che, in quanto rappresentativo della volontà della Santa Sede, il Nunzio fosse ‘sempre invitato’ a prendervi parte¹⁹. All'inizio del 1929, l'episcopato irlandese, diviso sulla politica interna, si presentava unito e compatto nel manifestare resistenze riguardo alla possibilità dell'arrivo di un Nunzio nell'isola. Per tale ragione, McGilligan decise di avviare le trattative con la Santa Sede nella più assoluta segretezza, senza consultare preventivamente i vescovi. Nonostante il ministro degli esteri fosse cosciente del fatto che indiscrezioni in merito alle iniziative diplomatiche del governo dello Stato Libero sarebbero comunque trapelate dal Vaticano, si convinse “that his method of approach without previous consultation with the heads of the clergy in Ireland has proved to be the best”, poiché le probabili opposizioni espresse dai membri della gerarchia ecclesiastica “might result in the nullifying of all his efforts”²⁰. Di comune accordo con Walshe, McGilligan dispose, quindi, che il Presidente Cosgrave avrebbe comunicato “to Archbishop [Byrne di Dublino] of the *fait accompli* within twenty-four hours of the publication”²¹.

Approntata la strategia del ‘fatto compiuto’, alla diplomazia irlandese non restava che avviare le trattative con la Santa Sede. Nell'aprile del 1929 Walshe e, successivamente, McGilligan guidarono un elaborato percorso diplomatico, che li portò a Roma per curare direttamente gli interessi dello Stato Libero e che coinvolse, inevitabilmente, anche l'autorità del governo britannico. Nel corso delle missioni in Vaticano, i responsabili della politi-

¹⁹ ASV, Archivio della Congregazione dei Vescovi (d'ora in poi ACV), pos. 229/24, doc. 27, f. 6, che riporta il verbale della Plenaria del 10 giugno 1926, in cui Pio XI dispose che “il Nunzio o Delegato Apostolico sia sempre invitato, ed esso andrà per l'apertura, od anche assisterà alle sedute, se crede necessario, od opportuno, e potrà anche non andare personalmente se le circostanze ciò consigliano, ma almeno interverrà con sua lettera di saluto ed augurio”. Per una ricognizione di carattere giuridico sul tema, si veda Manzanares 1980, 5-56.

²⁰ Walshe a Seán Murphy (Assistant Secretary of External Affairs), 20 aprile 1929, in National Archives of Ireland (d'ora in avanti NAI), Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary's files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

²¹ *Ibidem*.

ca estera irlandese incrociarono, tuttavia, gli articolati interessi di una Santa Sede ben disposta a stabilire relazioni diplomatiche con l'Irlanda, ma anche poco frettolosa rispetto ai tempi e ai modi della trattativa.

2. *Le tensioni anglo-vaticane e il viaggio di McGilligan e Walshe a Roma*

Il 17 aprile 1929, McGilligan e Walshe arrivarono a Roma. Il protocollo per l'avvio di colloqui con la Santa Sede prevedeva che ad attivare i processi della diplomazia ufficiale per conto dei rappresentanti irlandesi fossero gli inviati del governo britannico in Vaticano, dirette emanazioni del re d'Inghilterra, capo del *Commonwealth* di cui lo Stato Libero d'Irlanda faceva parte come *dominion*. Al loro arrivo in Italia, McGilligan e Walshe furono accolti in maniera collaborativa da Sir Henry Getty Chilton, ministro plenipotenziario della Gran Bretagna. Negli stessi giorni, le relazioni anglo-vaticane, dopo un decennio di sostanziale assestamento seguito alle vicende della Prima Guerra Mondiale, si erano complicate per via della politica del primo ministro del *dominion* di Malta, il cattolico, ma fortemente laicista, Lord Gerald Strickland. Questi, sin dal suo insediamento nel 1927, aveva inaugurato una polemica ideologico-religiosa contro la Chiesa dell'isola e il Papa, accusati di ostacolare il progresso della stragrande maggioranza della popolazione maltese, che professava la fede cattolica (cfr. Rhodes 1974 [1973], 57). Il disappunto della Santa Sede si era palesato nel febbraio del 1929, quando Strickland aveva ricevuto ufficialmente tre vescovi anglicani in visita a La Valletta nel salone del trono, luogo simbolo per il cattolico Ordine di Malta, e il cardinale segretario di stato Pietro Gasparri, in tutta risposta, aveva indirizzato una nota di protesta a Chilton in cui definiva l'atto come "un insulto alla antichissima fede dei maltesi"²². Oltretutto, gli strali di Strickland contro il Vaticano suscitavano anche la reazione interessata del governo italiano di Benito Mussolini, la cui stampa, in pieno clima concordatario, non aveva esitato ad apostrofarlo come un "frammassone e anti-Cattolico"²³. Il regime fascista considerava l'isola di Malta un luogo di cruciale importanza per la cura dei propri interessi coloniali e geo-politici nel Nord Africa; la politica aggressiva e nazionalista di Mussolini, tuttavia, entrava in collisione con le strategie del governo britannico, che valutava il presidio maltese come il vero baricentro della sua presenza nel Mediterraneo²⁴. All'indomani della sottoscrizione dei

²² *Esposizione documentata della questione maltese (febbraio 1929-giugno 1930)*, (1930), 59.

²³ *La Tribuna*, 17 agosto 1927.

²⁴ Cfr. Randall 1957. Sulla questione maltese e gli interessi del regime fascista sull'isola di Malta, l'autore, che nel 1930 fu nominato successore di Henry Chilton alla carica di Ministro plenipotenziario della Gran Bretagna presso la Santa Sede, ha osservato: "the privileged position of the Italian language in Malta was, in general, supported by the Church and the legal professions. To this the British government could afford to be indulgent as long as

Patti Lateranensi tra la Santa Sede e lo stato italiano, inoltre, erano circolate voci circa la presenza di clausole segrete del trattato che avrebbero impegnato il Vaticano in un avallo alle mire di Mussolini su Malta²⁵. A testimonianza dell'insofferenza e dei crescenti sospetti del governo britannico in merito alla faccenda, il testo di un memorandum interno rilasciato dal Foreign Office, in riferimento alla nota di protesta ricevuta da Gasparri, recitava: "it may only be a coincidence but it is certainly curious that this aggressive note from the Vatican should follow so closely on the settlement of the Roman Question with Mussolini"²⁶. La diplomazia britannica aveva, quindi, invocato l'invio di un delegato apostolico a Malta, che si impegnasse per la sottoscrizione di un concordato con il governo di Strickland. La Santa Sede si era mostrata propensa ad ottemperare alla richiesta e aveva nominato Monsignor Paschal Robinson, diplomatico di origini irlandesi particolarmente apprezzato dalla Segreteria di Stato, il quale, nel 1919, aveva coadiuvato il capo della delegazione vaticana a Versailles Bonaventura Cerretti.

All'arrivo di McGilligan e Walshe a Roma, la questione maltese era ancora aperta e Robinson era in missione nell'isola. La trattativa tra Irlanda e Santa Sede si configurava, quindi, come un ulteriore motivo di interesse per il Foreign Office nell'intraprendere un percorso finalizzato all'avvio di una relazione reciproca con il Vaticano. Nonostante ciò, i tempi per uno scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche erano ancora poco propizi: l'opinione pubblica e i circoli politici inglesi, prevalentemente protestanti, non vedevano di buon occhio l'eventualità della presenza di un delegato apostolico a Londra. Di contro, la Santa Sede aveva espresso in diverse occasioni una sostanziale approvazione riguardo all'idea di uno scambio reciproco di rappresentanze diplomatiche con la Gran Bretagna, poiché – come Walshe ebbe modo di notare – Gasparri nutriva "the conviction that a foothold in some part of the British Commonwealth of Nations was useful"²⁷. Per tali ragioni, al momento della richiesta di collaborazione da parte della diplomazia dello Stato Libero, il Foreign Office britannico si attivò con cautela per evitare che la

Italy was our friend. But with the intensification of aggressive Italian nationalism under the Fascist regime, there was evidently a danger that Italian cultural expansion would be used for further Fascist political designs, with the scarcely disguised aim of challenging British security in the Mediterranean, of which Malta is the key" (38).

²⁵ Cfr. Rhodes 1974 (1973), 54. Per un lettura più ragionata dell'impatto che la sottoscrizione dei Patti Lateranensi ebbero sulla diplomazia anglo-vaticana e, nello specifico, sulla questione maltese, si rimanda al pregevole lavoro di Kent 1981. Per una approfondita indagine sulle relazioni tra la Santa Sede e il regime fascista negli anni Venti, si rimanda invece a Binchy 1940; Jemolo 1974; Pollard 1985; Ceci 2013.

²⁶ Foreign Office, FO 371/13680.

²⁷ Walshe a Seán Murphy, 8 maggio 1929, in NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary's files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A). Cfr. anche Keogh 1982, 83.

trattativa tra Irlanda e Santa Sede diventasse, per l'esperto Segretario di Stato, l'occasione in cui discutere anche delle relazioni anglo-vaticane²⁸. All'inizio di aprile, dopo una riunione della segreteria del Foreign Office a cui prese parte lo stesso Walshe, a Chilton fu impartito l'ordine di favorire l'iniziativa diplomatica irlandese, ma di scongiurare che contestualmente il Segretario di Stato potesse sollevare "the question of a papal nuncio for London"²⁹.

Il 18 aprile 1929, il Ministro plenipotenziario britannico si limitò a presentare in Vaticano McGilligan e Walshe, i quali, dopo un'udienza di cortesia con Pio XI, passarono a discutere la questione dello scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con Gasparri. Il Segretario di Stato accolse i due inviati irlandesi cordialmente e, dopo aver ascoltato la proposta ufficiale di McGilligan di procedere allo scambio di inviati, chiese che questa gli fosse recapitata in una nota formale scritta, utile anche per chiarire la posizione del governo dello Stato Libero rispetto alla Gran Bretagna e al *Commonwealth* britannico³⁰. Il documento, che raggiunse il Vaticano poche ore più tardi, ottemperava, in un accorto linguaggio protocollare, alla richiesta di Gasparri:

Dopo la fondazione dello Stato Libero d'Irlanda, il Governo d'Irlanda ha sempre avuto il desiderio di effettuare uno scambio di delegazioni (diplomatiche) con la Santa Sede. [...] Il Governo vuole che i sentimenti del popolo irlandese, sia nel Commonwealth britannico, sia negli Stati Uniti, sia in Irlanda possano trovare un nuovo legame con la Chiesa nello stabilire definitivamente delle relazioni ufficiali tra lo Stato Libero e la Santa Sede. [...] Esso si propone, dunque, con la benemeranza di Sua Santità, di inviare presso la Santa Sede un Inviato Straordinario e Ministro Plenipotenziario e spera di avere il grande onore di accogliere esso stesso a Dublino un rappresentante del Santo Padre. Il Governo Irlandese ha comunicato di questa intenzione al Governo della Gran Bretagna, suo sovraordinato nel Commonwealth britannico, e questo Governo ha espresso la sua viva soddisfazione se le relazioni di amicizia secolare tra l'Irlanda e la Santa Sede dovessero ricevere il riconoscimento ufficiale che loro è dovuto.³¹

²⁸ Il resoconto della riunione del 4 aprile 1929, conservato in forma di Memorandum negli archivi del Foreign Office, FO 627 U199/78/750, è riportato in Keogh 1986, 139-140.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Il resoconto dell'incontro è riportato in una comunicazione di Walshe a Seán Murphy, 20 aprile 1929, in NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary's files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

³¹ McGilligan a Gasparri, 18 aprile 1929, in AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, ff. 67-68. Il documento conteneva anche un preciso riferimento alla allora recente risoluzione della questione romana e al conseguente riconoscimento della sovranità del pontefice sulla Città del Vaticano: "l'organizzazione dei diversi ministeri ha preso un tempo assai considerevole, ma il governo dello Stato Libero è molto onorato di profittare di questo momento storico, in cui il Vaticano ridiviene e in cui la sovranità del Santo Padre è riconosciuta".

Ottenuta la nota ufficiale di McGilligan, il Segretario di Stato Vaticano seguì a richiedere anche una comunicazione del presidente Cosgrave, alla quale la Santa Sede avrebbe risposto favorevolmente. Le elaborate richieste di Gasparri non erano giustificate soltanto dal rispetto delle procedure di protocollo: l'allora delicato equilibrio delle relazioni anglo-vaticane determinava l'atteggiamento circostanziato e prudente del Cardinale, che – come lo stesso Walshe ebbe modo di rilevare in un momento successivo – considerava “the peaceful maintainance of the British Commonwealth of Nations as the most important factor in the development and well-being of the Church”³²; inoltre, il Segretario di Stato, cosciente delle perduranti perplessità dei vescovi, aveva esigenza di prendere tempo e di ottenere sufficienti rassicurazioni riguardo al fatto che la Santa Sede non sarebbe stata anticipata dal governo dello Stato Libero nel comunicare agli ecclesiastici l'imminente arrivo di un Nunzio apostolico a Dublino³³.

La mancanza di zelo di Gasparri nel condurre la trattativa iniziò ad infastidire i rappresentanti irlandesi, ansiosi di addivenire a un risultato concreto. La mediazione tra la cautela del Segretario di Stato e la fretta di McGilligan e Walshe fu assicurata dall'intervento del Foreign Office, che istruì Chilton “to request Your Eminence [Gasparri] to submit to His Holiness the Pope an enquiry whether His Holiness would agree in principle to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State”³⁴. La risposta subitanea della Segreteria di Stato fu affidata a Monsignor Borgogini Duca, il quale si disse “lieto di poter significare a Vostra Eccellenza [Chilton] che Sua Santità particolarmente gradiva, in linea di massima, lo stabilimento di relazioni diplomatiche con lo Stato Libero d'Irlanda, anche perché la cosa era di gradimento di sua Maestà Britannica”³⁵. A testimonianza di un reale interesse della Santa Sede alla partecipazione del governo britannico alla trattativa con l'Irlanda, l'esplicito riferimento all'accondiscendenza di “His Majesty” il re d'Inghilterra risultò decisivo ai fini del superamento dello stallo provocato dal rispetto meticoloso dalle procedure protocollari richiesto da Gasparri.

³² Walshe a Seán Murphy, 2 maggio 1929, in NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary's files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Chilton a Gasparri, 26 aprile 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, f. 70. La nota, a garanzia del fatto che il Foreign Office si riteneva direttamente coinvolto nella trattativa tra la Santa Sede e lo Stato Libero d'Irlanda, conteneva un esplicito riferimento al fatto che il ministro plenipotenziario britannico agiva “at the instance of His Majesty's Government in the Irish Free State and on the instructions of His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs”.

³⁵ Borgogini Duca a Chilton, 27 aprile 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, f. 76.

Ottenuto il ‘gradimento’ del Foreign Office e manifestata ufficialmente la propria disponibilità a procedere allo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con lo Stato Libero, il Vaticano procedette alla definizione di una *road map* dei successivi passi da compiere, tesi a limitare al minimo le reazioni contrariate dei vescovi irlandesi. In un pro-memoria del 2 maggio, stilato dall’operoso Borgongini Duca, si dispose per l’11 maggio 1929 la pubblicazione, su “l’Osservatore Romano e il giornale ufficiale d’Irlanda”, di un comunicato con cui il Papa, “lieto di ricevere un rappresentante dello Stato Libero”, avrebbe annunciato l’invio – “a tempo opportuno” – di un incaricato in Irlanda³⁶. L’appunto del Segretario agli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, tuttavia, riportava anche la lettera di una disposizione pontificia, non resa alla stampa, che rifletteva la reale volontà di Pio XI e Gasparri: “per la fine di Giugno” sarebbe stato “mandato un Rappresentante della Santa Sede a Dublino con carattere diplomatico in qualità di Chargé d’Affaires”, mentre – “a suo tempo” – sarebbe stato deciso “se fosse il caso di nominare un Internunzio od un Nunzio”³⁷. Riguardo all’episcopato, il pro-memoria chiariva che sarebbe stata mandata “immediatamente una Circolare ai Vescovi Irlandesi nello stesso senso”³⁸. In realtà, il cardinale Gasparri, decise comunque di anticipare i tempi della circolare e comunicò la notizia dell’avvenuto accordo con il governo dello Stato Libero al più ostile fra i vescovi irlandesi, il metropolita di Dublino Edward Byrne. Questi fu raggiunto il 4 maggio da una lettera *sub sigillo* in latino del Segretario di Stato che recitava:

Certamente mi è gradito rendere noto alla Tua autorità che i civili rappresentanti dell’Irlanda, nei giorni precedenti hanno rivelato al Sommo Pontefice il desiderio di stabilire una legazione permanente presso la Santa Sede e di accogliere in Irlanda un ambasciatore della stessa Santa Sede. Tuttavia, riferendo a te queste cose, ti esorto (a proposito di ciò) di tenere segreta la questione fino al momento in cui la notizia non sarà resa nota dall’“Osservatore Romano”: ciò senza dubbio avverrà il giorno 12 del prossimo mese di maggio.³⁹

³⁶ Promemoria di Monsignor Borgongini Duca, 2 maggio 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, f. 77, in cui si faceva esplicita menzione del fatto che, nel rispetto dei patti conclusi con la Santa Sede e considerata l’estrema avversità che l’Arcivescovo Byrne nutriva rispetto all’idea dell’arrivo di un Nunzio apostoli, “venerdì 10 il Capo del Governo Irlandese comunicherà la cosa all’Arcivescovo di Dublino”.

³⁷ *Ibidem.*

³⁸ *Ibidem.*

³⁹ Gasparri a Byrne, 4 maggio 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, f. 84. Traduzione, a cura di chi scrive, dal latino: “Pregratum mihi sane est Amplitudinem Tuam certiorum facere Supremos Hiberniae Civiles Moderatores superioribus diebus desiderium Summo Pontifici aperuisse instituendi permanentem apud Sanctam Sedem Legationem, recipiendique vicissim permanentem in Hibernia eiusdem Sanctae Sedis Legatum. Haectamen Tibi referens, moneo de hac re secretum esse servandum quousque rei notitia

Nella sua risposta, Byrne si disse ossequioso nei confronti della decisione assunta dalla Santa Sede, ma non tradì l'occasione per mostrarsi perplesso, chiudendo il messaggio con un ridondante interrogativo:

Nel centesimo anno della libertà di religione ristabilita in Irlanda, chi potrebbe dubitare d'altronde che tale istituzione [la legazione della Santa Sede a Dublino] molto opportunamente (stabilita), sebbene con iniziali difficoltà, non accresca massimamente l'autorità morale del governare dei civili rappresentanti d'Irlanda?⁴⁰

La domanda retorica dell'Arcivescovo di Dublino non scioglieva definitivamente le riserve della Santa Sede in merito all'invio di un Nunzio Apostolico in Irlanda. La diplomazia vaticana aveva da poco concluso la laboriosa trattativa per la firma dei Patti Lateranensi e, oltretutto, era ancora impegnata nella gestione della spinosa questione maltese. Lo scambio delle rappresentanze diplomatiche con il governo dello Stato Libero, ormai deciso e annunciato, avrebbe richiesto un ulteriore periodo di decantazione, utile sia ad evitare gli errori commessi pochi anni prima in occasione della 'missione Luzio', sia a organizzare nella maniera strategicamente più conveniente il nuovo presidio diplomatico. D'altronde, anche il percorso tracciato nel pro-memoria di Borgongini Duca indicava un avvicinamento graduale alla nomina del Nunzio. La locuzione "a tempo opportuno", che sarebbe comparsa nel testo del comunicato pontificio dell'11 maggio 1929 (*L'Osservatore Romano*), non definiva un orizzonte temporale preciso. L'invio di un "Chargé d'Affaires" temporaneo alla fine di giugno sarebbe servito a sondare gli umori dei prelati e degli ecclesiastici dell'isola. La Segreteria di Stato, inoltre, cosciente dell'impossibilità di stabilire una rappresentanza in Gran Bretagna, considerava di importanza cruciale ai fini del suo posizionamento nel mondo anglosassone il ruolo del nunzio di Dublino, la cui scelta, dunque, avrebbe richiesto un tempo ragionevolmente lungo (cfr. Keogh 1988, 66-67).

Alla fine di aprile del 1929, McGilligan era rientrato in Irlanda nutrendo la convinzione che il rappresentante pontificio sarebbe stato presentato alle folle festanti nel corso delle celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici. La locuzione "particolarmente gradisce", con cui era stata comunicata la volontà del Papa di procedere allo scambio di rappresentanze ufficiali con lo Stato Libero, aveva evidentemente costituito motivo di soddisfazione per gli inviati irlandesi.

per ephemeridem 'Osservatore Romano' evulgetur: quod sane fiet decima secunda vertentis mensis maii".

⁴⁰ Byrne a Gasparri, 10 maggio 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 41, f. 95. Traduzione, a cura di chi scrive, dal latino: "Per opportune talis institutio anno centenario restitutae in Hibernia Religionis libertatis Ceteroquin, quis dubitare potestquin, altissima S. Sedis Legatione honestatum, Gubernium nostrum indigenum, difficultatibus primordialibus ad huc onoxium, auctoritate morali in regendo maxime augeatur?".

Tanto il Ministro degli Affari Esteri quanto Walshe, tuttavia, ignoravano la rotta tracciata da Gasparri e racchiusa nel contenuto del pro-memoria di Borgognini Duca. Il Segretario del Department of Foreign Affairs rimase a Roma dopo la partenza di McGilligan per attendere il Ministro plenipotenziario nominato dal governo dello Stato Libero. In realtà, Cosgrave non aveva ancora individuato una persona adatta al compito e il tempo trascorso in Vaticano si rivelò utile a Walshe soprattutto per comprendere che la nomina del nunzio avrebbe richiesto un tempo maggiore rispetto a quanto egli stesso immaginasse⁴¹.

3. *La Santa Sede temporeggia: l'Arcivescovo Pisani alle celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici irlandesi*

Joseph Walshe rientrò a Dublino alla fine di maggio del 1929 nutrendo ancora la convinzione che, nonostante i tempi risicati, il ricevimento ufficiale del Nunzio si sarebbe effettivamente tenuto nel corso delle celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici irlandesi. Lo stesso McGilligan, il 5 giugno, comunicò al Dáil Éireann la notizia dell'imminente scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con la Santa Sede e, d'accordo con il suo segretario, si spinse a dichiarare che "it is hoped that his [del Papa] envoy will reach Dublin on the 24th, so that his solemn entry into this state may form the appropriate climax to these celebrations"⁴². Il cauto ottimismo del Ministro degli Affari

⁴¹ Curiosa e singolare è la diversità di vedute tra Chilton e Walshe in merito all'atteggiamento della Santa Sede e all'allungarsi dei tempi per la nomina del nunzio apostolico. Il diplomatico irlandese riteneva infatti che "the weeks of hesitation in our case were due to the absence of a clearly expressed British opinion towards the Dublin Nunciature". Walshe a Seán Murphy, 8 maggio 1929, NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary's files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A). Mentre il Ministro plenipotenziario britannico si espresse molto polemicamente riguardo alla permanenza di Walshe a Roma dopo il ritorno in Irlanda di McGilligan: "I wish Walshe had gone a way with his chief. Though he is quite amenable and ready to do what we want, he is terribly fussy and in and out of the Chancery all day. I have pointed out to him that the Vatican never hurries and that he must have patience. The whole business would have been settled by now if the Irishman had stayed at home". Chilton to Montgomery, 1 maggio 1929, FO 627 U274/78/750, riportato in Keogh 1988, 142.

⁴² National Archives of Ireland, *Dáil debates*, 5 giugno 1929, vol. 30, columns 785-895. Nel corso della stessa seduta, Seán T. O'Kelly intervenne per il Fianna Fáil. Il vice di De Valera, probabilmente consigliato da Hagan, cercò di mettere in difficoltà il Ministro degli Esteri facendo riferimento al fatto che la gerarchia irlandese non era stata consultata dal governo prima di avviare le trattative con la Santa Sede: "What authority he [il Nunzio] will have over the Hierarchy, of course, I do not know [...] I would like to know whether those who are very intimately and seriously concerned in this matter, those whose views ought to be given very serious consideration in a matter of this kind, were consulted, for instance, the Primate of all Ireland or the Archbishop of Dublin, whether, for instance, the place where the new diplomatic envoy of the Vatican will reside was considered. Was any bishop or any priest consulted before the Minister made this arrangement?" (*ibidem*).

Esteri era dovuto principalmente al fatto che, pochi giorni addietro, il governo aveva sciolto la riserva in merito alla nomina del Ministro Plenipotenziario da inviare in Vaticano. Dopo un periodo di iniziali indecisioni, infatti, la scelta di Cosgrave fra i potenziali candidati al ruolo era caduta su Charles Bewley, un giurista di famiglia anglicana convertito al Cattolicesimo, che nel 1921 aveva 'servito' in Germania come inviato del Sinn Féin e aveva parteggiato per la compagine *pro-Treaty* durante la guerra civile⁴³. Nelle aspettative del Ministro degli Affari Esteri, il prossimo invio del diplomatico a Roma avrebbe contribuito ad accelerare le procedure protocollari per la nomina del Nunzio Apostolico. A testimonianza di ciò, il contenuto di una lettera con cui Walshe comunicò la notizia ancora ufficiosa dell'avvenuta investitura di Bewley al nuovo Assistente alla Segreteria di Stato, Monsignor Giuseppe Pizzardo, lasciò intendere come la diplomazia irlandese considerasse ormai scongiurata l'eventualità di un rinvio della nomina del Nunzio: "the motive of our anxiety was to secure that the Papal Envoy will reach Dublin at the conclusion of the Emancipation Celebrations, that is, on the evening of June 24th"⁴⁴.

Il 6 giugno, tuttavia, nel corso di un colloquio ufficiale con Chilton al Dominions Office di Londra, Walshe apprese che Gasparri "had no idea whom he was going to send to Dublin"⁴⁵. In realtà, la Segreteria di Stato aveva già individuato un candidato che, per profilo personale ed esperienza diplomatica, avrebbe potuto occupare la nunziatura di Dublino. Il più qualificato fra i possibili inviati era Paschal Robinson, il Visitatore Apostolico a Malta, che aveva fatto ritorno a Roma il 2 giugno 1929 e che, negli stessi giorni, si accingeva a presentare il suo rapporto in Vaticano⁴⁶. Proprio gli sviluppi della questione maltese[,] contribuivano a frenare l'iniziativa della Santa Sede in merito allo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con l'Irlanda: secondo Gasparri, infatti, ai fini di un miglioramento delle relazioni con la Corona britannica sarebbe stato più utile – come lo stesso Robinson aveva cautamente suggerito nel suo rapporto – anteporre alla nomina del Nunzio di Dublino "qualche passo in via diplomatica presso il Governo in-

⁴³ Per una ricostruzione della vita di Charles Bewley e il suo impegno diplomatico, si veda il testo autobiografico (Bewley 1989). Esiste anche una biografia anonima e inedita del primo Ministro plenipotenziario irlandese presso la Santa Sede, citata in alcuni suoi passi da Keogh 1988 e, secondo lo storico, in molti casi discordante rispetto all'autobiografia data alle stampe.

⁴⁴ Walshe a Pizzardo, 1 giugno 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, f. 7. Nella comunicazione Walshe anticipava all'Assistente alla Segreteria di Stato che avrebbe avuto "great pleasure of meeting you and Mgr Borgongini Duca within ten days", dal momento che avrebbe accompagnato Bewley a Roma il successivo 9 giugno.

⁴⁵ Walshe a McGilligan, Official Report, 16 giugno 1929. Per la consultazione del documento, facente parte del fondo McGilligan Papers e attualmente in possesso di Maurice Manning dello University College Dublin, si ringrazia il Professor Dermot Keogh per la gentile intercessione e, soprattutto, per le preziosissime indicazioni.

⁴⁶ *Esposizione documentata della questione maltese 1930*, 23.

glesi per far comprendere che, sebbene Strickland si atteggiasse a campione dell'imperialismo, in realtà era il vero aggressore delle migliori tradizioni ed interessi dell'Impero⁴⁷.

Il 9 giugno, Walshe e il neo-designato Charles Bewley furono inviati a Roma con la "special task" di predisporre "everything possible to better the than existing situation with regard to the Papal Representative in Dublin and to secure that [...] the Papal representation" fosse "definitely determined in most satisfactory manner at the earliest possible moment" (Walshe a McGiligan, 16 giugno 1929). Due giorni prima Gasparri aveva ricevuto da Chilton la comunicazione dell'avvenuta nomina del Ministro Plenipotenziario irlandese, il cui lavoro di mediazione avrebbe favorito – secondo il diplomatico britannico – "the maintenance and development of cordial relations not only between the Holy See and the Irish Free State, but also between the Holy See and the whole British Commonwealth of Nations"⁴⁸. Giunti in Vaticano, gli inviati irlandesi cercarono di porre al centro dei colloqui con la Segreteria di Stato proprio le motivazioni addotte da Chilton nel comunicato del 7 giugno: in una lettera a Pizzardo, Walshe pose l'accento sul fatto che Dublino era "in a very special manner the centre of the English speaking Catholic world and the gesture of sending a Nuncio" avrebbe generato "lasting echoes in every corner of that world"⁴⁹. Il 12 giugno, il Segretario di Stato ricevette un *promemoria* a firma di Walshe in cui fu esposta la chiara volontà del governo dello Stato Libero di evitare soluzioni di carattere temporaneo, che avrebbero provocato l'imbarazzo del Ministro degli Esteri nel dover ritrattare le dichiarazioni rese di fronte al Dáil Éireann: "If it appears absolutely impossible to send a Diplomatic Envoy for the 24th June" – "scriveva Walshe a Gasparri – it is better to defer ending any envoy at all until it is possible to send an envoy with a definite diplomatic character i.e. a Nuncio or Inter-Nuncio"⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 94. Documento XII – *Rapporto di Mons. Pasquale Robinson alla Segreteria di Stato*, 16 giugno 1929.

⁴⁸ Chilton a Gasparri, 7 giugno 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, f. 29.

⁴⁹ Walshe a Pizzardo, 11 giugno 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, ff. 11-15. Nella stessa lettera Walshe si fece latore delle rimostranze espresse dal suo governo per l'impossibilità "of receiving a Nuncio although away they were exceedingly glad to be able to announce in the Parliament that the Holy Father would send a representative in time because that his entry into Dublin would form the great final act of the Emancipation Celebrations".

⁵⁰ Walshe a Gasparri, 12 giugno 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, ff. 17-18. Nel Promemoria, Walshe si spinse a suggerire anche un'indicazione sul tenore del comunicato a firma del pontefice che la Segreteria di Stato avrebbe dovuto diffondere per giustificare il mancato invio del Nunzio Apostolico in Irlanda: "the Holy Father owing to the extreme urgency of the work connected with the Lateran Treaty has not been able to give the Dublin appointment all consideration he would have desired to give it and He has

Con il passare dei giorni, Walshe realizzò che ulteriori sforzi volti ad assicurare l'arrivo del Nunzio a Dublino in occasione delle celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici irlandesi sarebbero stati improduttivi, poiché – come ebbe a dire in una rassegnata comunicazione a McGilligan – egli stesso aveva dovuto fronteggiare “a stone wall in the Cardinal's determination to send one to see how the land lay before sending the final representative”⁵¹. La visione del diplomatico irlandese non era evidentemente infondata, poiché Gasparri, interpretando la sensibilità di Pio XI in merito ai rapporti tra i Nunzi Apostolici e gli episcopati locali⁵², considerava l'appuntamento celebrativo di Dublino come l'occasione nel corso della quale un inviato temporaneo della Santa Sede avrebbe potuto ‘conoscere’ la reale predisposizione dei singoli vescovi d'Irlanda riguardo all'arrivo nell'isola di un rappresentante pontificio permanente. Per assolvere al delicato compito fu scelto l'Arcivescovo Pietro Pisani, titolare della diocesi di Costanza, incaricato oltre che di consegnare una lettera papale recante la benedizione apostolica al “venerabile fratello Giuseppe [MacRory], Arcivescovo di Armagh e agli altri Arcivescovi e Vescovi d'Irlanda”⁵³, anche di indagare con riservatezza in merito al “parere dei Rev.mi Ordinari d'Irlanda sui rapporti fra Dublino e la S. Sede”⁵⁴.

Pisani giunse a Dublino il 19 giugno e si limitò a presenziare all'assemblea dei Vescovi riunita nel seminario di Maynooth e agli appuntamenti ufficiali organizzati dagli istituti religiosi della capitale, ribadendo, nelle poche occasioni in cui accettò di prendere la parola, “di non aver ricevuto altro incarico che quello, pur tanto onorifico, di consegnare alla Gerarchia Irlandese, nella persona del Primate, la Lettera Pontificia, che doveva parlare da sé al cuore dei Cattolici Irlandesi”⁵⁵. Il basso profilo mantenuto dal delegato pontificio era motivato dalla precisa istruzione, impartita da Gasparri, di evitare che alla sua presenza nell'isola fosse riconosciuto un valore civile e diplomatico. In effetti, nel corso del suo soggiorno a Dublino, Pisani non accettò “nessun invito da parte delle autorità pubbliche o di privati: tranne quello del Governatore Generale dell'Irlanda ad un lunch intimo, a cui parteciparono il

accordingly found it to omit the intermediary step of sending a Chargé d'Affairs to Dublin at the end of the Emancipation Celebrations. He will send a Nuncio in the early days of August”.

⁵¹ Walshe a McGilligan, 16 giugno 1929 (vedi nota 45).

⁵² Vedi *supra* e il già citato Feliciani 2010.

⁵³ *Lettera Papale – Al venerabile fratello Giuseppe, Arcivescovo di Armagh e agli altri Arcivescovi e Vescovi d'Irlanda*, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, f. 35.

⁵⁴ *Relazione del viaggio di Mons. Pisani a Dublino per la consegna della Lettera Pontificia alla Gerarchia Irlandese nella ricorrenza del primo centenario dell'Emancipazione cattolica*, 7 luglio 1929, AA.EE.SS., Inghilterra, 209-210 P.O., fasc. 42, ff. 43-50.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

Primate d'Irlanda, il Vicario Generale di Dublino in rappresentanza dell'Arcivescovo e altri ecclesiastici insigni⁵⁶.

Le celebrazioni per il centenario dell'emancipazione dei cattolici ebbero inizio il 22 giugno e, agli occhi meravigliati del delegato pontificio, risultarono come "uno spettacolo che non ebbe precedenti nella storia d'Irlanda", poiché al "Pontificale celebrato nel Phoenix Park" assistettero "in perfetto silenzio e con contegno edificante 50.000 persone" e "i cattolici di quella nobile nazione" furono "partecipi tutti degli stessi sentimenti a qualunque partito appartenessero", tanto che "nella processione il Presidente Dr. Cosgrave si disputò col capo dell'opposizione De Valera l'onore di regger il baldacchino"⁵⁷. "Nei brevi intervalli tra le cerimonie religiose e le adunate segrete della Gerarchia", Monsignor Pisani riuscì ad avvicinare "11 ordinari su 27" per vagliare i loro pareri sul possibile invio di un Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino, così come la Segreteria di Stato aveva ordinato⁵⁸. I risultati delle 'indagini' del delegato pontificio lasciarono intendere come l'episcopato dell'isola fosse sostanzialmente diviso "fra le due correnti rappresentate, la prima (quella sfavorevole a provvedimento in questione) dai quattro arcivescovi unanimi, la seconda (quella favorevole) dagli altri vescovi interpellati"; mentre, tuttavia, "il Primate Arcivescovo di Armagh riconobbe ripetutamente" come la Santa Sede avesse "put the case very strong" e finì per ripetere che i Vescovi, egli il primo, si sarebbero rimessi alle decisioni di Roma", il "più tenace nelle sue opinioni" fu "l'Arcivescovo di Dublino", la cui opposizione apparve "tanto più singolare in quanto egli palesava la tutta la stima e manifestava tutta la sua fiducia nell'attuale presidente del consiglio Dr. Cosgrave, suo amico personale, responsabile fra i primi del passo fatto dal suo governo presso la S. Sede"⁵⁹. La contrarietà di Monsignor Byrne, più che dai possibili sviluppi di carattere politico che l'arrivo del Nunzio avrebbe potuto generare – come,

⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁸ *Ibidem.* Il carattere riservato dalla missione speciale di Pisani è testimoniato dagli accorgimenti che questi dovette usare per avvicinare singolarmente i prelati irlandesi: "non mi fu facile avvicinare i Vescovi convenuti in Dublino per la commemorazione del centenario perché, essendo io ospite dell'Arcivescovo [di Dublino] (dichiaratamente sfavorevole al punto di vista del governo nazionale) e gli altri Vescovi domiciliati in alberghi o case private, non avrei potuto incontrarmi con essi se non o nelle pubbliche riunioni o visitandoli a domicilio: l'uno e l'altro partito sconveniente alla gravità o alla segretezza della cosa. Né mi parve prudente recarmi nelle singole sedi vescovili per più ragioni intuitive, specialmente per non legittimare il sospetto di un'inchiesta ordinata dalla S. Sede". Per tali ragioni, il delegato pontificio dovette operare la scelta di parlare con "coloro che mi risultavano fra i più anziani o più competenti, vale a dire i quattro Arcivescovi e i vescovi di Derry (Dr. O'Kane) di Kerry (Dr. O'Brien) di Killaloe (Dr. Fogarty) di Achonry (Dr. Morinoe) di Deomore (Dr. Mulhorn) di Cork (Dr. Cohalan) di Clegher (Dr. McKenna)".

⁵⁹ *Ibidem.*

per esempio, l'eventualità che i repubblicani irlandesi considerassero il "Legato del S. Padre [...] una longa manus, uno strumento dell'Inghilterra" – era motivata da considerazioni di carattere personale, relative al posizionamento gerarchico dello stesso prelado della capitale nell'ambito dell'episcopato dell'isola: come anche il delegato pontificio alle celebrazioni aveva rilevato, Byrne era principalmente timoroso per il fatto che "la presenza di un Nunzio a Dublino" lo avrebbe relegato al "terzo grado nella linea gerarchica" della Chiesa cattolica irlandese, essendo egli già allora subordinato all'autorità del Primate di Armagh⁶⁰.

Alla luce di tali riscontri, Monsignor Pisani concluse la sua 'indagine' argomentando che, seppure con diverse sensibilità in merito, "i Vescovi irlandesi deploravano che il governo nazionale non li avesse consultati circa le trattative colla S. Sede per lo scambio di rappresentanti diplomatici" e perciò consideravano "questo passo prematuro"; chiudendo il rapporto sul viaggio con un suo parere a riguardo, il delegato pontificio si disse convinto che, benché "i timori espressi circa l'invio di un Nunzio o Internunzio a Dublino" apparissero "la gran parte esagerati, se non del tutto infondati", sarebbe stato opportuno "differire al meno di qualche mese una decisione in merito"⁶¹.

Evidentemente le indicazioni di Pisani non restarono inascoltate, poiché Walshe, che era rimasto a Roma rinunciando a presenziare alle celebrazioni in patria, decise di derubricare dalla sua agenda qualsiasi tentativo di affrettare la nomina del Nunzio Apostolico e lavorò alacremente, invece, per accorciare i tempi per la presentazione delle credenziali ufficiali di Bewley a Pio XI. Anche per tale incombenza, tuttavia, il diplomatico irlandese dovette sperimentare la prudente parsimonia del Cardinal Gasparri, il quale, nel corso di un'udienza del 21 giugno, sentenziò, con il suo francese "poco protocollare", che l'accreditamento del Ministro Plenipotenziario del Free State di fronte al Papa sarebbe avvenuto "mardi, mais certainement pas plus tard que jeudi [il

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*. Pisani non mancò di rilevare come anche la memoria della 'vicenda Luzio' del 1923 costituisse ancora un motivo di irrigidimento per Byrne nella considerazione di eventuali nuove iniziative diplomatiche della Santa Sede in Irlanda: "mi fu detto che [l'Arcivescovo] rimase male quando, durante la guerra civile, un altro messo pontificio protrasse il suo soggiorno a Dublino più del necessario, comunicando con i Capi dei diversi partiti e contribuendo ad inasprire una situazione già estremamente difficile: per questa ragione avrebbe insistito presso la Segreteria di Stato perché dal latore del messaggio pontificio [Pisani] fosse esclusa perfino l'ombra di una qualsiasi rappresentanza ufficiale". Inoltre, come Keogh ha opportunamente considerato nel suo 1986, 157, nello stesso periodo delle trattative tra il governo dello Stato Libero e la Santa Sede per lo scambio delle rappresentanze diplomatiche, in Vaticano si decise la creazione del nuovo Cardinale d'Irlanda: i due unici candidati al "redhat" erano il Primate di Armagh Joseph MacRory e proprio Monsignor Byrne. Nonostante quest'ultimo fosse sostenuto dal Presidente Cosgrave, la Santa Sede valutò il suo profilo "not suitable for the hat" e ciò contribuì ad aumentare la distanza tra il soglio di Dublino e i Sacri Palazzi.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

27 giugno]”⁶². Il 22 giugno, un rassegnato Walshe scrisse a McGilligan per illustrargli eufemisticamente le difficoltà insite in quelli che – a parere del diplomatico – erano gli usi della diplomazia vaticana:

“Forse”, perhaps, is the most frequently used word in the Vatican vocabulary. I think we should not allow ourselves to be in the least degree discouraged by its frequent use in regard to the matters of serious importance to us. On the contrary, we should draw the conclusion that our interests have been disgracefully neglected at this most vital world centre, and determine to teach them the whole truth with patience and perseverance until “forse” is entirely eliminated from their attitude towards us. (*Ibidem*)

La pazienza e la perseveranza invocate da Walshe furono parzialmente ripagate dal fatto che le ‘elastiche’ indicazioni di Gasparri in merito alla data in cui il Ministro irlandese avrebbe presentato le proprie credenziali in Vaticano vennero effettivamente rispettate. Il 27 giugno, Bewley, di fronte a un Pio XI entusiasta per la notizia della festosa ed imponente accoglienza che Pisani aveva ricevuto a Dublino pochi giorni addietro, si presentò come il nuovo ed unico rappresentante del governo dello Stato Libero d’Irlanda presso la Santa Sede.

4. *“The Cardinal had forgotten to raise the question of the Irish nuncio with the pope”: la Santa Sede continua a temporeggiare*

Nel corso dei mesi di luglio e agosto del 1929, nessuna novità intervenne nell’interlocuzione tra la diplomazia irlandese e la Santa Sede sulla definizione dei tempi e dei modi per l’invio del Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino. L’accreditamento di Bewley presso la Segreteria di Stato non aveva prodotto il risultato, auspicato dal governo del Free State, di rendere più rapida la procedura di nomina del rappresentante pontificio da inviare in Irlanda. La cerimonia di investitura del 27 giugno – come lo stesso Ministro irlandese a Roma aveva opportunamente considerato – era stata un classico appuntamento protocollare, nel corso del quale più che le questioni legate alla volontà di Pio XI e di Gasparri in merito alla nunziatura di Dublino erano emerse le volontà del Vaticano sull’imminente creazione del nuovo cardinale irlandese: in risposta alla presentazione delle credenziali da parte di Bewley, il papa aveva lasciato intendere che la scelta sarebbe caduta sull’Arcivescovo di Armagh Joseph MacRory, poiché – aveva notato il diplomatico del Free State – “the Holy Father’s allusion to *l’Irlande entière* might have reference to this matter, and probably the question has already decided upon”⁶³.

⁶² Walshe a McGilligan, 22 giugno 1929 (vedi nota 45).

⁶³ Bewley a Walshe, 28 giugno 1929, NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary’s files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

Al suo ritorno a Roma, dopo un breve rientro a Dublino per l'estate, Bewley si adoperò per imprimere una svolta al procedimento di nomina del Nunzio, operando una costante pressione diplomatica sulla Segreteria di Stato, così come gli avevano ordinato di fare McGilligan e Walshe. In uno dei suoi frequenti incontri con Monsignor Pizzardo, il Ministro Plenipotenziario irlandese appurò definitivamente che il motivo principale dello stallo in cui la questione versava era la resistenza dei vescovi, rappresentata in Vaticano attraverso l'incessante e interessato lavoro di *lobbying* antigovernativa del rettore del Collegio Irlandese e del suo vice Curran. I ritardi nel procedimento di nomina e invio di un Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino sarebbero stati utili – secondo l'assistente alla Segreteria di Stato – a limare progressivamente la contrarietà dei prelati irlandesi, poiché – aggiunse sarcasticamente – “c'est de la psychologie” (Bewley a Walshe, 21 settembre 1929). Sul finire di settembre, la situazione sembrò essersi definitivamente bloccata, tanto che Walshe – evidentemente perplesso in merito al lavoro svolto a Bewley, il cui atteggiamento era “not strong enough to make him take the necessary action” – consigliò a McGilligan, impegnato a Ginevra in una assemblea della Società delle Nazioni, di ‘allungarsi’ verso il Vaticano, poiché “that Nuncio is not becoming incarnate and few days in Rome, a visit to the Pope, Gasparri and Pizzardo would settle the question”⁶⁴. Il Ministro degli Esteri irlandese, tuttavia, si convinse che, prima di impegnarsi direttamente nell'interlocuzione con la Santa Sede, avrebbe dovuto ricercare la collaborazione della diplomazia britannica. Evidentemente non conscio del deterioramento delle relazioni anglo-vaticane verificatosi nel corso dell'estate in seguito agli sviluppi della questione maltese⁶⁵, McGilligan richiese l'aiuto del Foreign Office, promet-

⁶⁴ Walshe a McGilligan, senza data (presumibilmente risalente alla fine di settembre – vedi nota 45). Nella comunicazione, Walshe non lesinava rimproveri anche nei confronti dell'atteggiamento rinunciatario assunto dal Presidente Cosgrave, il quale – secondo il Segretario agli Affari Esteri – “did not believe the nuncio would ever come” e “this particular view won't allow him [il Presidente] to take a single step to ensure his coming”. Le motivazioni di un simile atteggiamento – sempre secondo Walshe – era dovuto al fatto che Cosgrave sembrava “too much absorbed by the local episcopal view”.

⁶⁵ Cfr. *Esposizione documentata della questione maltese 1930*, 94-108. Con una nota di a Chilton del 2 luglio 1929, Gasparri comunicò al Foreign Office britannico che il Primo Ministro maltese Lord Strickland era da considerarsi “persona non grata alla Santa Sede”, poiché ritenuto responsabile di un atteggiamento ostile “verso le leggi e verso i diritti e i sentimenti del clero e del popolo cattolico”, nonché di “un regime di terrore e dispotismo, in cui l'opposizione al Parlamento è disarmata ed i suoi giornali imbavagliati, i Tribunali minacciati, la giustizia sospesa, la Costituzione in pericolo, il paese in fermento, la Chiesa e la religione apertamente offese ed osteggiate” (Doc. XIV, 2 luglio 1929, 97-98). La drastica reazione della diplomazia britannica, contenuta in un pro-memoria rimesso a Gasparri da Chilton, testimoniava l'inasprimento delle relazioni anglo-vaticane, menzionando tutti gli atteggiamenti della Santa Sede che – a detta del Foreign Office – avevano pregiudicato la felice risoluzione della vicenda, come, per esempio, il fatto che fossero stati interrotti

tendo come contropartita che eventuali posizioni ostili dello Stato Libero rispetto alla legislazione interna al *Commonwealth* sarebbero state riviste nel caso in cui “active steps were taken [by the British] to induce the Holy See to send a Papal Nuncio to Dublin”⁶⁶. Se, tuttavia, il repentino precipitare della vicenda maltese – e con essa del tenore delle relazioni tra Gran Bretagna e Santa Sede – non consentiva alla diplomazia britannica un impegno concreto nella trattativa per l’invio del Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino, anche la Segreteria di Stato era affacciata in altre spinose questioni. In un’udienza privata del 4 ottobre 1929, Gasparri aveva riferito a Bewley “that he had forgotten to raise the question of the Irish nuncio with the pope”⁶⁷. In effetti, già a pochi mesi dalla firma dei Patti Lateranensi, le attenzioni della Santa Sede erano concentrate principalmente sui rapporti con il regime fascista, che si erano incrinati in seguito alla diffusione di due discorsi di Mussolini alla Camera di Roma, nei quali il duce – come ha argomentato Emma Fattorini – aveva preso “le distanze dal debito confessionale, cercando di minimizzare la portata del Concordato”⁶⁸. La risposta di Pio XI si era materializzata in una lettera del 11 giugno 1929, indirizzata al Cardinale Gasparri, in cui il pontefice aveva utilizzato la celebre forma del “*simul stabunt, simul cadent*” per ribadire che il Trattato e il Concordato, presenti nella lettera dei Patti Lateranensi, erano da considerarsi “l’uno complemento necessario dell’altro e l’uno dall’altro inseparabile e inscindibile”⁶⁹. Lo scambio di piccate consi-

“improvvisamente e senza preavviso né spiegazione, i negoziati incominciati da Monsignor Robinson a Malta, dai quali il Governo di Sua Maestà sperava risulterebbe un accordo definitivo tra la Santa Sede e il Governo di Sua Maestà per stabilire su di una base soddisfacente le relazioni tra la Chiesa e lo Stato di Malta”. In una escalation delle accuse nei confronti del Vaticano, Chilton aveva considerato, inoltre, che il fatto di aver “dichiarato persona non grata il Capo di un Governo responsabile in una colonia britannica” era, nella sostanza, “incompatibile coll’esistenza di relazioni diplomatiche amichevoli con la Santa Sede” (Doc. XV, 5 agosto 1929, 101-104). Tale ultima considerazione suonava come il preludio della decisione del governo britannico di ritirare il suo Ministro Plenipotenziario in Vaticano, che sarebbe intervenuta pochi mesi più tardi, nel giugno del 1930. Per un’analisi più ragionata si veda anche il già citato lavoro di Kent 1981, 88-89.

⁶⁶ FO 627 U631/78/750, riportato in Keogh 1986, 154.

⁶⁷ Bewley a Walshe, 10 ottobre 1929, NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary’s files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

⁶⁸ Fattorini 2007, 30. In particolare, si veda il testo del discorso di Mussolini alla Camera, del 13 maggio 1929, riportato in Scoppola 1976 (1971), 207-208, in cui il duce affermò che “vi sono quindi due sovranità ben distinte, ben differenziate, perfettamente e reciprocamente riconosciute. Ma nello Stato, la Chiesa non è sovrana e nemmeno libera ... perché nelle sue istituzioni e nei suoi uomini è sottoposta alle leggi generali dello Stato ed è anche sottoposta alle clausole speciali del concordato”. Per un ulteriore approfondimento, si rimanda anche a Kent 1981, 48-74.

⁶⁹ Il testo della lettera è in AAS, 1929, 297-306. Nella lettera Pio XI aveva sagacemente ripreso la tendenza di Mussolini a confermare frequentemente la ‘cattolicità’ del regime fa-

derazioni in merito alle faccende concordatarie aveva inaugurato un periodo di ostilità tra il Papa e il regime fascista che – come ha ancora considerato Emma Fattorini – avrebbe toccato il “suo culmine nello scontro sull’Azione Cattolica dell’aprile e maggio 1931” e con la pubblicazione delle encicliche *Quadragesimo anno* e *Non abbiamo bisogno*, per assestarsi in un compromesso “destinato, tra alti e bassi, a durare fino a quando il fascismo di Mussolini non stringerà l’alleanza con Hitler”⁷⁰.

Un ulteriore elemento di difficoltà si introdusse nella già complicata interlocuzione tra Bewley e la diplomazia vaticana quando, all’inizio di ottobre, iniziarono a circolare voci in merito alla possibilità che la Santa Sede potesse inviare in Irlanda, in luogo di un Nunzio, un Delegato Apostolico, figura non accreditata ufficialmente presso il governo dell’Irish Free State e con competenze quasi esclusivamente spirituali. Nel corso di un appuntamento non ufficiale in Vaticano, infatti, Monsignor Pisani aveva riferito al Ministro plenipotenziario irlandese che “the Pope knew that the Bishops were very desirous of having an Apostolic Delegate and that the Government was equally anxious for a Nuncio”⁷¹. La sola eventualità paventata che la nunziatura potesse essere rimpiazzata da una delegazione mise in allarme il servizio diplomatico dello Stato Libero: Walshe si precipitò ad istruire Bewley affinché comunicasse, direttamente a Gasparri, che sarebbe stato “impossible for

scista: “Stato cattolico, si dice e si ripete, ma Stato fascista; ne prendiamo atto senza speciali difficoltà, anzi volentieri, giacché ciò vuole indubbiamente dire che lo Stato fascista, tanto nell’ordine delle idee e delle dottrine quanto nell’ordine della pratica azione, nulla vuole ammettere che non s’accordi con la dottrina e con la pratica cattolica; senza di che lo Stato cattolico non sarebbe né potrebbe essere” (301).

⁷⁰ Fattorini 2007, 32. Per un riferimento documentato alla controversia tra governo italiano e Santa Sede all’indomani delle firma dei Patti Lateranensi, si rimanda, in particolare, al volume VIII (13 settembre 1929 – 14 aprile 1930) della Settima Serie 1922-1935 dei *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Roma, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1972. A titolo esemplificativo, si segnala lo scambio di comunicazioni tra Mussolini e il Nunzio apostolico in Italia Borgongini Duca a proposito delle celebrazioni in occasione del 20 settembre 1929: Mussolini a Borgongini Duca, 6150, 15 settembre 1929, *Intenzione di continuare a festeggiare la ricorrenza del 20 settembre*, 6; Borgongini Duca a Mussolini, 18 settembre 1929, *Questione delle celebrazioni del 20 settembre*, 12. In aggiunta, si segnala anche l’inizio della aspra interlocuzione tra la Segreteria di Stato vaticana e il governo italiano in merito al rispetto del concordato in tema di politica religiosa e organizzazioni giovanili cattoliche: Borgongini Duca a Grandi, 245, 30 novembre 1929, *Protesta per un articolo di Lando Ferretti sul Popolo di Roma relativo alla politica religiosa di Mussolini*, 214; Gasparri a De Vecchi, 3038/29, 29 dicembre 1929, *Protesta per il trattamento riservato all’Azione Cattolica, in contrasto con la lettera e lo spirito del Concordato*, 296.

⁷¹ Bewley a Walshe, 10 ottobre 1929, NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary’s files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A). Interessante è la lettura che Bewley fece delle informazioni apprese da Pisani: “the Pope was very anxious to satisfy both Bishops and Government, and would no doubt do so, because the Holy See always succeeded in arriving at compromises to satisfy the different parties, but it would take time”.

government to accept apostolic delegate in lieu of nuncio”, poiché “the ad hoc diplomatic character presumably to be given the delegate would not be understood and would in any case be regarded as a slight on the government”⁷². Nonostante il pressante lavoro della diplomazia irlandese, le trattative non subirono sviluppi fino alla metà di novembre, quando Pizzardo comunicò confidenzialmente a Bewley di aver appreso in Segreteria di Stato che la nomina di un Nunzio Apostolico per l’Irlanda era imminente. Il 25 dello stesso mese, il Ministro dello Stato Libero fu raggiunto da un nota di Gasparri che lo invitava a recarsi in Vaticano per un incontro ufficiale. All’appuntamento, il Segretario di Stato accolse Bewley con l’annuncio entusiasta “Eh bien! Excellence, on vous envoie un Nonce”⁷³ e con la notizia che il diplomatico scelto dalla Santa Sede per Dublino era Monsignor Paschal Robinson, che al ritorno dalla sua missione a Malta era considerato l’ecclesiastico con maggiore esperienza in merito alle questioni relative al mondo anglosassone. Il nuovo Nunzio, oltre ad essere – come Gasparri aveva ripetutamente enfatizzato – “a very holy man”, si presentava anche come un diplomatico libero da vincoli di dipendenza rispetto al governo britannico. In tal senso – notava Bewley – “his recent report on the Maltese question, would prove to all classes of opinion in Ireland that he is not likely to be over-subject to English influence”⁷⁴.

La nomina del Nunzio Apostolico di Dublino fu, di fatto, uno degli ultimi atti della Segreteria di Stato del Cardinale Gasparri, che nel settembre del 1929 si era dimesso per essere sostituito, pochi mesi più tardi, dal Cardinale Eugenio Pacelli.

5. *Paschal Robinson a Dublino*

Al momento della sua nomina a primo Nunzio Apostolico in Irlanda, Paschal Robinson aveva sessant’anni ed era riconosciuto come uno dei più autorevoli ed esperti diplomatici della Santa Sede relativamente alle questioni del mondo anglosassone. Nacque a Dublino nel 1870 e si trasferì a New York da bambino, insieme alla famiglia. Negli Stati Uniti, mosse i primi passi da giornalista politico, scrivendo per la *North American Review*. Nel 1890, Robinson entrò nei Francescani e, nel 1901, fu ordinato sacerdote a Roma, dove si trovava per specializzarsi negli studi storici. Nei primi anni da ecclesiastico svolse compiti di elevata responsabilità nell’amministrazione dell’Ordine Franciscano e fu contemporaneamente avviato alla carriera diplomatica,

⁷² Walshe a Bewley, 10 ottobre 1929 (telegramma), NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary’s files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

⁷³ Bewley a Walshe, 25 novembre 1929, NAI, Department of Foreign Affairs – Secretary’s files, S 28A (SPO S5/857A).

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

partecipando a missioni umanitarie nell'estremo oriente asiatico. Dal 1914 al 1925 – con un breve intervallo nel 1919 quando coadiuvò Bonaventura Cerretti nella spedizione vaticana alla conferenza di pace di Versailles – lavorò come professore ordinario di storia medievale presso la Catholic University of America di Washington. Abbandonò la cattedra solo nel momento in cui la Segreteria di Stato vaticana gli chiese di dedicarsi a tempo pieno a compiti di diplomazia internazionale, consacrandolo Arcivescovo di Tyana in Turchia e nominandolo prima visitatore apostolico in Palestina e, successivamente, Delegato Apostolico per la spinosa questione maltese⁷⁵.

Benché alla vigilia della nomina di Robinson fossero circolati altri nomi per la nunziatura di Dublino, come, ad esempio quelli di Monsignor Pisani o dell'acerrimo 'nemico' dei repubblicani, il Cardinale di Westminster Francis Bourne, il Papa e Gasparri fecero cadere la scelta su un Irish-American, che, per il suo autorevole profilo internazionale, avrebbe offerto notevoli garanzie al governo dello Stato Libero⁷⁶ e, al tempo stesso, rassicurato l'episcopato irlandese. Oltretutto, l'origine isolana di Robinson rappresentò – così come aveva commentato Hagan in un lettera indirizzata all'Arcivescovo di Dublino Byrne – “a sort of compromise or better still a manoeuvre to disarm opposition by making it appear that the Holy See is anxious to show deference to Irish feeling by appointing one of themselves”⁷⁷. Per raggiungere il compromesso evocato dal rettore del Collegio Irlandese, la Santa Sede ricorse alla pratica, di certo non comune in Vaticano, di nominare rappresentanti diplomatici 'nativi' del luogo di destinazione⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ Non esistono attualmente pubblicazioni biografiche su Paschal Robinson, ad eccezione di quelle che furono date alle stampe all'indomani della sua morte, nel 1948, e che hanno carattere commemorativo, come, per esempio, Lee 1948, o il necrologio “Paschal Robinson Obituary”, apparso su *The Irish Times* del 28 agosto 1948.

⁷⁶ Nel suo discorso di capodanno Cosgrave espresse, a nome del governo, un giudizio di favore rispetto alla scelta di un diplomatico irlandese per la nunziatura di Dublino: “Towards the close of the year we received the notification of the appointment of his Excellency, Archbishop Robinson, as Papal Nuncio. By selecting an Irishman for this exalted position his Holiness the Pope has given a sign of remarkable interest in, and affection for, his people here”. *President's Message to Cork*, 1 gennaio 1930, il cui testo è conservato in ASV – Arch. Nunz. Irlanda, busta 9, fasc. 6, f. 3.

⁷⁷ Hagan a Byrne, 27 novembre 1929, Archbishop Byrne Papers, Dublin Archdiocesan Archives, Clonliffe College, Dublin, riportato anche in Keogh 1988, 65.

⁷⁸ Il precedente più vicino, ricordato anche da Hagan nella sua comunicazione a Monsignor Byrne di Dublino, era quello del bavarese Arcivescovo Andreas Frühwirth, che, 1907, era stato nominato primo Nunzio Apostolico in Baviera. Sul caso specifico si veda anche Stehlin 1983, 60. La scelta compiuta dalla Santa Sede fu anche oggetto delle attenzioni della stampa internazionale: il 20 dicembre 1929, il *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* riportava: “Le choix d'un prélat irlandais, et non italien, semble, de la part de Rome, une mesure habile pour ménager certaines susceptibilités et un délicat compliment à la nation et à la hiérarchie irlandaises” (“L'Irlande et le Sainte Siège – Le noncé a Dublin”, 1).

Già il 26 novembre 1929, all'indomani della comunicazione dell'avvenuta nomina, a Dublino erano iniziati i preparativi per l'organizzazione di una solenne ricezione del Nunzio. Robinson aveva lasciato intendere che, di comune accordo con la Segreteria di Stato, non avrebbe raggiunto la capitale irlandese prima dell'inizio del nuovo anno, poiché alcune faccende di carattere burocratico e, soprattutto, l'ultimazione del suo lavoro sulla questione maltese lo avrebbero trattenuto in Vaticano. Il governo del Free State si adoperò affinché ogni particolare fosse curato nei minimi dettagli e i problemi che rischiavano di ostacolare la buona riuscita delle cerimonie in programma fossero risolti rapidamente. Uno dei timori più diffusi negli ambienti governativi era legato all'atteggiamento che avrebbero mantenuto all'arrivo del Nunzio i repubblicani di De Valera. Essi, infatti, avevano sostanzialmente subito lo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con la Santa Sede, che rischiava di configurarsi come una fondamentale vittoria d'immagine del Cumman na nGaedheal. Per bocca del loro portavoce Seán T. O'Kelly, fu impartita a tutti i rappresentanti locali e nazionali del Fianna Fáil la direttiva di non prendere parte a nessuna delle iniziative civili promosse dal governo in occasione dell'arrivo di Robinson a Dublino⁷⁹. In seguito a una pacifica ma sostenuta interlocuzione con De Valera, Cosgrave e McGilligan riuscirono ad scongiurare il rischio che il boicottaggio delle cerimonie da parte dei repubblicani potesse trascendere in gesti eclatanti, in modo da evitare imbarazzi e disordini che avrebbero pregiudicato un avvenimento senza precedenti nella storia d'Irlanda. Sistemate le questioni legate alla politica interna, il governo passò a pianificare la logistica del ricevimento e ad affrettare i preparativi della nuova residenza del Nunzio, stabilita in un imponente palazzo nello sterminato Phoenix Park di Dublino.

Contemporaneamente, la Sacra Congregazione Concistoriale aveva approntato le istruzioni da impartire a Robinson prima della sua partenza. In termini specifici, il più preciso ammonimento nei confronti del nuovo Nunzio era relativo alle relazioni con l'episcopato locale: "Se per ragioni speciali", argomentavano gli ecclesiastici del Concistoro, "in Irlanda i Vescovi ebbero gran parte nelle cose della vita pubblica, è indispensabile anche in ciò, che essi abbiano a tener di mira unicamente il Regno di Dio. A questo scopo", continuavano, "Mons. Nunzio curerà, per alimentare la concordia, che i Vescovi soprattutto usino tutta l'avvedutezza necessaria e, in modo particolare, adoperino moderazione nel linguaggio, specialmente nelle 'Lettere Pastora-

⁷⁹ In una lettera di O'Kelly ad Hagan del 4 gennaio 1930, conservata negli archivi del Pontifical Irish College di Roma (Hagan Papers) e citata in Keogh 1988, 71, il rappresentante del Fianna Fáil chiarì la posizione del partito: "There are some of our members who would like to make an exception for the Nuncio but I have ruled that this can't be done. If however, a Te Deum or other religious ceremony be held it is likely our people would attend".

li”⁸⁰. La preoccupazione principale della Santa Sede era relativa alle conseguenze di natura politica dell’attecchimento dell’episcopato irlandese: Pio XI e Gasparri temevano, in particolare, che l’eventuale e manifesta ostilità dei prelati nei confronti del Nunzio potesse trasformarsi in un’argomentazione a vantaggio dei partiti contrari allo scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche. Pochi giorni prima della partenza di Robinson da Roma, infatti, non erano mancate polemiche in merito all’accreditamento del Nunzio, veicolate attraverso giornali vicini agli ambienti repubblicani. Su *L’Osservatore Romano* del 7 gennaio comparve un comunicato della Segreteria di Stato che rendeva note le modalità della presentazione delle credenziali di Robinson alle autorità irlandesi e, con acceso disappunto, smentiva le notizie diffuse dalla stampa di opposizione:

È intenzione del Governo che egli [Robinson] sia ricevuto al suo arrivo, la sera del 14 gennaio, al Dun Laoghaire, il porto di Dublino, dal Presidente del Consiglio Esecutivo dello Stato Libero d’Irlanda e dal Ministro degli Affari Esteri, al suono dell’inno pontificio. Il Nunzio sarà poi scortato alla città e resterà ospite del Governo irlandese finché non siano ultimati i lavori necessari per mettere in ordine l’ampio Castello offerto alla Santa Sede per residenza della Nunziatura. Il 15 gennaio avrà luogo la presentazione delle Credenziali al Governatore Generale. [...] Alla luce di questi fatti riescono particolarmente strane certe notizie apparse in qualche giornale, anche estero, notizie che pretendono di avere la loro origine in Roma e di provenire da chi è in grado di parlare con autorità degli affari irlandesi. Così, in uno di questi giornali, che si dicono informati, si legge la notizia che il Nunzio Apostolico durante il suo viaggio si fermerà a Londra allo scopo di presentare le Credenziali a S. M. Il Re Giorgio V; in un altro si insinua che la Segreteria di Stato di Sua Santità avrebbe desiderato seguire questa procedura, ma che, dopo lunghe trattative, fu finalmente persuasa a desistere dal suo punto di vista e ad accettare il programma sopra descritto. È affatto inutile dire che tali notizie sono del tutto arbitrarie ed infondate.⁸¹

Il 14 gennaio 1930, secondo i piani, Monsignor Paschal Robinson, dopo un breve scalo a Londra, sbarcò al Dun Laoghaire, il porto di Dublino. Fu accolto, con gli onori riservati alle alte autorità, “dal Presidente dello Stato Libero, Sig. Cosgrave e dal Ministro degli Esteri, Sig. McGilligan”, i quali rappresentarono “il benvenuto anche a nome del Governatore Generale”, la diretta emanazione della Corona britannica in Irlanda, James MacNeill⁸².

⁸⁰ Sacra Congregazione Concistoriale a Gasparri, 3 gennaio 1930, ASV – Arch. Nunz. Irlanda, busta 9, fasc. 3, ff. 2-8. Il riferimento alle lettere pastorali dei Vescovi era motivato da casi precedenti, come ad esempio, quello della Pastorale del 22 ottobre 1922, su cui vedi *supra*, che avevano provocato divisioni e rimostranze, soprattutto da parte dei repubblicani.

⁸¹ “Il Nunzio Apostolico a Dublino”, *L’Osservatore Romano*, 7 gennaio 1930.

⁸² Robinson a Gasparri, 18 gennaio 1930, ASV – Arch. Nunz. Irlanda, busta 9, fasc. 3, f. 3-6.

A questi il nuovo Nunzio Apostolico rimise, il giorno seguente, “le Lettere Credenziali accompagnandole con un breve discorso”, al quale MacNeill “rispose con altro discorso pieno di deferenza per il Santo Padre, manifestando la sua compiacenza e gratitudine per l’onore che il Sommo pontefice ha fatto allo Stato Libero dell’Irlanda con l’invio di un Nunzio”⁸³.

Nonostante l’attenzione profusa dalla Segreteria di Stato nell’evitare che all’arrivo di Robinson a Dublino fosse attribuita una valenza politica di parte, l’avvenimento inaugurò una nuova stagione di acceso raffronto – di cui lo stesso Nunzio fu testimone interessato – fra i repubblicani di De Valera, in progressiva ascesa in termini di consenso, e il Cuman na nGaedheal di Cosgrave, impegnato nel tentativo di trarre vantaggio dal concluso scambio di rappresentanze diplomatiche con la Santa Sede, che – secondo la propaganda governativa – rappresentava una prova inconfutabile della “Free State’s political independence” dal Regno Unito⁸⁴.

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⁸³ *Ibidem*. Per una ricostruzione documentata con fonti irlandesi della vicenda della nomina del Nunzio apostolico in Irlanda, si segnala anche il dossier intitolato *Appointment of Papal Nuncio in Ireland (Monsignor Paschal Robinson)* e conservato in NAI, DFA/5/318/77 (1929).

⁸⁴ “The Papal Nuncio”, *The Irish Times*, 15 January 1930.

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Political Prisoners and the Irish Language: A North-South Comparison¹

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Abstract:

The Irish language is witnessing a revival in some parts of Ulster. This revival is most visible in Belfast where *An Cheathrú Ghaeltachta* (Gaeltacht Quarter) was founded to promote the Irish language. While Irish was marginalized during the conflict in the North, Belfast, for example, had more *Gaelscoileanna* (Irish-language schools) than any other city in Ireland except Dublin and Cork in 2013. One of the most important aspects for this development was the release of the Irish Republican prisoners following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. In contrast to the North, although considered as the national language in the southern Republic of Ireland, the Irish language is further declining in the South. Thus, while the former Republican prisoners perform a pivotal role in the North, their role in re-vitalising the language in the Republic is marginalized. By comparing the role of the Irish language in Long Kesh/HMP Maze and Portlaoise Prison, I will discuss two aspects for this North-South divergence. These two differences are first the role of former prisoners within their community, and second the colonial/post-colonial framework of the two states.

Keywords: IRA, Irish language, Irish Republicanism, Language Revival, Prisons

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1. Introduction

In 1969, riots between the Unionist majority and the Nationalist minority broke out as a result of the demand for civil rights by the pro-Irish minority. The Unionist establishment greeted these demands with further repression, harassment and discrimination. Following what those who experienced them describe as pogroms, in August 1969 in Belfast, the British army was deployed to the North of Ireland. It was this event that marked the conflict that is commonly known as the “Troubles”. The deployment of the British army only intensified the already tense situation, resulting in a full-scale war in Ireland in the early 1970s². As a consequence, the Unionist government introduced internment without trial in 1971 (McCleery 2012, 411-430; Doherty 2015, 68-75; McCleery 2015). Until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the release of the majority of the political prisoners in the year 2000, between 20,000 and 25,000 people, overwhelmingly male Catholics, went through the internment camps and prisons in the North of Ireland³. While few of these Northern Republicans spoke Irish before their imprisonment, the majority of them left the prisons as fluent Irish speakers.

This paper looks at the Irish language use of the Republican prisoners on both sides of the inner-Irish border. Thus, by comparing the colonial and post-colonial situations in both Irish states, I discovered that the former prisoners have a stronger position in society in the North of Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland. In other words, by using the Irish language as a case study, this paper illustrated the role former political prisoners’ play in their communities in Ireland.

The Irish language is witnessing a revival in some parts of Ulster. This revival is most visible in Belfast where *An Cheathrú Ghaeltachta* (Gaeltacht Quarter) was established to promote the Irish language in 2002. While Irish was marginalized during the conflict in the North, by 2013 Belfast, for example, had more *Gaelscoileanna* (Irish-language schools) than any other city in Ireland except Dublin and Cork. In this contribution, I argue that one of the most important reasons for this development was the release of the Irish Republican prisoners following the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in

² For an overview on the outbreak of the troubles see *inter alia*: Bell 1997 [1989], 1993; Hennessey 2005, 2007; Prince 2012; Prince, Warner 2013, 271-296.

³ The record of how many people experienced time in internment camps and prisons as a result of the conflict in the North of Ireland and Republican activities in the Republic of Ireland since 1969 is not precise. This might be a surprising fact for some of the readers. Now, according to various surveys, the number of political internees and prisoners in the North of Ireland since 1969 range from 20.000 to 30.000; comprehensive numbers for political imprisonment in the Republic of Ireland since 1970 do not exist; see *inter alia*: OFMDFM 2007.

1998. However, although discussing the Irish-language revival in the North of Ireland, this is not the main focus of this article. Instead, I will firstly introduce the roles and mechanisms which Irish Republicans adopted during imprisonment in order to learn the Irish language; this will be followed by a discussion on the role that former Republican prisoners play in the language movement in the late 20th Century and early 21st Century. In essence, then this paper compares the Irish language and political imprisonment in the North of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Rather than outlining the Irish-language revival in the North, my paper examines the learning and using of the Irish language by Republican prisoners. Therefore, I will not discuss what a language revival actually is and why I am speaking about a revival of the Irish language in the North of Ireland with respect to a revitalising of the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland; since this has already been done (MacGiollaChríost 2012; MacIonnraichtaigh 2013; Couzens, Eira 2014, 313-334). Nonetheless, it is useful to outline the growth of the Irish language in the North of Ireland, in particular, the city of Belfast. The establishment of *An Cheathrú Ghaeltachta* as one of Belfast four quarters has already been mentioned; the other three quarters are the Cathedral Quarter, the Queen's Quarter, and the Titanic Quarter. Another example is the increase in *Bunscoileanna* (primary schools) in and around Belfast in recent years. The first Irish-medium primary school in the North of Ireland, *Scoil Ghaelige Bhéal Feirste*, later *Bunscoil Phobal Feirste*, was established in 1971 in a climate that was hostile towards the Irish language. Nonetheless, in 2010 and 2011, with twelve primary schools, Belfast and the County Antrim had the third-highest number of *Bunscoileanna* outside Gaeltacht areas in Ireland after County Dublin with 32 *Bunscoileanna*, and County Cork with 21. If we compare the number of pupils attending these primary schools, Belfast and County Antrim still ranked number seven of all 32 Counties. Although County Antrim runs only one Irish-language post-primary school, its 553 school students in this school make County Antrim number four in the ranking of the number of school students in the post-primary Irish-language schools (*Iar-bhunscoileanna*); if measured by the number of teachers in these *Iar-bhunscoileanna*, Belfast and County Antrim is even number three. To conclude, although the Irish language has developed in a hostile environment in the North of Ireland since the early 1970s, its spreading in recent years justifies using the term "language revival", even on a small scale⁴. Hence, the aim of the paper is to contrast the use of the Irish language by the prisoners and ex-prisoners in the North with those in the

⁴ All data taken from: De Brún 2006, <http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/assets/Staitistic%C3%AD-2010-2011_Gaeilge.pdf> (07/2015); for an introduction to the Irish language in the North of Ireland see: O'Reilly 1999; for a history of the Irish language see: Doyle 2015.

southern Republic. By using this comparative approach I will provide a different focus on the role of the former prisoners in the Irish language movement in particular and the role of former political prisoners in society in general.

2. Research Question & Methodology

2.1 Historical Significance

Irish Republican ex-prisoners now hold prominent positions within both their political movements and their community. While John F. Morrison writes that Republican internees and prisoners held a “significant role” in the larger transformation of Republican organisations (2014, 75-86), I go further and argue that these former prisoners additionally perform this role within their wider community. On the basis of one case study, the Irish language and Republican prisoners, this article problematizes our notion of interaction between political prisoners and their communities outside of prison walls; in other words, I argue that it is crucial for the understanding of political prisoners to rethink them as agents of political and cultural changes in societies. In essence, I am of the opinion that, through the self-organised education process in the internment camps and prison, the political prisoners were able to influence political and cultural phenomena outside the internment camps and prisons. I will argue that education, reading, and debates within the internment camps and prisons were one of the driving forces behind the political self-awareness, politicization and de-radicalization process of the Republican Movement in Ireland.

While these considerations provide the broader research questions of the research project, this paper is a case study on the learning of the Irish language in the prisons. Thus, this paper outlines the impact that former political prisoners have in developing the Irish language in the North of Ireland. Indeed, I would argue that the Republican ex-prisoners are the driving force behind the Irish-language Revival in the North of Ireland. In other words, this case study on Republican imprisonment and the Irish language analyses one particular aspect of the education system within the prisons. Additionally, it shows how this Irish-language activism of the former Republican prisoners influenced the cultural and political developments within their Northern Irish nationalist communities. In contrast, the Republican ex-prisoners do not have similar pivotal positions of influence within their communities in the southern Republic of Ireland. Hence, the former prisoners, although mostly fluent Irish speakers, perform a minor role within the language movement in this southern part of the island. Thus, I will compare the experiences of the prisoners in the Northern and Southern prisons as well as the colonial and post-colonial situations in both states in order to illustrate the role of prisoners as agents in their communities.

2.2 *Theoretical Framework*

Language was one form of resistance by political prisoners in Ireland. The learning and speaking of the Irish language by the Republican prisoners served two forms of resistance: First, it was a form of resistance developed as a direct result of the colonial, and respectively post-colonial, framework of Ireland to strengthen the cultural and national identity (McMahon 2012, 80). MacLonnraichtaigh calls this an “act of cultural de-colonization” (2013, 78). Second, it was a communication tool that made the English warders in the Northern Irish prisons unable to understand what the prisoners are saying.

Fran Buntman has described various categories of resistance when analysing political prisoners in South Africa. Among these categories are: resistance as survival; resistance as dignity and self-consciousness; and resistance as open challenge (2003); if I analyse the two previously outlined functions of the Irish language in the prisons according to Buntman’s categories, then the use of the language as a way to strengthen cultural and national identity is a form of “resistance as dignity and self-consciousness”. Furthermore, the second function, language used as a “secret” communication tool, is a form of “resistance as the appropriation of power” (Buntman 2003, 254).

The use of the Irish language by political prisoners is a form of “strategic resistance” (*ibidem*, 128). According to Buntman, strategic resistance aims at long-term development of the community of prisoners in organisational and educational terms that could “impact upon the political terrain both within and beyond the prison” (*ibidem*). This notion of using the Irish language as strategic resistance stands in contrast to Kieran McEvoy’s argument that the learning of the Irish language is a “hidden or less overt form of resistance” (2001, 442), since MacLonnraichtaigh, instead, sees it as a “public” form of protest (2013, 56). In other words, the learning and speaking of the Irish language by the Republican prisoners in Long Kesh/HMP Maze and Portlaoise Prison is a form of strategic and cultural resistance, aiming at the long-term development of their community. McMahon writes that “the simple act of speaking the indigenous language in an ‘unauthorised context’ is already a strike against the Other” (2012, 82). Nonetheless, this strategy only proved successful in the colonial context of the North, rather than the post-colonial context of the Republic of Ireland, as will be seen below. While the results of the learning and using of Irish are different, the speaking of the Irish language was, in both prisons, a form of resistance by Republican prisoners.

2.3 *Sources & State of the Art*

While some publications have already analysed the learning of Irish, the reading habits of the prisoners, and their literary output from the Long Kesh internment camp resp. HMP Maze, there is a wide lack of academic

research on political imprisonment in Portlaoise Prison (McKeown 1996, 43-49; 2001; Whalen 2006, 123-139; MacGiollaChríost 2007, 317-336; Whalen 2007; McKeown 2009, 74-283; MacGiollaChríost 2012; MacLonnrachaigh 2013). Two recently published works explore the learning and using of the Irish language by Republicans during internment and imprisonment. These are the books by Diarmait MacGiollaChríost on the *Jailtacht* (2012) and by Feargal MacLonnrachaigh on *Language, Resistance and Revival* (2013). Diarmait MacGiollaChríost offers a linguistic analysis of the particular version of Irish that has been learned and developed by the internees and prisoners, an Irish-language dialect he calls “Jailtacht”, whereas Feargal MacLonnrachaigh uses post-colonial approaches to research the use of the Irish language by the Republican prisoners both inside the prison and following their release. Although both analyses provide an essential understanding of the Irish language in 21st century Ireland and its role in the modern Provisional Republican Movement, they are intentionally limited to the developments within the Northern prisons and the Six Counties. Melanie McMahan similarly limited her analyses to the North in her PhD-Thesis, *Irish as Symptom: Language, Ideology and Praxis in the Post/Colony* (2012). McMahan analyses first the meaning of the language during the dirty protests in the H-Blocks; in a second step she argues that the building of a prisoner’s community was enacted by the speaking of Irish. While all these three studies provide important contributions to the field, this paper goes beyond MacGiollaChríost’s, MacLonnrachaigh’s, and McMahan’s approach by comparing their findings on the North of Ireland with additional finding on the southern Republic. Thus, this paper will provide additional material on the situation in the Southern prisons and the Republic of Ireland, as well as providing a comparative analysis on the situation in these two states.

The main data for the article is provided by interviews and archival research⁵. I will use this to present an in-depth case study with former political prisoners. To collect the data, qualitative expert interviews were conducted with former political prisoners from the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA). The second group of sources used are archival sources such as documents from the prison authorities, the governments in Dublin and Belfast, as well as documents and articles written by the prisoners themselves while imprisoned⁶.

⁵ For a detailed description of my data collection process see: Reinisch 2012.

⁶ The main archives and libraries to be used in Belfast are the Northern Ireland Political Collection of the Linen Hall Library, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), the National Library of Ireland (NLI) and the National Archives of Ireland in Dublin. Additionally, material made available by online databases like the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) and recently collected databases with interviews of participants of the conflict in Ireland, such as the Prison Memory Archive, has been consulted.

3. *Imprisonment in Ireland*

MacLonnraichtaigh argues that the “cultural re-conquest”, as mentioned by Irish socialist Republican James Connolly, was an integral part of the ideology of the resistance strategy by Republicans opposed to the Two-States-Strategy (2013, 71-78)⁷. Since the 19th century, the Republican Movement used education during imprisonment for their political strategy. Following the 1916 Rising, political prisoners held lengthy political debates and organised classes in the internment camp Frongoch, giving it the name “University of Revolution” (O’Mahoney 1987). Similarly, the Republican prisoners in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s used their time in Irish and British prisons to develop political strategies, rethinking the Republican programme and ideology, as well as sharpening their historical and cultural understanding of Ireland⁸. MacLonnraichtaigh, for example, writes that “Belfast’s Crumlin Road prison became a centre for language activity and cultural revivalism as part of their resistance during incarnation” (2013, 86-87). In the following part, I will first discuss the use of the Irish language by the Republican prisoners in the North; this will be followed by a discussion of the use of the language in the southern Portlaoise prison.

3.1 *Republican Prisoners & Irish in the North of Ireland*

The internment camp Long Kesh and later the prison HMP Maze, infamous for its H-shaped Blocks, was the main prison of the North of Ireland⁹. Among the first classes organised by the prisoners in Long Kesh were Irish-language courses (McCarron 2013, 100). In Long Kesh, one of the internees remembers that “nine or ten people out of 80 or 90 people” housed in one hut took these Irish classes. The classes were organised once or twice a week and the language was initially taught through Gaelic songs since Irish books were forbidden by the prison authorities. Thus, Irish-language development varied from cage, an area comprising various huts, according to the knowledge of Irish of individual internees. Later, the prisoners established two Gaeltacht huts. Gaeltacht is a term used in English to mean an Irish-speaking district. One of these Irish-speaking districts was Cage 10, the other one was Cage

⁷ See also: Connolly 1910; Metscher 2002; Reinisch 2012; MacLonnraichtaigh 2013, 71-78.

⁸ For an overview of Republican imprisonment before 1970, see *inter alia*: McGuffin 1973; O’Mahony 1987; MacEoin 1997; Kleinrichert 2001; McConville 2003, 2014 [2003]; Ebenezer 2006; Bryson 2007; Maguire 2008; Brennan-Whitmore 2013; O’Duibhir 2013; Murphy 2014.

⁹ For a history of Long Kesh/HMP Maze see *inter alia*: Ryder 2000; McKeown 2001; McAtackney 2014.

11, according to MacIonnraichtaigh (2013, 117, 124), whereas MacGiollaChrist mentions Cage 11 and 17 as being the Gaeltacht huts (2012, 16-18); one prisoner who was in Cage 10 at the time remembers that:

Your teacher nominated you, but there was always a waiting list and only a half of a hut was used which left only around 20 beds. [...] [T]hey were very strict on the language in the Gaeltacht in Cage 10. [...] [Y]ou were thrown out if you spoke in English and there would be a list of guys waiting to take your place. (MacIonnraichtaigh 2013, 124)

The situation in the Gaeltacht hut in Cage 11 was more relaxed. Another prisoner remembers that there:

It was about helping each other and learning together [...]; it moved away from the heavy compulsory, anti-English language mentality. [...] [O]ur motto in the Gaeltacht was inclusive and simple: Gaeilgemásféidir, béarlamásgá. (Irish if possible, English when necessary). (*Ibidem*, 122)

This situation proved to be highly successful and one prisoner says that:

Towards the end of my time in prison, our Gaeltacht had developed amazingly. [...] I mean, between 1977 and 1979 I really never spoke English at all except when I had to, we even began doing all our political and theoretical discussions in Irish. (*Ibidem*, 123)

Another prisoner says that in 1977, there were “about seven or eight of us from the Cages who had Irish [and] within a year and a half, there were 300 prisoners with fluent Irish” (*ibidem*, 108, 139). This shows us that, the self-organised Irish-language classes held by the Irish-speaking prisoners in Long Kesh proved to be successful, encouraging hundreds of fellow prisoners to use the language.

The situation changed dramatically with the opening of the H-Block prison and the withdrawal of de-facto political status for the political prisoners¹⁰. In response to these new developments, the Republican prisoners embarked first on blanket and dirty protests and later on two hunger strikes¹¹.

¹⁰ For the discussion on ‘political status’, see *inter alia*: Walker 1984, 189-225; Hogan, Walker 1989; O’Ruairc 2010.

¹¹ Those prisoners sentenced before the withdrawal of ‘political status’ maintained their rights and were not transferred to the H-Blocks. Thus, a number of prisoners stayed in the Long Kesh huts until the mid-1980s, continuing their Irish language classes as they did before opening the H-Blocks, while their newly arriving fellow-prisoners were kept in the H-Blocks. The differences of imprisonment in the huts on the one hand and the H-Blocks on the other hand is not subject to this article; for a discussion on this question, see: MacIonnraichtaigh 2013.

Those prisoners on protest lost all their privileges and spent 24 hours' locked up in their cells. As a consequence they had to adapt their programme for learning Irish: a 'shouter' was selected to teach the classes. As this name implies, the shouter, in Irish *scairteoir*, shouted lessons out of the cell door. The Irish classes were called *ranganna Gaelige* and every class started with a shouting of *rang anois* ('class now'). The beginners' classes were on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 12 noon and 1pm; the advanced classes were on Tuesday and Thursday from 3pm to 5pm; and the teachers' class was every Sunday from 12 noon to 2pm (MacGíollaChrist 2012). Stripped of all their belongings during the protests, the only four resources available for the prisoners to learn Irish, apart from the lesson given by the shouter, were the Bible, since it was the only book allowed in the cells and it provided some paper on which to write; the cross, used to write on the walls; some toothpaste that was left outside the doors by the prison warders and which was used to write on the walls; and the priest during the Sunday mass (Maclonnrachtaigh 2013, 145). In some blocks there were no good Irish speakers; as a result, the prisoners had to learn Irish from texts without learning the correct pronunciation, so the priest was the only person who could tell the shouter how to pronounce Irish-language words (MacGiollaChrist 2012, 30-31). Moreover, the priest smuggled learning materials in during Sunday mass (Goldenberg 2002, 76; Maclonnrachtaigh 2013, 140-141). In fact, the prisoners had to organise their learning of Irish themselves in a hostage environment, under these circumstances, the Irish language was made a coping strategy during the prison protests. One prisoner remembers that "this [the Irish-language classes, note DR] was totally invaluable in the terrible conditions to lift the spirit of the lads and help build their identity" (*ibidem*, 139). Thus, while the prisoners used Irish as a 'secret' language for communication, "the building of identity was its main function" he explains (*ibidem*). McMahon argues accordingly and writes that "Irish language and excrement combine in the H-Blocks to produce a disordering of the accepted relationship between language and politics" (2012, 74).

The prison protests ended in autumn 1981 and the situation for the Republican prisoners gradually improved in the H-Blocks during the 1980s¹². Following the hunger strikes, the politics of the Republican prisoners towards formal education courses changed; even where the prisoners had boycotted these classes in order not to give the prison regulations any recognition, they changed their position so as to use the 'system strategically'. This means that the prisoners recognised the prison regime in order to use the facilities for their own gains. Accordingly, the Republican leadership in the prison argued

¹² For an overview of Irish Republican prison protests in HMP Maze see *inter alia*: Beresford 1987; Campbell, *et al.* 1998; McKeown 2001; O'Rawe 2005.

that “the education would help our own personal development of the struggle itself” (MacLonnraichtaigh 2013, 151-152). One prisoner tells us that 46 fellow prisoners were on his wing, 90% of them were fluent in Irish, the rest could understand it, and, as he informs “Irish was the means of communication on the wings” (*ibidem*, 151). Nonetheless, the Irish language went into decline once again in the aftermath of the prison protests (*ibidem*) as former prisoner turned academic and writer Laurence McKeown tells:

However this had a major impact on the language, which began to dwindle as the spoken language of the Blocks [...] when people came face-to-face they tended to speak the language they were most comfortable with, which was English. (*Ibidem*)

In general, there were three reasons for the interim decline of Irish as the spoken language on the prison landings. First, as McKeown explains, prisoners started to use English when they met in person. On the one hand, they were more comfortable with English; on the other hand, they could associate with each other following the end of the protests. This association meant that they were not forced to shout from one cell to another in order to discuss political developments. Under these new circumstances, the use of Irish as a secret language became redundant. Second, while the prisoners on blanket protest, the so-called Blanketmen, held their history and language classes by shouting from door to door, no formal classes were organised in the immediate aftermath of the protests. Third, new prisoners who had no prior knowledge of Irish associated with the Blanketmen; consequently, the latter used more English in their conversations. To be sure, this decline of Irish as the spoken language by the prisoners HMP Maze was a short-lived result of the changing circumstances after the prison protests.

The P-IRA staff in the prison tried to counter this decline by setting up a ‘cultural/educational officer’, and the standardisation of Irish-language classes by introducing a curriculum for all blocks. Consequently, in 1983, 86 prisoners did an O level degree and 90% passed with an A grade in the exam (*ibidem*, 152-153). These changes in the politics of the prisoners further improved the Irish language in the H-Blocks, and professional teachers and learning material became available in the mid-1980s. After the Provisional IRA ceasefire in 1994, the prison authorities finally stopped all remaining restrictions regarding Irish-language material in HMP Maze. A Gaeltacht wing was re-established and by the time of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, there were even two Gaeltachtwings. The first Gaeltacht wing was created by 25 Republican prisoners in H6 (C wing) on 29 May 1995 and was relocated to H5 (D wing) in March 1996. The second Gaeltacht wing was established by another 25 prisoners in H8 during the year 1997 (MacGiollaChríost 2012, 40).

While the prisoners continued their Irish classes, the Republican Movement outside the prison likewise started to place more emphasis on the Irish lan-

guage. In 1982, Sinn Féin formed its Cultural Department, *Roinn an Chultúir*, and published the booklet *The Role of the Language in Ireland's Cultural Revival* in 1986. The main tasks of this newly established Cultural Department were to hold Irish-language classes and organise campaigns such as installing bilingual street signs in Nationalist areas in the North of Ireland. In 1984, the Irish-language newspaper *Lá* was established, Sinn Féin founded the political Irish-language magazine *Saoirse*, and ex-prisoners ran an Irish-language primary school in the West Belfast neighbourhood Ballymurphy. A survey from that time shows that the numbers of students in Irish-language schools increased rapidly after the 1981 hunger strikes and that three-quarters of the children in these schools came from Republican families. In 1985, researchers interviewed pupils from sixty Irish classes in Belfast; 86% of them said their motivation to learn Irish was an aspiration to “strengthen my Irish identity”, and 70% said their enthusiasm was ignited by “Bobby Sands and the H-Block protests” (MacIonnrachtaigh 2013, 165).

In essence, the former Republican prisoners in Long Kesh played an essential role in promoting and teaching the language. McCoy writes that the Irish-language movement had undergone “a rapid transformation from counter-culture to officialdom” during the so-called peace process in the late 1980s and 1990s (*ibidem*, 211). However, the Irish language did not just undergo this formation during but also because of the peace process. Former prisoner Jim McCann goes even further and puts the impact factor of the former Republican prisoners within their community much higher than the impact factor of Irish-language activists during that period when he claims that:

This might be a bit arrogant to those people who had previously been working on the language, but I know I did more in ten years than ten of them could have done in all their lives, I know this. I didn't sit in a club somewhere in Belfast waiting for people to come to the door wanting to learn the language. We went out and made Irish-language classes available to people and started them all over Belfast. If it hadn't been for Long Kesh it would not have happened. (*Ibidem*, 200)

While Irish-language activists might disagree with these critical comments on their own work and impact, McCann is correct when he stressed the availability of hundreds to thousands of fluent Irish speakers on the streets of the North of Ireland willing to promote the Irish language following the release of most of the political prisoners.

3.2 Republican Prisoners & Irish in the Republic of Ireland

Portlaoise Prison, originally named Maryborough Prison, is the only high-security prison holding Republican prisoners in the southern Republic of Ireland. Following the outbreak of the “Troubles” in the North, the high-security Portlaoise Prison, Co Laois, turned into a crucial theatre for

the struggle of the Republican Movement. Although situated in the Republic of Ireland, its E-Wing housed hundreds of Republican convicts. However, the literature on political imprisonment in Ireland mainly focuses on developments in internment camps and high-security under British jurisdiction, the North of Ireland¹³.

In Portlaoise Prison, the Republican prisoners enjoyed de-facto political status since the transfer of the prisoners in autumn 1973. This is an important aspect that set the situation in the Republic apart from the situation in the internment camps and prisons under British jurisdiction in the North. However, in 1977 a number of prisoners went on hunger strike demanding a public enquiry into conditions in Portlaoise Prison (Barrett 2005). This hunger strike was only the last one in a series of protests for better conditions in this prison. The Republican prisoners were at that time housed in the E-Wing of Portlaoise Prison; and it was also around that period, the Republican Movement put a higher emphasis on the politicization of their prisoners. The Republican prisoners had always maintained a military structure in the internment camps and prisons, since the vast majority of the prisoners were charged for IRA activity; thus the prisoners were organised in a rigid military structure led by the O/C of each prison landing. Additional, in the late 1970s, the Republican Movement decided to organise the prisoners additional as Cumainn (local branches) of its political wing, Sinn Féin. The formation of this Cumann was an integral part of the politicization and political self-awareness process of the Republican Movement. In August 1973, the first Sinn Féin Cumann was organised in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin. During an attempt to politicize the IRA prisoners, this Cumann was later reorganised at a meeting of Republicans in Portlaoise Prison in 1978¹⁴.

A central part of the work of the Cumann was the teaching and promoting of the Irish language in Portlaoise Prison. One prisoner remembers that Irish classes were given by prisoners immediately after the transfer from Mountjoy to Portlaoise Prison¹⁵. The extent of these early classes is vague; another inmate, however, reports that the situation improved following the hunger strikes in 1977 and the prisoners were from then on allowed to organise their own classes and lectures¹⁶. Nonetheless, while inmates taught each other Irish in the early days, it was only in 1979 that a bigger attempt was made to promote the Irish language among the prisoners. This new de-

¹³ For literature on Portlaoise Prison during the 20th century see *inter alia*: Tomlinson 1995, 194-227; McConville 2014; Kilcommins, *et al.* 2004; Rogan 2011; O'Sullivan, O'Donnell 2012.

¹⁴ Author Unknown, Sinn Féin. In Mountjoy + Portlaoise, private possession.

¹⁵ Interview with Dan Hoban, Newport, Co Mayo, 15 April 2015.

¹⁶ Interview with Vivion Hayden, Dublin, Co Dublin, 14 April 2015.

velopment was largely initiated by the arrival of a new prisoner, Cyril McCurtain from Limerick¹⁷. McCurtain was a fluent Irish speaker, a member of Sinn Féin, and immediately joined the Cumann in Portlaoise Prison. In this position, he was elected to the officer board of the *Cumann* and started to form a Gaeltacht area within the prison¹⁸. This Gaeltacht area was situated on the top floor of the landing and everyone there was encouraged to use as much Irish as he could. Prisoners who spoke Irish or those who wanted to learn Irish could ask the prison authorities for transfer to one of these cells¹⁹. While it is known, that this Gaeltacht was set up in 1979 or early 1980 and performed a vital role in the political and social life of the prison in the first half of the 1980s, it is unclear when it ceased to exist. Matt Treacy who was imprisoned in Portlaoise Prison from May 1990 on said that at that time, the Gaeltacht landing had already ceased to exist²⁰.

The prisoners in this Gaeltacht area on the top landing of Portlaoise Prison organised a wide range of activities. Among those were Irish-language classes, the publication of the Irish-language prison newspaper *Maccalla* (Echo), and the organisation of Irish nights²¹. These Irish nights were introduced in 1984 and held twice a year. During these Irish nights, lectures were given in Irish, sometimes prisoners performed plays in Irish, and Irish songs were sung²². These nights were organised by the Gaeltacht Committee which also run the Gaeltacht. The committee consisted of three prisoners and was elected by all prisoners on the Gaeltacht landing. This is one of the differences between the Gaeltacht areas in HMP Maze and Portlaoise Prison. While the Gaeltacht in Portlaoise Prison was run by an elected committee, the Gaeltacht areas in HMP Maze were run by the Educational Officer of the IRA who was appointed by the IRA O/C of the prison. Another difference between Long Kesh/HMP Maze and Portlaoise Prison was the selection of the prisoners for the Gaeltacht areas. As mentioned above, the prisoners selected those on the two Gaeltacht huts in the Long Kesh internment camps themselves; instead the prisoners who wanted to join the Gaeltacht landing in Portlaoise Prison had to ask the prison authorities for transfer to this landing²³. Thus, while the prisoners on the Gaeltacht landing could voice their objection or approval of any prisoner asking for transfer through their OC, the final decision was made by the prison staff.

¹⁷ Author Unknown, Sinn Féin. In Mountjoy + Portlaoise, private possession.

¹⁸ Interview with Seosamh Ó Maileoin, Tyrellspass, Co Westmeath, 16 March 2015.

¹⁹ Interview with Matt Leen, Tralee, Co Kerry, 19 April 2015.

²⁰ Interview with Matt Treacy, Dublin, Co Dublin, 14 April 2015.

²¹ Interview with Seosamh Ó Maileoin, Tyrellspass, Co Westmeath, 16 March 2015.

²² Interview with Seosamh Ó Maileoin, Tyrellspass, Co Westmeath, 30 April 2015.

²³ Interview with Matt Leen, Tralee, Co Kerry, 19 April 2015.

Although the Gaeltacht area ceased to exist during the 1980s, the prisoners continued with the Irish classes following its closing. When John Crawley arrived in Portlaoise Prison in 1984, the Gaeltacht landing still existed. Crawley was original from the United States and had no Irish before imprisonment; nonetheless, he says that he learned Irish “very well in prison”. During his interview, he stressed the importance of the Gaeltacht landing in Portlaoise as a “national thing” because the Irish language is in the eyes of Crawley “a Republican and nationalist element”. He furthermore remembers that he did most of the reading and studying after the lock-up during the night²⁴. Treacy, who was in Portlaoise Prison from 1990 to 1995, tells that the prisoners were unlocked at 8h30 in the morning and the prisoners could decide if they go to the gym, the yard, or do classes such as Irish classes or learning for Open University degrees. He stresses that all prisoners did a lot of reading and writing. This was possible because every prisoner was allowed to order two or three books through the prison library per week²⁵. There were no restrictions regarding reading material, “any book on any subject” could be ordered, except hardbacks due to security reasons²⁶. SeánÓg Ó Mórdha remembers that classes were held twice a week for one hour each during the mid-1990s²⁷. So, although there was always a great emphasis on promoting the Irish language within Portlaoise Prison, former prisoner turned academic and political advisor Matt Treacy thinks that the “Irish classes [in Portlaoise Prison had] not the same meaning” as those in Long Kesh/HMP Maze, because in the “North [they were] more identifying”²⁸.

In other words, following the prison protests and the hunger strikes in Portlaoise Prison, the Irish classes became a central feature of the daily life of the prisoners which originated in the founding of the Gaeltacht landing in 1979-1980. For some years, this Gaeltacht landing was, along with the Sinn Féin Cumann, the cultural and educational pivotal point of the prison. However, following the split in the Republican Movement in 1986, the Gaeltacht landing ceased to exist. The reasons for its cessation are, however, unknown and not subject of the research question of this paper. Nonetheless, the prisoners continued with individual learning of the Irish language, self-organised, as well as official Irish-language classes throughout the 1990s. As a consequence, a significant number of Republican prisoners gained fluent Irish-language skills while imprisoned in Portlaoise Prison.

²⁴ Interview with John Crawley, Monaghan Town, Co Monaghan, 30 April 2015.

²⁵ Interview with Matt Treacy, Dublin, Co Dublin, 14 April 2015.

²⁶ Interview with Seosamh Ó Maileoin, Tyrellspass, Co Westmeath, 30 April 2015.

²⁷ Interview with SeánÓg Ó Mórdha, Dublin, Co Dublin, 17 April 2015.

²⁸ Interview with Matt Treacy, Dublin, Co Dublin, 14 April 2015.

4. *Ex-Prisoners & the Language Revival/Revitalisation: A Comparison*

The learning and speaking of the Irish language by the Republican prisoners was a form of strategic resistance both within the prison walls and outside the prison walls. While imprisoned, the Republican convicts had three ways to promote the Irish language. First, they did promote the Irish language through publications. Among these publications were not only Republican magazines and newspapers published outside the prisons such as *An Phoblacht* or *Saoirse*, but also magazines published by the prisoners themselves. These magazines were for example *Scairt Amach* (Shout Out), published from 1989 onwards; *Irish Bheag* (Little Magazine), published from 1987 onwards; and *An Glór Gafa* (The Captive Voice), published from 1988 onwards (MacGiollaChríst 2012, 38). Second, through visits, newspapers reports, and their own publications, Republican prisoners made their supporters aware of the importance of the Irish language for their struggle. Third, as a result of this, they generated an Irish-language friendly environment. Following their release, they continued with promoting the Irish language, once again on three fronts. First, ex-prisoners became active in grass-roots initiatives. Second, they started teaching Irish-language classes; this partly resulted out of idealism and partly out of the necessity to earn an income. Third, ex-prisoners supportive of Provisional Sinn Féin were able to lobby for language through Republican politicians supportive of the peace process and thus were able to generate additional funding for the Irish language in the North of Ireland. Although this may be true, the revival of the Irish language in the North is less linked to the financial funding of the language as agreed in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, than to the Peace Process in the North of Ireland during the 1990s, namely the release of the Irish-speaking political prisoners and their activism in cultural grass-roots campaigns. Likewise I disagree with MacGiollaChríst who writes that “Irish, as the peculiar language of Irish republican (ex-)prisoners, enters the public domain via murals” (2012, 145). I argue that the Irish language entered the public domain not via Republican murals but via cultural, community-orientated activism by former Republican prisoners.

While there are few substantial differences in the development of the Irish language in Long Kesh/HMP Maze and Portlaoise Prison, the situation of the ex-prisoners in the revival respectively revitalisation of the Irish language in the North and the Republic of Ireland stands in stark contrast to each other for four reasons. First, the position of the former political prisoners in their community differs between the North and the Republic of Ireland. The former prisoners have a stronger position and perform leading roles within their community due to the colonial context in the North, whereas the post-colonial situation in the Republic of Ireland does not allow them to perform similar roles. Second, there are fewer grass-roots initiatives

to promote the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland than in the North. Thus, there are fewer opportunities of the former prisoners to become active in these initiatives. Third, the Irish language is an official language in the Republic of Ireland whereas in the North, the political party Sinn Féin can lobby for language support and sell any funding for the Irish language and culture as a 'victory' against the Unionist community. Fourth, the Republican prisoners in the Republic of Ireland were considered less relevant for the strategy of the Republican Movement by the Republican leadership itself than the Republican prisoners in the North of Ireland. Hence, while the Southern Republican prisoners were able to debate and express their opinion in public, Matt Treacy, who was imprisoned in Portlaoise Prison during the late 1980s and early 1990s, interprets the role of the Southern prisoners in the following way:

No one took us serious at that time. We were not important for the Movement. We were not the prisoners in the North, in Long Kesh or so, we were in the South, in Portlaoise and no one in the Movement cared what we were saying. But they gave us the feeling that we were important and send people into jail and they made us feel important and we send statements out and there were delegates to the Ard-Fheis and we thought we have an input but in fact, you know, they were just using us for their own gains, you know. I think that was very dishonest. (2015)²⁹

In other words, it is unsurprising that the Republican prisoners had a less powerful stance within their own communities in the Republic of Ireland compared to their fellow ex-prisoners in the North, if one considers that the Republican Movement itself gave the Southern prisoners the feeling that they were less important for the Republican struggle than the Northern prisoners.

5. Conclusions

To conclude, while similarities in the learning of the Irish language in the prisons in the North and the Republic of Ireland exist, at the same time significant differences occur in the role of former Republican prisoners in the Irish-language movement in the two Irish states. In this article, the developments within the cages of Long Kesh respectively the H-Blocks in the North of Ireland and Portlaoise Prison in the Republic of Ireland we used as examples. It has been outlined that the learning of the Irish language was among the first self-organised education classes in both prisons. Furthermore, both prisons developed Gaeltacht areas for those prisoners keen to use the Irish language as the main spoken language on the landings. In a similar develop-

²⁹ Interview with Matt Treacy, Dublin, Co Dublin, 14 April 2015.

ment, inmates from both prisons published some of their writings in Irish in political periodicals in order to promote the language among their supporters.

The use of the Irish language by the prisoners is characterised as a form of resistance within a colonial respectively post-colonial framework in order to maintain the cultural and national identity. Indeed, the using and learning of the Irish language was from the very beginning a cause of tensions between the Republican prisoners and the prison authorities whenever the latter refused adequate teaching material to the prisoners. Contrary to the similarities during imprisonment, the second form of resistance, the use of the Irish language as the main spoken language for 'secret' communication because the prison warders were unable to follow and understand it, in other words, to use Irish as a 'secret language', was not suitable in Portlaoise Prison; the reason for this is obvious since Irish is the national language in the Republic of Ireland. Thus, even though English is the first language of the vast majority of the people, all citizens have at least basic knowledge of the Irish language. Contrary, the British warders in the North of Ireland had no prior knowledge of the Irish language. Hence, the use of the Irish language in the H-Blocks established, according to MacGiollaChríost, a situation in which the prisoners could break out of their isolation and instead isolate the prison warders themselves (2012, 87).

On the one hand the situation within the prisons shows wide similarities, whereas on the other hand the role of the ex-prisoners in developing the Irish language is different in both Irish states. While the former prisoners ignited a language revival due to their activism in the community in the North of Ireland, the Republic of Ireland faces a further decline of the Irish language in recent decades. Under those circumstances, the former Republican prisoners were not able to develop the language in the Republic of Ireland as their comrades did in the North. The reason for this uneven development is to be found in the different role the prisoners hold in their communities. In other words, while the former prisoners are treated as heroes of their community within the nationalist, working-class areas of cities like Belfast, Derry, or Lurgan, these strong Republican communities do not exist in the Republic of Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland, Republican publications have a lower circulation, the support for militant Republicanism is smaller and therefore former political prisoners are more likely doomed to experience isolation following their release. Rather than being seen as heroes, Republican ex-prisoners in the Republic of Ireland have to struggle to find a way back into an ordinary life in an often hostile environment.

In essence, this case study on Republican prisoners provides additional understanding of three areas in the research of the wider field of political imprisonment in Ireland. First, it provides understanding of the daily-life of the prisoners in Portlaoise Prison, a previously largely neglected area in academic research. Second, it provides further understanding of the role politi-

cal prisoners can play in shaping developments outside prison walls. Finally, third, by offering a comparative approach, it helps understanding the different roles the former prisoners play in their communities in the North of Ireland on the one hand and in the Republic of Ireland on the other hand.

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“Who am I? Well, I’m Irish anyway, that’s something.” Iris Murdoch and Ireland

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Abstract:

Peter J. Conradi, a lifelong friend and biographer of Iris Murdoch, born in Dublin of Anglo-Irish parents, speaks of her attachment to/ detachment from her country of origin as follows: “Her Irish connection was reflected in a lifetime’s intellectual and emotional engagement [that] – before her illness – transformed her from a romantic Marxist idealist to a hard-line Unionist and defender of the politics of Ian Paisley” (Conradi 2001b). This article is an attempt to investigate possible connections between Murdoch’s social, ethnic, and religious background and her philosophy based on up-rooted and rootedness and self-distancing (terms borrowed from Simone Weil) personified in the characters of her numerous novels. Her only works set in Ireland, namely the short story “Something Special” (1958), and the novels *The Unicorn* (1963) and *The Red and the Green* (1965), will be analysed and compared with the novels of another woman-writer from the same background, Jennifer Johnston, the doyen of Irish writers, who has inherited and modified the same tradition in the light of contemporary Irish history.

Keywords: 1916 Easter Rising, Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, Ireland, Iris Murdoch, Jennifer Johnston

In writing on Iris Murdoch and Ireland I was confronted with a number of crucial questions to which I try to give an answer, since in her works the writer seems to distance herself from her home country.

* * *

Is Iris Murdoch an Irish writer, simply because she was born in Dublin? “Murdoch always claimed she was Irish. But was she mythologizing herself?”

her biographer Peter J. Conradi asks perceptively and explains her complex relationship with the country where she was born in the following terms:

In 1998, [...] Iris Murdoch disconcerted friends by asking, “Who am I?”, a question she herself answered almost at once, “Well I’m Irish anyway, that’s something.” As the mind of the brilliant novelist and philosopher faded, she still clung to a deep sense of identification with Ireland. Her Irish connection was reflected in a lifetime of intellectual and emotional engagement that – before her illness – transformed her from a romantic, Marxist nationalist into a hard line Unionist and defender of the politics of Ian Paisley. Born in Dublin to a father from Belfast, she was always proud of the fact that she carried so many different Irish traditions within her [...]. She set three of her early fictional works in Ireland: the short story *Something Special* (1958) and the novels *The Unicorn* (1963) and *The Red and the Green* (1965) [...]. (2001b)

Her sense of Irishness smacked strongly of myth-making – she cherished her distant links with the Anglo-Irish landed gentry, though her immediate family were of far humbler stock. But her identification was due to more than romanticism. I read somewhere that she preferred to be called an “Irish” rather than a “British” novelist, a specification many would consider a trivial detail which is, in itself, characteristically Irish. We recall of the late Seamus Heaney’s *An Open Letter* dated 1983 where he objected to being included in the Penguin anthology of *Contemporary British Verse* with the lines:

Names were not for negotiations.
Right names were the first foundation
For telling truth [...]

And concluded:

But British, no, the name’s not right.

But of course Heaney came from the “other tribe” (1985 [1983], 29).

Murdoch’s willingness to mythologize her own origins, and lament a long-lost demesne, marks her out as a kinswoman of Yeats’s. In 1978 Murdoch stated:

My Irishness is Anglo-Irishness in a very strict sense... People sometimes say to me rudely, ‘Oh! You’re not Irish at all!’ But of course I’m Irish. I’m profoundly Irish and I’ve been conscious of this all my life, and in a mode of being Irish which has produced a lot of very distinguished thinkers and writers. (Chevalier 2003, 95)

She was referring to writers such as Swift, Sterne, Sheridan and philosophers such as Berkeley.

Who were the Anglo-Irish in the narrowest sense of the word? Although the definition should in theory refer to all classes of people of British origin

born and living in Ireland, it is conventionally used to refer to those who lived in Big Houses of the XVIII, XIX and early XX centuries at the centre of large estates. The particular Anglo-Irish class referred to here and of which Murdoch claimed membership, were heirs to the English colonizers of the Elizabethan re-conquest of Ireland dating back to the XVI century, necessarily consolidated by the Jacobean, Cromwellian and Williamite settlements of the XVII and XVIII centuries. After their arrival in Ireland the Anglo-Irish nearly always regarded themselves not as settlers, but as an outpost in a hostile land. Evocative of racial memory is Brendan Behan's curt definition of the Anglo-Irish gentleman: "a Protestant with a horse". Behan not only scorns the "Anglo-Irish Horse-Protestants"; he goes on to maintain that there is, in fact, no such thing as the Anglo-Irish – that the Anglo-Irish concept is a "middle-class myth" (1988 [1958], 15). As a matter of fact both Yeats and Murdoch belonged to the Protestant urban middle-class and shared the same yearning for the aristocratic politeness and stylish ease they hadn't inherited from their families. It comes as no surprise, then, that when the so-called Northern Irish Troubles broke out in 1968, leading, over a period of thirty years, until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, to 3000 deaths, with casualties on both sides, as Conradi briskly reported: "No occasion is recorded on which she allowed that the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland had [...] distinct and legitimate grievances" (Conradi 2001b). In a letter of 1945 Murdoch wrote: "There's Ireland, There's England – but I have a fatherland, it would be something like the literature of England perhaps". She described Ireland as an "island of spells, provincial pigsty. 'Little brittle magic nation dim of mind', Joyce, of course" (2015, 43). It is no wonder therefore that, to my knowledge, very few scholars in Ireland would acknowledge Iris Murdoch as an 'Irish' writer. Robert Hogan, for instance, in his *Dictionary of Irish Literature* of 1979 simply excluded her, though in 1975 she had already been included in the American Bucknell UP *Irish Writers Series* (Gerstenberger 1975). In the 1980s and 1990s things changed slightly, probably due to her increasing fame and success. The first critic to break the spell was Norman Jeffares who included her in his *Anglo-Irish Literature* in 1982, but criticized the two novels I'm interested in, as follows:

The Unicorn and *The Red and the Green* are set in Ireland, the former a messily melodramatic novel which fails to convey symbolic meaning, but the latter a more serious attempt to grapple with the divided loyalties created by the 1916 Rising. A slackerly written novel, it fails to rise to the potential of its materials. (1982, 248)

Murdoch's novels and philosophical essays were later included in Irish publications such as dictionaries and anthologies. Last but not least her philosophical work is included in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing, vol. IV: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* (Bourke et al., 2002) vis à vis Eva Gore-Booth's theological work.

* * *

Shouldn't a proof of her Irishness lie in the *influence* Irish writers and Irish literary traditions had on her work?

Undoubtedly both Yeats and Joyce loom behind Murdoch's works. Margaret E. Fogarty speaks of an "amalgam of Yeatsian and Joycean motifs" (1987) but she fails to mention and focus on Joyce's mythic method which T.S. Eliot defined in the famous essay on "Ulysses, Order and Myth". Myth is the story known to everybody but "fabled by the daughters of Memory", according to Joyce (1986 [1923], 20). Murdoch's use of classical or local myths, mediaeval or Christian icons to juxtapose to contemporary life, and her tendency to avail of allegory owe something to this mythic method.

Although, she is devoid, perhaps, of the same skill, imagination and poetic drive of her two countrymen, she remains, nonetheless, in their wake, shunning Modernism, however, and thriving within the safe furrow of traditional fiction: "The short story *Something special* recalls Joyce in its detailed, detached naturalism, but its lyrical unexpectedness is pure Murdoch" (Conradi 2001a, 446).

As early as 1975 Donna Gerstenberger, the first critic to tackle the issue of Murdoch's Irishness, wrote: "[...] the real question would seem to be about the writer's own consciousness of national materials and (more or less) conscious attitudes toward them" (1975, 70). The word "conscious" is important here. Umberto Eco provides us with an interesting interpretation of the idea of literary influence. Interviewed about the numerous sources used in his novel *The Name of the Rose*, he affirmed that "Thus I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told" (2014 [1980], 549). The process of intertextuality is at the root of every work of art, music, and literature. Artists do not live in an egotistical void. Moreover, in his *Lector in Fabula* Umberto Eco (1979) demonstrates that what triggers a story off is not the voice that tells it, but the ear that listens and interprets it: the reader's active role in decoding the text. A cunning use of intertextuality together with the awareness of the idiosyncrasies of her English audience will help us to understand Murdoch's "conscious attitude to Irish materials". We have, in fact, a "conscious", overt use of cliché and stereotypes, like playing a well-known refrain to win over an audience.

The reader quickly notices, for example, the persistence of Irish "types" in Murdoch's novels – lower-class personae characterized by chameleon-like attitudes, while, on the other hand middle-class or Anglo-Irish characters are endowed with a capacity for introspective sensitivity. The 'Irish' character usually belongs to the servant class in the employ of genteel middle-class English society. In some cases the servant class in Murdoch's novels emerge as interesting and complex characters, like Marian in *The Unicorn* (1963), but her lower-class Irish characters are, for the most part, delightful and

deceptively simple. In other words, their Irishness operates as a kind of fictional, narrative shorthand, a way of defining certain expectations. That the idea of Irishness in the English world of Murdoch's novels carries with it a class stigma is reinforced by the long succession of stereotyped Italian servant girls in the novel *The Italian Girl* (1964), who are indiscriminately and oddly called by the commonly used Irish name Maggie. I have the impression that her use of stereotypical characters and iconic social settings is meant to titillate the snobbishness and racial prejudices which she shared in part with her English reading public.

Murdoch does not only use stereotypes but also settings and themes which belong to the Irish literary tradition, namely the Big House and the 1916 Easter Rising. In *The Unicorn*, for instance, faithful descriptions of the landscape of County Clare and the nearby Cliffs of Moher and the Burren with its exotic flora and the centrality of the bog in the novel, while changing the names of Irish topography and obtrusively avoiding naming the country itself and forbidding her publisher Chatto to mention Ireland in the blurb or in any other form of publicity, are an artificial device to capture her reader's complicity. She entangles her reader in a kind of sophisticated puzzle of hinted-at references. Her well-read and cultivated readers have to recreate the atmosphere or the image in their own minds, as in the case of the famous mediaeval tapestry of the Lady and the Unicorn, which she acknowledges in interviews to be the inspiration for the book but is never mentioned. Joyce was a master in this expedient: he never mentions the Greek hero Ulysses except in the title of his novel, the rest is done by his *lector in fabula*.

Moreover in Anglo-Irish literature, as in Irish life, the houses of the Anglo-Irish take on a deeply symbolic value. In *The Unicorn* two Big Houses, the Gaze and The Riders, are set symmetrically and symbolically, on the two edges of the bog, like the two "Eggs" – West and East, in *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by the Irish-American Francis Scott-Fitzgerald.

There is a discernible difference between the houses of the Anglo-Irish and the small dwellings of the majority of the population. In Murdoch's novel there are no small dwellings, but class divisions are there to establish unbreakable psychological barriers between the two female protagonists – Hannah, the Anglo-Irish lady, and Marian, the naïve commoner.

Throughout Anglo-Irish literature, the vocabulary used in relation to the Anglo-Irish is rich in words such as "pressure", "isolation", "somnolence", "decay", "guilt" and "insecurity". The most emotive of these terms is "burden". The burden of responsibility of a Puritan élite endowed by God's grace reverberates Kipling's "the white man's burden" (Kipling 1899). This recurrent vocabulary and the traditional setting of the Big House Novel served Murdoch's aims in *The Unicorn* very well.

Hannah's ambiguous condition of being privileged and imprisoned in her Big House is at the centre of the novel. This bears witness to Murdoch's

deep knowledge of the Anglo-Irish literary tradition. No critic has noticed, to date, that the theme of the lady, segregated and imprisoned by a jealous, violent or sadistic husband had already appeared at the centre of *Castle Rackrent*, the short novel by Maria Edgeworth published in 1800, which is often regarded as the first Big House, and first ever Anglo-Irish novel. It is also widely regarded as the first novel to use the device of a narrator, the servant Thady, a prototype of the 'stage Irishman', who is both unreliable, and a naïf onlooker of, rather than a player in, the actions he chronicles. He resembles Marian in *The Unicorn*. In it the second Lady Rackrent we meet, a British Jew, exposes Thady's xenophobia and narrow-mindedness. It is she who is locked up by her husband, because she is not ready to part with her wealth by giving him her precious gold and diamond cross. In retaliation Sir Kit refuses to observe the norms of kosher and turns the key of the door to her room for good. Like Hannah, she manages to escape from the estate, but only after her husband's death. Another Lady Rackrent, Isobella, is not so fortunate. She does escape, but is gruesomely dragged to death in a carriage accident. Hannah dies in similar circumstances.

In *The Red and the Green* (1965) Murdoch uses another popular theme in Irish literature: the co-occurrence of the 1916 Easter Rising with the battles of the First World War in which British and Irish soldiers died wearing the same uniform. Set in the Dublin of her birth, Iris Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* is an evocative historical novel in which the action takes place during the passionate days leading up to the Easter Rising in 1916. A large cast of characters covers the political spectrum. At the centre of the novel is Millie Kinnaird. Loved by both Barney and Christopher Bellmann, Millie is also idolized by her two nephews, Andrew, Frances Bellmann's eternal fiancé and British soldier on the point of leaving for the Belgian front, and Pat Dumay, the utopic Catholic revolutionary. In a highly comic series of events, on the very eve of the Rising, each of these four men attempts to visit Millie in her boudoir at Rathblane, a short distance from the city. They make their way to her house through the rainy night by means of an assortment of broken bicycles and lame horses. An absurd scene grows ever more farcical as Millie's paramours stumble about in the dark avoiding or bumping into each other. Only the naive and innocent Andrew actually makes it to her bed but his performance leaves her so disappointed that she rushes off the next day to join the rebellion. This darkly comic passage is in sharp contrast with the bloody massacre at the Post Office and proves that Murdoch definitely belongs to the "Irish Comic Tradition", which, according to Vivian Mercier (1962), is an amalgam of macabre, grotesque, satire and parody.

Donna Gerstenberger in her pioneering study of 1975, convincingly plots the almost line by line echoes of Yeats's poem *Easter 1916* in Murdoch's *The Red and the Green* (1975, 77). Yeats's poem is, for Murdoch, what Homer's *Odyssey* is for Joyce, the myth of Western Culture, the story known to every-

body. Once again Murdoch expects her reader to know the poem. The usual stratagem of complicity between author and reader.

Unlike other commentators I feel that *The Red and the Green* is one of Murdoch's most personal and sincere novels, since, as she contemplates an Ireland whose destiny is alternative to that of Britain, she is very much at home, especially as much of the material relates, most presumably, to her own experience underscored by some serious historical research. Murdoch does not refrain from taking a political stance. At one point Barney says "England had destroyed Ireland slowly and casually, without malice, without mercy, practically without thought, like someone who treads upon an insect" (1965, 183).

Murdoch's technique is capable of revealing the innermost thoughts of several of her characters in a way that heightens the irony, both dramatic and tragic, that stems from her characters' faulty assumptions about each other. One is tempted to accuse Murdoch of cheating a little, in that she does not, except for in the final pages, enter the heads of the female characters at all, but prefers to leave them as mysteries for the reader to work out, while she is exposing the men all the time. Her male characters seem to be intimately foppish or immature, while the women appear independent-minded, endowed with sterner inner stuff – or seem, at least, prepared to grapple with the chauvinistic constraints of the era.

In *The Red and the Green* only the three women – Kathleen Dumay, Millicent Kinnaird and Frances Bellman survive.

What I am fascinated by here is the allegorical value Murdoch attributes to each of the three female characters. The novel, set in the weeks before the 1916 Rising, ends with an epilogue dating 1938. This is not irrelevant. This epilogue is a severe critique by Murdoch of the Ireland that emerged after the 1921 Partition, the ensuing Civil War and the new Constitution of Ireland which came into force on 29th December 1937, replacing that of the Irish Free State and calling the new state "Éire", or, in the English language, "Ireland". Kathleen – *nomen omen*, an echo of Yeats's play – is the Catholic wife of Frances' uncle Barnie Drumm, the defrocked seminarian, a total failure as a lover, scholar, man of the Church, and as a revolutionary. She remains in Ireland with her ridiculous, estranged husband who dies an unheroic death in 1928. She stands for the new independent Catholic Ireland, poor, shabby and insignificant, deprived of her two utopic sons, Pat killed in 1916 and Cathal in the Irish Civil War of 1922-1923.

Aunt Millicent Drumm, the impoverished Lady Kinnaird by marriage and owner of Rathblane, a run-down Big House, is the 'vamp' of the piece, i.e. she is the 'vampire' that attracts and ridicules the male heroes of the novel. We are tempted to think that Millie is a satirical Murdochian version of Countess Constance Markievicz, an offspring of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy, or even of Murdoch's friend Elizabeth Bowen, who until the 1950's, went on pretending to keep the values and rites of her class alive, "besieged" in her ancestral

Bowen's Court, as it fell to pieces. In 1938 Millie is in "a dear little room in Dargle Road. [...] There's a lot of other old crocks in the house and they all call her 'my lady'" (Murdoch 1965, 272) a title that thrills and flatters her.

Finally Frances is the pragmatic, young Irish Protestant woman, who leaves Dublin for London and an English husband. She represents the Anglo-Irish middle-class, born in Ireland, with divided loyalties. Unlike her father who espouses and kindles the romantic ideals of the Irish fight for independence, dying un-heroically during the Rising, she is soon disappointed by what was to become the Irish Free State and De Valera's Republic, marred by bigotry and pro-German nationalism, and leaves Ireland. In her voluntary English exile, like many others from her social background, she cannot but praise the heroes of 1916, most of whom came from the Anglo-Irish intelligentsia, although they also numbered some "mere Irish" and utopists like the Catholic Pat Dumay she had loved in her Dublin days. Frances's choice stands for the diaspora of some of Ireland's greatest Protestant writers such as Sean O'Casey, Jennifer Johnston and William Trevor. In their works they have all borne witness to the complexities of Irish society, the "muddle" (a favourite word of Murdoch's) of inter-married and fighting tribes.

The fact that only three women survive at the end of the novel, all of them victims of men's wars and feuds, reveals the red thread running through the plot, i.e. that, at the heart of centrality of gender in historical understanding, we find a pervasive use of female figures to defend the essence of Irish identity and the national project, the price being attending to the agenda of living Irish women.

A couple of quotations from the novel may help to corroborate the validity of my argument. On turning down Andrew, Frances says: "being a woman is like being Irish... everyone says you are important and nice, but you take second place all the time" (*ibidem*, 28-29) and when addressing her uncle Barney, whose romantic nationalism she does not share, she asks "and what will Home Rule do for that woman begging in the street?" (101).

The novel anticipates themes that will be at the centre of Irish Literature in the following decades. I'm thinking of the poetry of women writers such as Eavan Boland (namely the poem "Mise Eire"; Boland 1987, 10-11)¹ and

¹ *Mise Eire*: "I won't go back to it – // My nation displaced Into old dactyls, / Oaths made / By the animal tallows / Of the candle – // Land of the Gulf Stream, / The small farm, / The scalded memory, / The songs / That bandage up the history, / The words / That make a rhythm of the crime // Where time is time past. / A palsy of regrets. / No, I won't go back. / My roots are brutal: // I am the woman – / A sloven's mix / Of silks at the wrists, / A sort of dove-strut / In the precincts of the garrison – // Who practises / The quick frictions, / The rictus of delight / And gets cambric for it, / Rice-coloured silks. // I am the woman / In the gansy-coat / On board the 'Mary Belle', / In the huddling cold, // Holding her half-dead baby to her / As the winds shift / And North over the dirty / Waters of the wharf //

many others. The book is thus a compelling, altogether great and intriguing addition to the canon of Irish literature of the 1960s.

* * *

To what extent have writers of more recent generations been aware of the peculiar use of Irish materials Murdoch made in the mid 1960s? This would help us to include her in the history of contemporary Irish literature. I am convinced that – in the case of writers of the 1970s and 1980s – it was not a conscious influence, but reveals how anticipatory Murdoch’s Irish novels were.

In *The Red and the Green* Murdoch gave voice to the clash between the two nations but in the fundamental last chapter of the novel set in 1938 – centred on the act of transmitting historical facts to the new generations, Frances’ tall son, since “each country tells a selective story creditable to itself” (276) – by echoing Yeats’s “terrible beauty” she ironically criticizes the petty offspring of that “beauty” (Yeats 1950 [1921], 201-205). It may be interesting, however, to quote from a letter from Jennifer Johnston who answered my questions on Murdoch and Bowen thus:

I have never greatly enjoyed reading Iris Murdoch. I never met her, but a great friend of mine, now dead, called Michael Campbell, also a writer, used to see her from time to time. We all had cottages near Oxford. He didn’t like her books much, but liked her. I don’t think that she came very often to Ireland. *I could never put her in the category of Irish writer*: I don’t think that anyone cared very much in Ireland about what her feelings were about this country and her relationship to it. Elizabeth Bowen was a very different kettle of fish. I didn’t know she was a friend of Iris Murdoch’s. I have met her several times in England, She lived close to Ian’s [Johnston’s second husband] uncle Tom in Kent. Her books I do admire, her style is wonderful and she writes with such grace and truth. I always felt that Iris Murdoch struggled not to be Irish and Elizabeth Bowen didn’t give a damn what she was. But this is probably sloppy reading on my part. (Italics mine)

Yet I find echoes of Murdoch’s treatment of Irish history in the works of Jennifer Johnston. Johnston, born in Dublin, to the Irish actor/director Shelah Richards and the playwright Denis Johnston, educated at Trinity College Dublin, in fact, lived in London with her English husband and, after her divorce, returned to live in an elegant country house on the outskirts of Derry with her second husband just on the eve of Bloody Sunday in 1972. She was in her 40s, when she wrote her first novel *The Captains and the Kings*

mingling the immigrant / guttural with the vowels / of homesickness who neither / knows nor cares that // a new language / is a kind of scar / and heals after a while / into a passable irritation / of what went before”.

(1972). Her novels are often set in the vanished world of the Protestant Ascendancy, and cling to a largely extinct and deeply unpopular aspect of Irish history. Although larger issues like war, culture clash, the Northern Irish troubles, may not take centre stage, they are always in the background, providing, perhaps, a more realistic picture of the way history intrudes subtly upon most people's lives.

The existence of two voices in the English-language literature produced in Ireland is an established fact. But the difference is not merely a matter of class. These two groups of the Irish population were separated not by wealth and social position, but on the whole, and more significantly, by radically diverging feelings of national allegiance. What happened to the Big House novel after the foundation of the Irish Free State? On the whole we can say that the literary voice of the Anglo-Irish proper becomes faint from the Thirties on. Iris Murdoch's two Irish novels were published just on the eve of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Easter 1916 and at the onset of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1968-69 and anticipated the rebirth in the 1970's and 1980's of the Big House novels set at the time of the 1916 Rising and the First World War. It is against a background of this kind that the new flourishing of contemporary Irish fiction may be viewed. The publication, within two to three years, of Jennifer Johnston's *The Captains and the Kings*, *The Gates* (1973) and *How Many Miles to Babylon* (1974), each with a Big House setting and the First World War looming in the background, seen in conjunction with Aidan Higgins's *Langrishe, Go Down* (1966), J.G. Farrell's *Troubles* (1970) and John Banville's *Birchwood* (1973), justified talk of a revival of the *genre*. In 1980 John Cronin spoke of a "late blossoming of an amazing kind" (1980, 17-18) the novels just mentioned having been joined in the meantime by Jennifer Johnston's *The Old Jest* (1979) and William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune* (1983). And there has also been the welcome reappearance of Molly Keane with *Good Behaviour* (1981) and *Time after Time* (1983) and the reprinting of Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* (1982). It is noteworthy that, with the exception of Higgins and Banville, the Irish novelists who use the Big House setting themselves, come from an Anglo-Irish background.

Does this new Anglo-Irish voice differ from that heard in the XIXth century and in the early decades of the XXth century? Obviously, yes.

In 1975 Brian Donnelly pointed out that in her novels "Miss Johnston was at some pains to weight the scales of relative merit – or fault – equally between the representatives of the two nations" (1975, 138-139). Alexander Moore, the main character in *How Many Miles to Babylon*, has Home Rule sympathies; "a Protestant with a horse" who strikes up a friendship with a stable-boy, who declares himself a Republican towards the end of the novel. They are both enlisted in the English army fighting in Flanders where the officer will be unjustly executed for treason. I think that echoes of Murdoch's Irish novel *The Red and the Green* are to be heard distinctly here.

In 1972, in an article on “The Problems of Being Irish”, Denis Donoghue characterized Irish literature as “a story of fracture: the divergence of one Irishman from another” (292). To my own knowledge, the Troubles in Northern Ireland have re-activated awareness of “the divergence of one Irishman from another” in the South too, and the works of Banville and Higgins are a proof of it. The choice of the Big House as a setting helps to highlight the divergence between the two traditions. Jennifer Johnston, known as ‘the quiet woman of Irish literature’ confesses that The First World War is a “passion” for her, one she initially used as a metaphor:

When I started writing prose, I had it very seriously in my mind that I wanted to write about the Troubles... yet I couldn't face taking them head-on. So I started to write about the First World War... how people try to keep their lives normal, their feet on the ground, even though terrible things are going on. (*The Irish World*, 24 October 2007)

A feeling that reminds us of Frances Bellman's angry cry in *The Red and the Green*: “Why do the men go and fight in that stupid ghastly war? Why don't they all say, no, no, no?” (Murdoch 1965, 105).

Nowadays on the occasion of the centenary of Easter 1916 an endless line of conferences on the event are organized all over the world, but there is a great difference from the 1966 50th anniversary celebrations held in the Republic guided by Sean Lemass towards modernity, a difference that can be hinted at by juxtaposing the titles of the two documentaries produced and broadcasted by RTE: *Insurrection* of 1916 gives a sense of national revenge on the oppressor, while *Rebellion* of 2016 reduces the event to “Storms in teacups. Who's heard of nineteen sixteen now?” (Murdoch 1965, 276) as Frances' husband says before leaving the house and his wife with the difficult task of telling their son the “true” story.

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Resisting Motherhood in Thomas Kilroy's *Talbot's Box*

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Abstract:

This paper discusses the heretofore unexamined role of women characters as performing agents in Thomas Kilroy's play, *Talbot's Box*. Employing a close analysis of textual patterns, it argues that the first Priest Figure and the Woman represent a collaborative effort by two women to highlight and to resist their confinement into roles of symbolized motherhood. In this aim, they are ultimately unsuccessful. Their relationship is fractured, and its object thwarted by the actions of the play's male characters. We see their suppression as shameful indictment of what it means to be a woman in the world Kilroy is showing us, and by drawing attention to their pain, we are better able to understand why Matt Talbot seeks a life of solitude.

Keywords: Matt Talbot, Motherhood, Thomas Kilroy, Women

The plays of Thomas Kilroy have been much remarked upon for their foregrounding techniques of artifice and theatricality, antithetical to the modes of naturalism. Constituent in these discussions has been a shared view among critics that Kilroy's (male) characters are performing subjects, and that what they are performing is an experience of fractious and fracturing identities¹. Far less critical attention has been given to the exploration of Kilroy's female characters. Anna McMullan's article, "Masculinity and Masquerade in Thomas Kilroy's 'Double Cross' and 'The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde'" (2002) offers a welcome corrective to this neglect by drawing attention to the normative, stabilizing roles that women play in Kilroy's work. The present essay highlights the broader interpretive potentialities of women as subjects in their own right, and posits a new character focus according to which our

¹ See in particular: Sampson 1991; Roche 1994; Dubost 2002, Grene 2002, Murray 2002.

understanding of *Talbot's Box*² might be revitalized. It argues that two of the play's characters, the first Priest Figure and the Woman, represent a collaborative effort by two women to highlight and to resist their confinement into roles of symbolized motherhood. In this aim, they are ultimately unsuccessful. Their relationship is fractured, and its object thwarted by the intervention of First Man and Second Man, and by the rebirth of Matt Talbot.

That the Priest Figure and the Woman are worthy subjects for our consideration is indicated by the central theme of Matt Talbot's story, and by the structure of Kilroy's play. The eponymous Talbot is inspired by and to some extent echoes the life of the Venerable Matt Talbot (1856-1925) of (scant) historical record³. The real Talbot was a Dublin labourer who, at the age of twenty-eight, gave up the alcohol to which he had become addicted, and lived the rest of his days in a state and spirit of ascetic devotion to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Thematically, the narratives of Kilroy's Talbot and the historical Talbot are organized around questions about what it means to be born and reborn. The Talbot of record has been used as a means to illustrate the teachings of the Catholic Church in Ireland⁴. The rebirth of Kilroy's Talbot is the result of an act of violence against women, committed in the first act of the play. The beginning of the second act in many ways mirrors the opening of the first. The relationship between the two permits us to understand that the violence we have witnessed is exemplary of a condition, rather than a single, isolated act. From this we are able to glean something of the fears and torments which afflict and influence the life and mind of the otherwise largely unknowable Matt Talbot.

Talbot's Box opens with darkness (Kilroy 1997 [1979], 9). Darkness is a condition that both fascinates and beguiles. It is a state of statelessness. It is a condition without form. It is an end as well as a beginning. It represents a moment of infinite opportunity and an unbroken expanse of infinite closure. It is blind without the need of sight. It is unity without being. To disrupt it is both an act of liberation and an act of violence against a condition of peace. It has the power both to conceal and to reveal. Darkness is the analogue of pure light. It is a paradox, qualified in the opening line of *Talbot's Box* by the raising of the lights, and by "*the strains of the hymn 'Faith of Our Fathers'*" (9). The intervention by the hymn draws our attention to the darkness as an element of the play. It helps us understand that the darkness is not simply a

² *Talbot's Box* was first performed at the Peacock Theatre in Dublin on October 13, 1977 as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival. For premier and text publication information, see Byrne 2002.

³ For an interesting, if perhaps not altogether disinterested account of the life of Matt Talbot, see Glynn 1942 [1928].

⁴ See Canavan 1932; Cassidy 1933; Duff 1940.

transition to a beginning, but rather it is vital to the act of beginning. Darkness *is* the beginning. The hymn establishes a relationship with darkness and calls for our active interpretation of what it means to be in a condition of darkness. For some of us, the darkness may seem to signify something that is to be striven against and overcome. The hymn, therefore, might be understood as a welcome intervention by Christ and the Church on behalf of humanity. For others, the darkness may seem to represent the evils and ignorance of the Church itself. What is significant is that the hymn will focus our attention on the negative aspects and potentialities of darkness. We feel that what we desire is light. Only in the light are the beneficent forces of the divine active and present. Only in the light may we find truth. That we hear "*strains of the hymn*" (9) gives us a sense of something that has a communal and a familial, as well as a religious essence. It seems to suggest that the play itself is a component of a condition, a longer tradition that both precedes our theatrical experience and anticipates its future condition, expressed ambiguously both as further dissolution, and as greater unity. We do not have darkness and then a hymn; we have darkness and strands of the hymn. They are inextricably connected, units of the same whole. They ebb together as the light rises, but they are elemental in everything we are about to witness. Their vitality is absorbed, elaborated, reflected, refracted, and challenged in every transition. We see it absorbed in the opening of the box and in the movements of the actors. The bodies of the actors manifest the pieces of the hymn. They testify to its fractured reality but they do not as yet portend any particular resolution.

The box itself sustains this impression of interconnectedness between constituent parts. By preventing the actors from entering and exiting the acting space, Matt Talbot's box posits a fundamental connectedness between the events and the characters in the drama, such that characters are present and are implicated in events, even where they are neither moving nor speaking. The opening of the box reveals "*the PRIEST FIGURE busily manipulating the pedestal into position to one side. On it, statuesque, is the WOMAN, in the costume and pose of a statue of the Virgin*" (9).

Kilroy stipulates that the character of the Priest Figure "should be played by an actress" (Production Details Page). The decision is significant, as is the title under which the actress assumes the vestments of the Church. "Figure" is a qualifier: the word disrupts our efforts to easily assimilate the actress' femininity with the ready ideas of Mother Church by calling into question the Priest Figure's degree of membership within the Church, her capacity for agency, and even her corporeality. Because she is neither "priest" nor "figure" we are called upon to interrogate the possibilities and complexities of her ambiguous title, and to probe its implications for the woman who bears it. For example, the fact that her femininity is incongruous with the priesthood might lead us to the belief that her gender is to be understood sym-

bologically, but the qualifier casts doubts as to her status and station, and so permits us to consider her, if we elect to do so, in the character of a person. Nor does the function of the garments she wears serve to relieve the ambiguity: that she is “*in soutane and biretta*” (9) at once supports her interpretation as priest and also suggests that they are being used to deliberately disguise or prevent her self-representation as a woman. But womanhood is a necessary condition for motherhood, and where its expression is thwarted there must be a corresponding diminution of symbolic effect. To acknowledge that she is a Priest Figure should, therefore, cause us to question not only her position with respect to the Church, but also her position relative to family structures of which she may be a part, and to her own body. The title given to her also demands that we should be conscious of our interpretive choice to symbolize or to particularize her, and it encourages us to evaluate the effects of that choice relative to our understanding of the play, episodically and as a whole.

Examining the play more closely, we see that the ambiguous condition of the word “figure” actually allows Kilroy to give us two distinct Priest Figures, each of whom suggests a condition of being which, while superficially satisfying, is in fact an illusion. The first – the one this essay is concerned with – is an individual woman, symbolized into the role of a mother figure. The second is an articulated institution (the Irish Catholic Church), particularized as an individual father: that is to say as an ‘actual’ priest.

That the Priest Figure is not one character, but two, is suggested both in the terms by which the first Priest Figure identifies herself, and by the terms by which each Priest Figure is identified by the other characters in the play.

The first Priest Figure assumes the office of Mother Church, and thrice identifies herself with its embodiment. She poses and replies to First Man: “Yes – yes! Mother Church!” (12). Later, she advises First Man to “Return to the bosom of Mother Church” (14); and in the third instance, she replies: “Yes? Over here!” (15), when Woman mentions “Mother Church” (15). This first Priest Figure is addressed by the other characters only as a feminine subject. First Man exclaims to her: “Oh, Mother, Mother, I gave it all up when I was fifteen” (14); moments later, he implores of her: “Oh, Mother, help me over the hump” (14). The Woman, referring to the chains worn by Talbot, remarks: “It is – miraculous. Or rather will lead to miracles when Mother Church –” (15). She is interrupted, then continues: “– when Mother Church will raise this simple man to the calendar of the saints” (15). The second Priest Figure is addressed by the title, “Father” (24, 31, 46-47, 53-56). It is this second Priest Figure who attempts to influence and manipulate Matt Talbot.

The point of demarcation between the two Priest Figures is the aftermath of a sexual congress of the characters, as a result of which Matt Talbot is reborn (13-17). The line denoting the change is given to the First Man, who signals the dissolution of the link between the Woman and the Priest Figure by remarking, “All is forgiven. Good day, sister” (16). The Woman is

not addressed by name or by title before this line. The Woman addresses the Priest Figure only twice thereafter (24-25). The identifier "Mother Church" is not used again. Having positioned the Woman, the Priest Figure addresses her opening remarks to the audience:

My dear brethren in Jesus Christ! We are gathered here this evening to give honour to Matt Talbot (1856-1925). A simple Dublin working man. For years he had been a drunkard. A sinner. But then, my dear brethren, then – at the age of twenty-eight he was touched by the Holy Spirit. He reformed. Gave up the drink – (9)

The repetition of the word "brethren" is significant. By contrast, the second Priest Figure never uses the word, referring instead to his congregation as "My dear people" (24). The term "brethren" serves to draw our attention to the woman underneath the vestments. She wears the symbols of Mother and Mother Church, but the ideas for which they stand are a lie: she knows that what is valued are the symbols themselves, not her. She uses the word only twice more, both times as a means of drawing our attention to her true femininity (10).

The Woman whom the Priest Figure arranges (9) also exists under conditions of imposition. Like the Priest Figure, the Woman stands representative, both of the Church, and of the state of motherhood: she is arranged "*in the costume and pose of a statue of the Virgin*" (9). In the manner of her display, we see these symbolic offices as impositions against her nature: the Woman is not, in fact, a statue, and we know that the actress will not be able to maintain the pose into which she has been positioned, indefinitely. That her position precedes our awareness of her indicates that her condition is not assumed only for our benefit and instruction: what pain she feels is a pain of being, not a pain which arises only from being watched. Nevertheless, Kilroy permits us to understand that under the grotesque imposition, there is some faint glow of her true character, some inner beauty of spirit, which, if permitted to develop independently of the pressures to which she has been subjected, might flourish into something beyond symbolism, something real and meaningful: she is not a statue, but she is "*statuesque*" (9), an elaboration of the priestly "figure". So too is the Woman an elaboration of the Priest Figure herself. The effect is that the Priest Figure touches upon an idea in such a way as to invite reaction, and the Woman develops, explicitly, the criticism implicit in the words of the Priest Figure. She is the step too far, the resisting voice which the Priest Figure encourages to act and challenge, but which she dares not claim as her own.

In the first instance, their combined force provides the transition from the Priest Figure's speech to the Woman's expression of her desire to get down from the pedestal by allowing us to associate the reborn Talbot with the Woman's own desire to be reanimated. Directly she has invited the Wom-

an's question, "How long do I have to stand like this?" (9), the Priest Figure sets up the Woman's next revelation by saying: "You're supposed to be the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary!" (9). We know it is a setup because the statement would be unnecessary otherwise. Both the Priest Figure and the Woman know who the latter is supposed to be. The heavy stress placed on the sacred title by the use of all three words invites us to understand both that the Woman is not actually a statue of the mother of God, and nor is she a virgin. The Woman's reply, "Don't I know it!" (9), is a wry negation of her artificial position in both senses. From it, we can also deduce the significance of the "*blooded white medical coats*" (9) worn by the two men: it is her blood. That the blood is not simply a means of denoting the characters' role is indicated by the men themselves: they are assistants, not morticians. Their function relative to Talbot is not penetrative, but superficial only: to present a form, a face, to "prepare the corpse for its descent and consequent ascent or further descent, as the case may be" (11).

The pattern between the two women is continued. Resuming her summation of Talbot's life, death, and discovery, the Priest Figure states: "And when they came to take him, they discovered that he had bound himself with penitential chains, chords –" (10). Immediately, the Woman draws our attention to her own corporeality, and permits us to draw a distinction between Talbot's suffering, which was chosen by him, and her suffering, which is imposed upon her: "I'm going to get a cramp if this goes on much longer!" (10), she exclaims. The Priest Figure continues: "Such penance – such prayer – like a strong light, you see, blazing, and then he passed from this valley of darkness into eternal light –" (10). Again, the Woman uses the Priest Figure's cue to draw attention to the more physical reality they share together: Talbot is still very much with them, and his body smells (10). The Priest Figure's histrionic exhortation to "Remain on your pedestal at all costs!" (10) invites a strong reaction from the Woman. The Woman exclaims, "I will not!" (10), and immediately jumps down.

But as well as animating the Woman, the Priest Figure's forceful exertions serve to animate the two men (11). Their animation disrupts the relationship between the Priest Figure and the Woman. Immediately, both become secondary figures. The Priest Figure is no longer able to anticipate and guide speech; instead, she finds herself reacting to the speech of First Man and Second Man. The shift occurs where the Priest Figure instructs the men to "Hurry up back there!" (11). The remark by the First Man, "I thought t'was to be a sorta trial" (11), implies an action – or inaction – which is similar to what we have come to expect from the Priest Figure's relationship with the Woman, but the further development of the pattern is thwarted by the intervention of the Second Man, who remarks: "'Twas my understanding 'twas to be an entertainment" (11). The back and forth of the dialogue is then, for a time dictated by the conversation of the two men. The significance of the

women is not yet at an end, however. The animation of the two men is only a sort of practice birth; it prefigures the rebirth of Matt Talbot. The diminution of the Priest Figure and the Woman is symbolic of the loss of real status experienced by a woman who has performed her birthing function. It is not complete, however, because it is a practiced act, a theatrical device. It lacks a subject upon whom a familial name has been bestowed.

The real apotheosis of their function is expressed as a thinly veiled sexual encounter between the Priest Figure and First Man (13-16), initiated by the entrance of the "attractive nursing sister, carrying chains –" (13). It is worth noting, however, that even where they are at the apex of their sexual expressiveness, the actions of the two women are still being dictated by the two men: without the interruptions by the Second Man, it would be entirely possible to read the encounter between the Priest Figure and the First Man as an act of confession, only; but with Second Man's contribution, it is nearly impossible to miss the sexual connotation. His question, "What's going on around here?" (14), demands that we query what we are seeing, and as if to help us to the right conclusion, he sings snatches of a love song: "A-roamin' in the gloamin', with my bonnie lass from –" (14). That he is "*Rooting about under the trolley*" (14) (an action he has not performed heretofore and never repeats) while the First Man is "*On his knees before PRIEST FIGURE*" (14) will be of further information to the more sexually experienced reader. The details are too specific to be read innocently; but for the Priest Figure, it means that the significance of the act is all on his side. The Woman, likewise, is not permitted to express herself on her own terms. Her statement draws our attention, both to her sexuality and to her chains. Here the chains are functioning not as Talbot's chains, but as her chains. She is initially repulsed by the Second Man (13) only to return again (14). Her second effort is successful, and after a short conversation with the Second Man, she "*throws herself upon the trolley and kisses the figure of TALBOT, passionately*" (15). The act is not a liberating one. The ridiculousness of its execution invites our laughter, which has the effect, not of validating her expression of desire, but of further suppressing it as an act of harmless whimsy. We have placed ourselves in the shoes of the First Man, and as with the Priest Figure, we are not, therefore, simply witnesses to her oppression; we are, ourselves, agents of her oppressed condition.

The First Man then exclaims: "I've made my peace! Hey, everyone! I'm at peace with the Lord my saviour! All is forgiven! Good day, sister" (15-16). What is being signalled here is his sexual and spiritual fulfilment, achieved by his intercourse with her real body; implicit in this is the assumption that the Priest Figure was simply a means of achieving that end. He does not ask what she got out of the experience. Nor does he permit either of the women to determine the effect of their intercourse; instead, the two men announce the birth of Matt Talbot (17). Thus, the bodies of the two women are appropriated and symbolized again into a state of motherhood, and what would

otherwise have been merely a sexual liaison is therefore defined as a procreative act, resulting in the rebirth of Matt Talbot. Thereafter, the women's identities are not bound to one another, but to Talbot.

Talbot is reborn in the light of truth, but neither the light nor the truth it reveals is uplifting. Instead, the light draws our attention to the fact that Talbot is born into a world where people are in pain:

With a sudden, startling energy, he rises on the trolley and flings both arms out in the shape of crucifixion. As he does so, blinding beams of light shoot through the walls of the box, pooling about him and leaving the rest of the stage in darkness. The other four figures cringe back, the women screaming. (17)

This pain is more than the pain of the delivery room: "A high-pitched wailing cry rises, scarcely human but representing human beings in great agony. As it reaches its crescendo it is of physical discomfort to the audience" (17). The unnatural, violent conditions of his birth are symptomatic of a world in which proper affection is wanting. Directly Talbot has been born, First Man callously remarks: "I find the ah – specimen interesting" (18).

Pain is to be elemental in the life of Matt Talbot. The opening of the second act gives us some knowledge of his early years:

Before the lights go up, the shaking voice of TALBOT can be heard in the darkness, singing snatches of hymns. The lights find him kneeling on his trolley. To one side, a makeshift tenement kitchen. At a table, drinking their tea, the WOMAN, FIRST MAN and SECOND MAN dressed, respectively, as mother, little boy and father of the Dublin slums. While TALBOT sings the FATHER makes rude gestures up at him while the MOTHER tries to restrain the FATHER. (37)

As with the opening of the first scene, darkness and hymns are linked: here, instead of "strains" (9) we have "snatches" (37). The second Priest Figure addresses the audience (37), but since there is no longer a relationship with the Woman to foreground his remarks, he is very quickly cut adrift from the action. As the scene develops, the Father's anger grows:

She tries to hold him and they struggle. Cries of "Get off me", "Don't", "Please don't". He begins to beat her, brutally, finally knocking her unconscious onto the floor while he collapses into a chair. FIRST MAN has run forward, petrified, a frightened little boy looking out into the world. (39)

We can see the parallel Kilroy has created between the two openings in order that we should understand that his women – his mothers – suffer in conditions in which life leaves them. The beating of Talbot's mother early in the second act (39) represents a perverse appropriation of the quest for voice, for liberation from present conditions, as expressed at the beginning

of the play. Here again, the Woman is objectified, but this time, it is in relation to the dishes: in the eyes of the father, both are items of domestic economy, which lack individuality and agency, even in the spheres to which they have been uniquely assigned. Neither their destructibility nor their humanity causes him to exercise greater care and consideration for them; rather, he sees their vulnerability as slights against himself: in his mind, they are not victims, but agents which have conspired to thwart his ambitions and deny him his proper dues (39). We see the effect of his rage join the blood on the white medical coats from the first act (9); we see their unity as a shameful indictment of what it means to be a woman in the world Kilroy is showing us.

And it is because his father was violent that we understand Talbot's desire for solitude: he is afraid that he might become his father. Talbot knows of his "bad temper" (50). He knows that he hates (46). He feels that "It takes another to bring out the worst in everyone" (22), and where he expresses anger or irritation, it is always directed against the Woman, or the Priest Figure (20, 22, 47-48, 51, 57). We know that in some place inside him, he already is his father. Matt Talbot lives only a life of isolation so that he may escape himself, but he believes in the possibility of a better world; he imagines a world in which the light reveals people living in peace, and where we hear honest work rather than hymns. Here, the actions of man have been turned to good account:

The old man worked at the bench, shavin' the yella timbers in the sunlight. An' the boy used help him. They worked together. They niver spoke. No need for words. Nuthin' was heard but the sound of timber. Then wan day – wan day, the boy left. He put down the tools outta his hands. Again, nare a word. The old man came to the door with him. They kissed wan another. Then the mother came like a shadda from the house 'n she kissed the boy too. Then the boy walked down the road in the dust 'n the hot sun. An' way in the far distance of the city he could hear them, the sound of the hammers 'n they batin' the timbers inta the shape o' the cross. (63)

But we do not live in that world; not yet. For Kilroy's Talbot, darkness was the only condition to which he could aspire as a being of the world: "Beggin' your pardon, Father, I think meself the darkness is Gawd" (47).

As the play ends, "*The great doors of the box are closed from without by the two MEN and the WOMAN who stand looking in through cracks in the walls from which bright light comes which illuminates their faces*" (63).

And we are left to wonder whether the light bodes well or ill for the future.

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Writings

Four poems

Barry Keane

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Barry Keane is, by choice, a truly migrant poet, born in Ireland, but living in Poland, renegotiating the categories of home and abroad, distance and nearness, familiarity and strangeness. A task he has been also undertaking in his exquisitely crafted poems, which look beyond the border to the country he left behind, but are equally responsive to the place he has become part of. This new place has been appropriated in the most accurate manner available to the poet: by acquiring its language and by studying the art of this language, Polish literature. His poems, which “carry him away and take him home”, are poetic palimpsests in which Irish cadences, memories, and landscapes have been overwritten with Polish images, names and narratives. From among the many traditions of Polish writing that Barry Keane has been attracted to, the closest to his poetic sensibility seems the poetry of the inter-war period, and primarily of the *Skamander* group. It is to one of the leading *Skamander* poets that he dedicates his poem “Lechoń’s Last Night”. What he shares with them are qualities not foreign to readers of Irish verse: the classical clarity of vision, precise, direct diction, the concreteness of imagery, the measured pace of lines. His new poems, as well as his much praised translations from Polish, have become the synergic foci of an informed intercultural dialogue, unique literary rapprochements, making Barry Keane a voice to be listened to. (*Jerzy Jarniewicz*)

“Running in Bielany forest”

Along the rail-track out of Greystones,
Wicklow town out far ahead
in the low-flying distance,
I would run in a sunlit world
on days when the sea was crystal-clad
beyond the spray,
and the grasslands seemed
content with their lot.
Today I’ll jog to the forest boundary,
and from there begin stiffly striding out,
pacing myself for an hour’s journey,

wandering inward upon a forest-trail
 hard-found,
 carrying me away and returning me home,
 far from the sea,
 the life-giving bathe, the salty air,
 but taking me home all the same,
 an energised man –
 ready for a river-cold shower,
 more at peace,
 my view on things a little clearer.

“A Wexford day before me”

Soon I will venture forth
 Along bemused country lanes
 In the pre-dawn stillness
 To find a remembered path
 Once covered with nettles,
 Leading to the pebbly banks
 Of the Owenavorrhagh River.
 There I will listen to morning sounds
 And be warmed by sunlight’s buoyancy
 Plunging into the flowing clearness
 Under Ballinatray bridge.

“Lechon’s last night”

In New York, on 8 June 1956, Polish poet Jan Lechoń jumped out the window of his 12th-floor hotel room.

I.

I would have done well if I’d stayed in my bed,
 And not asked the night to compare depths of sadness,
 To feel that pounding despair in my heart and head.
 But if my life of three score had been otherwise,
 I’d be lounging in a hammock on a whitewashed patio,
 My mind being zapped into life by a morning espresso –
 The faintest of breezes cooling the sun-filled air.
 It could be a Greek island. But I’d settle for Sicily.
 And the long quiet day would stretch before me,
 With fine food cooked by a woman in her fiftieth year.
 And of an evening she’d keep my glass a quarter full,
 With each sip bringing new avenues of recall
 For a clutch of yarns guaranteed to greatly impress.
 She could follow my talk or not? It hardly matters.

II.

How close the night sky seems through the window,
 Turned fluorescent by the lights of this city.
 The blackness is gone and the stars are elsewhere.
 I too should be elsewhere, in a garden silver-spun
 By the light of the moon, fixed by time. Not here.
 My elsewhere is awash with stars. And she. So mild.
 Allows her voice to unravel my tangled mind.
 She kisses my tear-filled eyes, pulls my bowed head
 To her breast. And there am I, sobbing like a child.

III.

How lonely can a man be? It hardly matters.
 But I am that man, alone in this room.
 With my face pressed tightly to the window.
 I look up and see a wrong-coloured sky.
 I look down and see the light-filled street.

IV.

The pills once did their work but brought me no peace,
 Only a sickening lunge into nausea and swirling emptiness,
 Buffeted by black shadows, screeching though my being.
 If I turned off the light and sat down on the dusty couch
 I could perhaps recall my awakening; seeing my mother
 Asleep on a chair beside my bed, lost to unsettled dreams.
 She had journeyed into deep chasms of silver and black
 And begged a compassionate angel to bring me back.

V.

What have I left to me now? Only thoughts that take me
 To the cobbled streets of my youth in Warsaw,
 Where I once saw an old man begging for pennies,
 Speaking in what seemed the tongues of madness:
 "Hanging over a precipice. I hold the crumbling ledge
 With the clasping fingertips of my teetering mind,
 As it cries silently: 'I can give you your return,
 Only do not let me fall. If I fall we are both lost.
 The price must be paid and that is the cost.
 You brave spiking bushes. The berry is found.
 The price must be paid and that is the cost.
 She prays that her children thrive. They follow God.
 The price must be paid and that is the cost.'"

 And he laughed, so as the whole street could hear.
 All the while he eyed me sternly. What a stare!
 I just walked on, feeling as if I'd been cut to the bone.
 But now I know why. I should have thrown him a coin.

“Inshore”

I.

In silence I sat by the edge of the sea as the clapping rhythm of waves washed the shoreline. An old man I saw, tired and bedraggled, coming so close that he covered me in shadow, and forthwith he poured out his heart:

“The day and the mind of dreams have seldom met
 Those signs seen by me, like comets of augury.
 With my head in my hands, I cry: What is left!?
 All we have left is a memory that grows distant,
 Swearing oaths at our own demise, suffocated
 By the oncoming silence. With me it became a ghost
 In the dark, a tell-tale presence of conflict that dims
 Daylight and fills what is left with sultry pride.
 With eternity to think on things, bolted fast behind
 Wooden doors, sending hatred in vapours through cracks
 In the floors and walls. Murder, mayhem, and loss,
 They all enter this domain. There will be no peace
 Until some embassy on friendly terms braves what is there
 And listens to the sorriest of tales a man could hear.
 Like a child who is lost in a crowd and screams hot tears,
 Like he, all will bewail my misfortune – left betwixt and between.”

With this he set me wandering – the mind ever more disturbed,
 Traipsing in search of night-fires and lost in visions,
 Toiling over a grey terrain, every road black and getting blacker.

Accursed with the seeing.

II.

In a wide-open place of fallen columns,
 Surrounded by a world weighing its vines,
 I spotted a friend’s resting place, wild-grown,
 And weary, thought to sit and reminisce.
 Sun-veils of rain brought gasps and laughter.
 My wet eyes, half-shut and brushed by drizzle,
 Espied rainfall’s passing but a moment after.
 I felt happy there, filled with warm thoughts
 Of the past and pleased with the sun’s heat.
 Then an outraged cry turned my heart stone:
 “Fetch yourself home! For is it not plain:
 The human arena is not your domain.”
 Like waking from a sleep of evil dreams,
 My parched lips looked skyward for comfort.
 But the words had anchored the pluming sky,

Drawing colour upwards, leaving only grey.
Then as man surely knows the sign of the cross,
I saw in this fall my own irreversible loss.

III.

I wandered a forest-trail that led towards soft mountains.
The night took on a heathery shade with the onset of darkness.
Winding at a pace through twisting paths, feeling my way through,
Worried about the worsening light, knocked about, unsure.
Fears proved right as a black beast trotted around the bend.
Head high and haughty, dog, wolf, or boar – I saw my end.
All three I feared the most, and all three it seemed to be.
“But how,” I cried, “could I be seeing this threesome thing I see?”
There was no third choice, but to fight or flee.

I set my course to the right and walked with care toward brush. It too swaggered slowly toward the brush. Wet wood lying on the forest floor was all I had to repel its charge and tusks. I must do, I knew, what I thought needs must, and run and run did I, pedalling hard and gliding over the terrain, making hard for the forest's edge – the leaf-filled world sliding by. It was there at the edge that I saw an old man, sitting on a bench and enjoying the quiet of the early day. The sun's breath was warm and the breeze was conducting a duet of dancing grass and working bees. “Old man,” I cried, “what is it that I've just seen? Big and black, bullish and bearish, rabid and wild, set to set itself upon me. As luck would have it, my legs kicked it off my heels in some hungry place back there.”

“Nonsense, child. Such creatures don't exist.
Still, you've twig-legged far before breakfast.
Your face tells tales of tall encounters,
Of aversion, loss and fear.
It's clear, too, your mind and soul are in a twist.
The question's what took you through there,
And how far you've left to traipse and wander?”

Take this path anyhow. It runs to the bottom of that solitary mountain in the distance that overlooks a fine stretch of coast. Yes, the one that struggles with the wind beating its crown. Yes, that's the one: meadow-fair and fragrant at its waist, and with careworn granite that climbs toward the sky as it meets the sun's rays, blistering through the crown of slow-moving grey cloud. Make your way up there and embrace the lie of the land.”

With clear purpose I departed and walked toward the mountain with its silver head.

IV.

On the summit I saw stretching along the coast:
Hillocks, cliff heads, sea surf, barb-twists joining post,

Land-locking wide bays that embraced the curious tide,
 White waves, deep sea, the trampling surf in sea-slide,
 Salty green estuaries greeting a river's sea-bound flow,
 Grass – blade green – and seals, rippling fish shoals.
 Smiling times were these, this pulsing land, thrusting sea,
 This high peak, lofty space, this low sky tumbling free.
 My eyes were wind-watery, my cheeks were stung and flush,
 Surrounds that unfurled my soul, or at least I thought as much.
 A cry gushed forth like a paused sob when the hurt bites deep,
 Frenzied with turns and thoughts of sleepless sleep.
 Head low I stepped into the step-jolting descent,
 Chasing twilight towards the gloom-black haunt.

V.

Dark then, my eyes saw the black as well as can sleep. “Is this not a vengeance upon me,” I cried, “to be more lost than ever in this open place, with the wind sweeping through me, and I upon this slope of the mountain.” The howling and crashing, as if the mountain was tumbling to its knees, left me with no life at all. I dropped and crawled blindly for something and fell under a standing boulder in my path. Crawling under its lip, I lay there waiting for sun up. And memory fashioned an inner fire, a fire to keep hopes bright and at bay a biting dark. And the crisis gave way to song:

“If life has, as it seems, flung me astray,
 Then it is a trick of mind and memory,
 Some wrong voice that keeps sense at bay.
 Perhaps I hunt life's hiding story,
 That leaps over the sun-streaming horizons,
 Forever falling, and with it pulling me
 By an ethereal cord tied to my waist,
 Hurling and pedalling over the world's edge –
 A retreating fall into things eyes fail to see.”

And I laughed and cried at my poor attempts at good-cheer, as the entire night reverberated with the clamour of space that pummelled the rock, standing up to it all and extending itself outwards to keep me from getting too wet. “Things could be worse,” said I, “and morning light can't be far away. So I'll pre-empt whatever song there'll be then, as the darkness is overpowered by grey and the blue breaks through: if that indeed be the course of events –

If I am a soul in pain,
 I'm surely not alone,
 Surely not the only one
 Wandering a darkened room.
 Lost in the emptiness
 Of this wandering home.
 I have celebrated with others
 And as well as the next.

And though often vexed,
 Contentment I've known,
 With it all sliding by,
 Thinking no more on
 The daily slings of misfortune,
 And quietly satisfied with
 The few occasions when I thought
 The world walked in my shadow
 And followed my step, and looked
 Upon my leaps, and shone upon
 My smiles. Indeed. Good days I have had."

Though morning broke reluctantly, soon all before my eyes sang a finer tune.

VI.

The return road, they say, is a pleasure
 Compared to the penance of an outward journey.
 All is familiar and the head is subtracting hard
 The time left from the time that it took.
 We are more decisive, some say.
 The road is better known, say others.
 Both true, I think, but in this instance...
 It is heart-strings that pull me home.
 Time passes when you're thinking
 And day-dreaming of the good times
 As you hope they'll be.
 To journey is necessary, but it is a failed enterprise
 If you cannot return.

VII.

The next morning I set off to the beach
 Where I love to sit and love to swim,
 Intending to plot my journey with each stone I'd skim,
 In an episodic form and according to skipping prowess,
 So as to refashion each story and vision
 And throw them to the waves,
 Where they may leap for life before sinking to the seabed.
 Some would overshoot an incoming wave,
 Whereas others dropped quickly into rushing surf.

In seeing one loses more than one gains,
 Like wind swiping the feet from under you,
 All is off centre and heavy is the strain
 From striding upon open roads and looking to the skies.
 But we are all making a journey home,
 And today, every stone that I have flung into the sea
 Will find its way once more to the shore.

Voices

A Poet and a President. A Conversation with Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland

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I will never forgive myself for this. I managed to be late on the day of my appointment with the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. Our meeting had been arranged way ahead of time and it had been scheduled on a day of August 2014, at 11 o'clock. The national daily *Avvenire* had asked me to interview him (see Michelucci 2014) over the recently published Italian translation of some of his poems, *Il tradimento e altre poesie*, edited and translated by Enrico Terrinoni, and published by Del Vecchio (Higgins 2014).

That morning I left Dun Laoghaire, where I was on vacation with my family, early enough. But I hadn't planned to get lost in the intricate expanse of Phoenix Park, on the outskirts of Dublin, where the official residence of the President is located. In this gigantic area of parkland there isn't a single road sign that helps the traveller reach the *Áras An Uachtaráin*, 'The President's House'. And while time was passing by inexorably, my GPS stopped working.

I took the wrong turn a couple of times. Then, thanks to the directions of a young female jogger, I finally found the gate of entrance. Unfortunately when I passed through the gate, it was a quarter past 11 and it had started to rain.

"I am an Italian journalist. I have an appointment with the President", I said hastily to the guard, who let me pass without even asking for my ID. Quickly, I covered the last hundreds of meters leading to the residence and, after parking my car right in front of it, I got off and rang the doorbell. I confess that in spite of the rather autumnal weather, I was sweating. I was afraid that my being late would make that long-awaited meeting vanish. I sighed in relief only when another guard opened the door to usher me in, and assured me that the President was waiting for me. "Your car needs to be moved to the parking lot next-door", the guard said, "if you give me your keys, I'll do it".

In order to kill time in my absence, my wife and children were supposed to visit the zoo nearby, but Irish rain, which was now pouring down, had made it impossible. When I saw the guard letting them in, I started sweating again. I wasn't worried about Edoardo, who was 8 already, but about the often uncontrollable exuberance of my daughter Vittoria, who at that time

was only 4. While we were waiting in the President's lobby anything could happen: fruit juice could spill over tapestries and antique sofas, ancient and valuable china could be broken, and kids could start running wildly among the marble busts of past Presidents. Luckily nothing happened. The President just got out of his room and greeted us all warmly.

Our conversation was about 45 minutes long, and took place in the large office which the President has filled with books and personal keepsakes. Michael D. Higgins has always combined political engagement with an acute cultural and artistic discernment. Poetry is his elected means of expression. He has become the living paradigm of the symbiotic relationship that culture and politics have always had in his country. He is the tangible example of how literature and civil rights, poetry and pacifism can intermingle and communicate. His literary output harks back to the tradition of the Aisling, the ancient Irish epic poets, and of the Fenian poets from the beginning of the 20th century. His poetry reflects an idea of society that calls for personal involvement and commitment.

As a socialist poet and philosopher, who has always fought for peace and human rights, it seems right to compare him to another great man of letters who occupied those same rooms: Douglas Hyde (1860-1949), the man who, in the 1930s, became the first President of newly independent Ireland. A promoter of cultural nationalism, Hyde translated popular Celtic texts and fought to preserve ancient traditions which had almost been erased by centuries of colonialism. Higgins' vision is more far-reaching than that of his illustrious predecessor. In his poetry he is more interested in giving voice to the poor, to the "lowliest", who don't have a way of making their cries heard.

The style of this interview reflects the informality of a conversation. Pauses, interruptions and repetitions have been edited out.

M: The first question I would like to ask you is about your personal concept of poetry: you are a man who has always been involved in politics, in the fight for peace and civil rights. How can poetry, a moment of private reflection, be linked with a public commitment to politics?

H: I think the important, combining work is words, the nature of words, of language. I intend, in years to come, when I get free again, to return to poetry. I am working on a long poem. It had been my hope that if I was finished in time, I would include it in the Italian anthology, which I am very honoured has been published. This issue of words and of language surfaces in

the poems in different ways. And, you are right; words in the public spaces articulate grief, memory, which is a memory of humiliation, and this informs the writing of people like Sartre and others. I believe that also in autobiography there is an element of remembered humiliation, and then there is the recovery of possibility, of the possibilities of joy. The long poem I am having the difficulty with has a number of lines such as “The night is long and I awake remember, the night is long and I afraid recall”; and really it is an invocation of a life – I am 73, after all – a life that has been involved with language. When I speak I pour out words in public spaces, words that express great grief and anger, great griefs, in famine places. These bodies I have seen in rubbish dumps or whatever. But for many it is a kind of disconsolate sense of a lost version of life. As regards poetry, you see, my relationship to this is a strange one. In a way, it is like the relationship of a child outside the railings, looking into the park where people are playing games: the structure of the game is well known, there are things you have to know in order to participate, and so forth. At the same time, in that innocence there is an urge to belong, the recognition that some of this is artifice. What I do recall, what I do say is, to make it simple, that the great silence of life precedes words; and when words are used today they need to be very carefully used. But then, when words are enclosed tightly within, let us say, a limited time version of the rational, they begin to lose their life. And thus in World War I, which people are celebrating now – although celebrating is the wrong word – they are recalling people as Robert Bridges [1844-1930], poet Laureate in England in 1915, who produced a set of heroic poems invoking all the myths in order to hide the most awful carnage that was taking place in the trenches. I have a new unusual view though, which encourages me slightly towards people like the Anglican Archbishop Rowan Douglas Williams [1950-]. If I understand it, Williams has a concept of the divine, which would interest both utopians and what you might call people involved in emancipatory movements: he considers words as the divine seeking to make itself manifest. You could see it in the projects of emancipation, the exercise of the divine, so the divine is neither allocated, nor bounded by certainties of existence, be they good or not, so that it is probably best located in uncertainty. And, in a curious way, I see quite a lot in that, and it was a deluded friend of mine, the late John O’Donohue [1956-2008], who died and to whom I’ve dedicated one of my poems, any day lost, he’d say, was one of possibility. And, when you write a poem recalling people’s lives, you are suggesting to people what to do and what not to do. But really, what you envisaged as possibilities is much wider than what you can in fact recall, or even try to shape visually. So, in many cases at the end of one’s life, the possibilities buried in memory, the things attempted but perhaps never achieved are maybe the richest, and that is what O’Donohue considered important about the utopian tradition. Sometimes I keep referring to it as the

wild that has not yet succeeded in being born. And that has implications for human rights, for economics, for trades, for politics, for the public life. When asked about these dark poems of mine, I'd reply that occasionally in my collections I could get as far as irony, just to relieve the thrust of the book, or whatever, striving for a kind of authenticity. It's a great privilege to be able to record them now. I should tell you, I have one poem that is in the collection, I think ... one I rarely read because it is a bit obscure, but I think it's more truthful; it is called "One's Own Story":

Our own story must always be lonely,
and when we pray from fear,
it must be a mumble,
out of some terror,
instilled,
a cry of the wounded,
without much hope of healing.

But if the truth be told,
our own story
brightens in the light of other stories,
older stories that glimmer,
lost in a long tail of time.

We need these scraps
made luminous
to relieve the darkness
of our fall
from the imagined divine
towards that space
where the occasional sparkle
of the human
remains a prospect,
in the still space
of our loneliness,
as we pray
for the gift of love. [Higgins 2011, 69]

The awful damage that was done to people is terribly important to me, by the quenching of their appropriate ethical censoring capacities to love each other. It is what makes me so critical of authoritarianism of any kind, including the dreadful authoritarianisms of bureaucracy foreseen by Max Weber.

M: How have your life and political career been marked by the betrayal of your father and the Republicans during the Civil War as you recount in your famous poem?

H: I think that is the poem I am most often asked about, and perhaps I project onto my father some of my own thinking. But what I suppose is very critical in it is the distinction between independence, Home Rule, nationalism, republicanism, and so on. And I stand back from any judgmentalism, but historically we went through a period where people were questioning the motives of those who fought for Irish independence. My father was from a family of ten, and many of them emigrated to Australia, and through a small legacy from Australia my father was the only one of the ten to get two to three years of education. He became an apprentice at a grocery and then went to Ennis, to Limerick, to Cork, and so on. But after he was involved in the War of Independence. It is very important to recognise that the people who were the most active were those who had not inherited any land, the shop boys, the apprentices, the trades people, and so on, and at that time you had to sign an indenture saying you would not open a competing business within so many miles where you were indentured. If you like, they were the militants in the War of Independence. And the Civil War came, which was about whether to accept the Treaty or not. My father's brother would accept the Treaty, my aunts might have been doubtful, my father was on the Republican side, and was arrested and imprisoned in 1922-1923. Now, I have a feeling that nationalist struggles today are all over the world. I once wrote to say that any serious republicanism must have the glow of egalitarianism at its centre. All nationalisms are non-emancipatory, some nationalisms are about the right to have one's own independence from capitalism. But in the different revolutionary tradition in Ireland, there were those who also wanted to be free in a wider sense, rather than just being free to trade within a capitalist system. And there were those who said: "we'll be equal, we will have education, we'll have the right to health, we will have the right to feel proud of ourselves as people, to experience joy together". This was a curious kind of civic egalitarianism, which even the Church could not ignore because in its condemnation of *Rerum Novarum* it offers us an alternative, a kind of corporativism. But the notion of the collective, of the "worldtogether", of the public space, all of this, the public world, and all the different separatisms do not carry that. So, what I suppose my poem is referring to today is that, yes, the country became independent, we had a tragedy that was the Civil War, which had an effect on memory when members in the same family couldn't speak to each other because of what they had done to each other, by way of exclusion, and by way of all they had thought about each other. In addition to that, the making of a new state and the case for independence, was also made as a cultural case by writers, writers in the Irish language, writers in the English language, poets, mystics, and so forth. By the time the new state was founded, there was in fact a conservative, administrative, bureaucratic class that moved in, achieved a hegemony, and ultimately came to running the State. This was the tool that would turn their faces against sensibility in

literature, film, and dance and the experience of the public world. And that inevitably led to bad decisions in relation to censorship, and to a version of the Church's relationship to a State that was authoritarian, intrusive, and unhelpful. And then, what happened to the old Republicans? They got old and you'd find them in hospitals, and I visited my father as one of them. It occurs to me to try and put my mind back and think: "What was he like at my age? Working in the shop and thinking, 'What kind of Ireland will happen?'" What are people of my age now? I am 73, I have used words in the public space, I like the life of the *piazza*, of collective singing, and when in my new work I am writing, for instance "The night is long and I awake recall the making of the march the prayer's feet behind banners, bright and daring..." this is due to the changing nature of alternatives in the present time: the world has become private in that particular kind of communication. I think a great importance was attached to collectivity, to people who found their courage because they were behind the banners, singing the songs, the miners, the people in the Dublin Lockout, and certainly they did not have transformative moments. So, is there a collective space now, in a world where everyone is privately sending messages? It is the same reason why I think that good thinkers within the Church, people like Rowan Williams and others, started resuming a faith in the public square. Is it possible to keep a transcendent vision of faith in the present condition? I think the answer is that "it must happen". But you have to do it in a different way. So I ask myself, why am I happiest when I am performing my poems? Because I can make a connection, and I like that. I actually think I like it as well when I am in combination with musicians and others. I regard music as maybe the first sound, because it precedes words. Remember, the first sound is not a word, it is the scream of birth.

M: And, concerning your personal concept of betrayal, do you think that, in a way, the State betrayed the Irish people, even during the recent economic crisis?

H: In relation to this, wherever we are, not just in Ireland or in Europe, the best guide is the speech I gave at the Chicago Council for Global Affairs. It is not a matter of conscious betrayal, I don't criticise governments, it is not my business; and when I was speaking at the London School of Economics about the role of public intellectuals, or at the Sorbonne about the French intellectual tradition and how it had many differences, for example, in the period of the Empire, the Enlightenment period, you had philosophers against Empire, what I meant is that there is a failure of scholarship. I think that since I gave those speeches, you have had the French economist Thomas Piketty [1971-] and his work is getting more attention now, in France and elsewhere. My main point about it is, first – I am going to try to make it brief for you – the suggestion that there is a single paradigm of the con-

nection between Economics, Society, and Life is so dangerous; it is also, in a scholarly sense, abstract and wrong: Keynes, who is not a raving Socialist by any means, writing on economics spoke about Physics envy, that is, they wanted to claim the State as a being of Science, when in fact Economics is a craft, and it is a craft dealing with human materials. The suggestion that you would have rating agencies issuing comments on sovereign governments and, in turn, these opinions influencing central banks, which in turn effects how you will manage scarcity, vulnerability, social transfers and so forth, is itself quite absurd. So what is needed is a plurality of teaching in Economics. It is simply wrong to teach young Economics students that there is only one, single model of Economics, and that it involves a particular version of the market. It is nothing to do with being Left or Right, it has to do with the democratic right to be offered a pluralism of models in economic thinking. This affects how policies are formed, and, in relation to the discourse, if you get narrow economic teaching, you equally get a very narrow commentary in relation to media, because that is all they comment upon, which is coming out of this narrow strain. This is a very interesting debate in Europe, and it is better in some places with a tradition of teaching philosophy, locating these issues within ethics, and ethics itself within philosophical systems, including mistakes. But I think now we are headed very much into a kind of new economic thinking, and younger economists are seeing through this. When I gave my speech at the University of Chicago, at the Harris School of Public Policy and some other institutes, I said that in many cases you really need to be able to have all the intellectual tools available to you in order to be able to deal with new complex relationships, like those we are going through. For example, how do you deal morally with the issue that for every unit of capital that is productively invested on our planet, eight units are circulating around the world as a kind of toxic shadow waiting to come to earth through toxic bubbles in housing? Do you see? The public, who have spent generations after generations struggling towards democracy, in the assumption that they would be able to decide their lives morally and fully, with their own mistakes, their own joys and achievements, they instead are somehow secondary to a technocratic management of a single model that is in turn unable to deal with a speculative cloud – that, in fact, is enslaving the world. It is very interesting that what you speak about is getting space for this in a commentary. But Pope Francis and I are of the same mind, and I think his speeches on it have been excellent.

M: Your poems do not only deal with Ireland. Latin America, which you know very well because you were there over a long period, is another of the principal themes in your works. What kind of teaching could we receive from devastated countries like, for instance, El Salvador? In what way do they help us avoid shutting our eyes in the face of reality?

H: Well, it was in 1982 that I was asked to leave Salvador, just after the massacre at Morazán, and it was very moving to go back there as President of Ireland, and to meet people like Jon Sobrino, who is the surviving Jesuit of those Jesuits at UCA, the Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas”, who were murdered, people like Ellacuría and others. And I think it will tell you how things do change in the world, and can change. I think San Salvador’s airport is now going to be called “Oscar Romero Airport”, and this is a very good thing. I was received by President Mauricio Funes, in the Parliament and with honours, and I visited the Jesuits. It was very moving. When I was writing “Foxtrot in El Salvador” [also in Higgins 2014, 94-97], it was the worst time of the killings, which would take place during the night, and bodies would be dumped in the rubbish dump, and you knew from the way hands were tied or the stomach had been opened which group was responsible. It was a kind of signature of death, and then they were all moved into the morgue after that. At that time I was debating in my mind an essay, I think it might have been an essay by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal [1898-1987], and it was about conscience. Faced with this kind of realities, you could try and move on and not see, but if you take these things into yourself you have to accept the transformation that will take place for yourself, both personally and spiritually. This is maybe the challenge of our time, for someone like myself, for example, who was very interested in socialist theory but was not a materialist... Why could not I be fully a materialist? It is perhaps for this reason, I think that today you have to take the vulnerability and wound of the world into yourself, so as to be able to experience the joy of solidarity that comes with it. There are great moments, like the turn between 1982 and today, when I go back to Central America. So therefore, there is joy on the journey but the greatest joy is achieved when the fullness of vulnerability is experienced. This is why we are now in our darkest moments, because we have slaughter and confrontation and killings taking place between minority religious groups and majority religious groups, often within the faith system, between faith systems, and so forth, and they are all based on distortions of what was prophetic and what is in fact accepted as the intention of the human spirit involved in the beginning. It is a tragedy and what I think is that in many cases it is the fact that it has become attached to the armaments industry, that it has become attached to new methods of killing and destruction and exclusion, and also great increase in violence that is anti-human, and particularly the rise in gender-based violence, even on the edges of refugee camps where people have fled. So, this is the time when there is need for global leadership, and there is need for more than arid, dry words. One of my books, remember, is called *An Arid Season* [Higgins 2004], and I wrote that book when there were lots of passionate speeches which brought me to the public world. We give way to press releases, to statements, to accommodating texts that have turned into ashes before you get to the end of them.

M: It is now the first anniversary of the death of Ireland's most important poetical voice. What do you think Seamus Heaney has left to your country?

H: I think he has left to the whole Earth the value of generosity. It was a life to which no limit was placed on what he would do, for small groups or larger groups. You must remember as well that he, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, and some of those Northern Poets had a great knowledge of Greek Myth standing behind them – I am thinking of Michael Longley's line, Priam's line, in the poem "Ceasefire": "[I kneel] and kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son" – [Longley 1984], but they also had a mythic sense that touched what was universal, and then they took the contemporary, and framed it in their own way. But one of the things that was Heaney's greatest strength was his working of language, of the thump of language, from *Beowulf* for example, or also the language that was the language produced by the collision of two languages, Irish and English. In his poem "The Barn" [in *Death of a Naturalist*, 1991 (1966), 5] and in others poems as well, there is a great sense of not losing the opportunity in the lives that we have, of taking the moments of love and treasuring them, like the sides of a car battered by the wind. But friendship is important, love is important, the location of both between a gentle nature is important, generosity towards other beings and being inclusive is important. So it is not as much the words of Seamus Heaney that people like myself who were his friends miss, but his presence, too and the great generosity I have seen in him so often at the end of readings giving young people so much time, and help, and the great patience of the man.

M: Finally I would like to discuss the hundredth anniversary of the Easter Rising, which is directly connected with another centenary, that of World War I. How is your Country preparing for this very important anniversary, what does public opinion feel about it?

H: I think there is now a widespread agreement that the context of 1916, the larger context of course, is 1914 and World War I. 200,000 Irish people participated in World War I. 50,000 perhaps died. World War I was a great catastrophe that stretched disaster all across Europe. When you think you have four layers of thousands of miles of trenches with people being slaughtered and wading through fields of the dead, it is so important not to forget those who died, were injured, those who had their families at home, and those who objected to the war as well, the conscientious objectors. They all have to be remembered, but there is nothing to celebrate, except to recall the tragic mistake of how the blundering detractors of Empire would have suggested a huge human cost, and you condemn the dynamics taking place in Ireland, namely, the belief that participation in the Great War would have in fact assisted the Irish Independence, whereas others had already seen the broken

promise, as Ulster had organised the way-in differently. And then I think, when you are interpreting the leaders of 1916, it is entirely inappropriate to be looking at them through a military frame or a military optic of insurrection. They were poets, they were writers, they had a version of an Ireland that they perhaps knew themselves could not come to be in the short term, but that would have certain values: it invoked previous attempts at freedom and it invoked the echo of the suppression of the personhood of nation, and then it envisaged, in its own way, what might come to be in the future; it is interesting that it was kept alive by the Irish diaspora, particularly in the United States. It is a complex issue for the government. I am quite clear in my own mind as to how I feel about it; I have no discomfort of any sort, I think we should take advantage of this complexity that this is now a challenge of all our values of truth, complexity, and authenticity. We should not use it to belabour each other with silly or wrong versions or simplicities. They are not helpful at all.

“The Betrayal”

A poem for my father

This man is seriously ill,
 the doctor had said a week before,
 calling for a wheelchair.
 It was
 after they rang me
 to come down
 and persuade you
 to go in
 condemned to remember your eyes
 as they met mine in that moment
 before they wheeled you away.
 It was one of my final tasks
 to persuade you to go in,
 a Judas chosen not by Apostles
 but by others more broken;
 I was, in part,
 relieved when they wheeled you from me,
 down that corridor, confused,
 without a backward glance.
 And when I had done it,
 I cried, out on the road,
 hitching a lift to Galway and away
 from the trouble of your
 cantankerous old age
 and rage too,
 at all that had in recent years
 befallen you.

All week I waited to visit you
but when I called, you had been moved
to where those dying too slowly
were sent,
a poorhouse, no longer known by that name,
but in the liberated era of Lemass,
given a saint's name, 'St. Joseph's'.
Was he Christ's father,
patron saint of the Worker,
the mad choice of some pietistic politician?
You never cared.

Nor did you speak too much.
You had broken an attendant's glasses,
the holy nurse told me,
when you were admitted.
Your father is a very difficult man,
as you must know. And Social Welfare is slow
and if you would pay for the glasses,
I would appreciate it.
It was 1964, just after optical benefit
was rejected by de Valera for poor classes
in his Republic, who could not afford,
as he did
to Travel to Zurich
for their regular tests and their
rimless glasses.

It was decades earlier
you had brought me to see him
pass through Newmarket—on—Fergus
as the brass and reed band struck up,
cheeks red and distended to the point
where a child's wonder was as to whether
they would burst as they blew
their trombones.
The Sacred Heart Procession and de Valera,
you told me, were the only occasions
when their instruments were taken
from the rusting, galvanized shed
where they stored them in anticipation
of the requirements of Church and State.

Long before that, you had slept,
in ditches and dug-outs,
prayed in terror at ambushes
with others who later debated

whether de Valera was lucky or brilliant
 in getting the British to remember
 that he was an American.
 And that debate had not lasted long
 in concentration camps in Newbridge
 and the Curragh, where mattresses were burned
 as the gombeens decided that the new State
 was a good thing,
 even for business.

In the dining-room of St. Joseph's
 the potatoes were left in the middle of the table
 in a dish, towards which
 you and many other Republicans
 stretched feeble hands that shook.
 Your eyes were bent as you peeled
 with the long thumb-nail I had often watched
 scrape a pattern on the leather you had toughened for our
 shoes.
 Your eyes when you looked at me
 were a thousand miles away,
 now totally broken,
 unlike those times even
 of rejection, when you went at sixty
 for jobs you never got,
 too frail to lead vans, or manage
 the demands of selling.
 And I remember
 when you came back to me,
 your regular companion of such occasions,
 and said: 'They think that I'm too old
 for the job. I said I was fifty-eight
 but they knew that I was past sixty'.

A body ready for transportation,
 fit only for a coffin, that made you
 too awkward
 for death at home.
 The shame of a coffin exit
 through a window sent you here,
 where my mother told me you asked
 only for her to place her cool hand
 under your neck.
 And I was there when they asked
 would they give you a Republican funeral,
 in that month when you died,
 between the end of the First Programme for Economic Expansion
 and the Second.

I look at your photo now,
 taken in the beginning of bad days,
 with your surviving mates
 in Limerick.
 Your face hunts me, as do these memories;
 and all these things have been scraped
 in my heart,
 and I can never hope to forget
 what was, after all,
 a betrayal.

“Il tradimento”¹

Una poesia per mio padre

Quest'uomo è gravemente malato,
 aveva detto il dottore una settimana prima,
 e chiese una sedia a rotelle.
 Fu
 dopo la telefonata
 perché venissi
 a convincerti
 a entrare
 condannato a ricordare i tuoi occhi
 che incontrarono i miei in quel momento
 prima di farti portar via sulla sedia a rotelle.
 Fu uno dei miei ultimi compiti
 persuaderti a entrare,
 un Giuda scelto non da apostoli
 ma da altri più abbattuti;
 fui, in parte,
 sollevato quando ti portarono via sulla sedia a rotelle,
 lungo quel corridoio, confuso,
 senza girarti indietro.
 E dopo averlo fatto,
 piansi, per strada,
 mentre facevo l'autostop per Galway e via
 dal fastidio della tua
 irascibile vecchiaia
 e anche il livore,
 per tutto quello che in anni recenti
 ti era capitato.

¹ La traduzione è tratta da Higgins 2014, 29-39. Ringraziamo l'editore per aver concesso il permesso di ripubblicarla in questa sede. / This translation is included in Higgins 2014, 29-39. Our sincere thanks to the publishers for permission to reproduce it here.

Tutta la settimana aspettai di venirti a trovare
ma al mio arrivo, eri stato trasferito
dove mandavano
chi muore troppo lentamente,
un ospizio di carità, non li chiamano più così,
ma nell'emancipata era Lemass,
scelsero il nome di un santo, "St. Joseph".
Era forse lui il padre di Cristo,
il santo patrono dei lavoratori,
la scelta folle d'un qualche politico pietista?
Non te n'è mai importato.

E non parlavi molto.
Avevi rotto gli occhiali d'un inserviente,
mi disse la santa sorella,
dopo l'accettazione.
Suo padre è un uomo molto difficile da trattare,
come ben saprà. E all'Assistenza Sociale son lenti
e se può pagarli lei, gli occhiali,
gliene sarei grata.
Era il 1964, dopo il rifiuto di de Valera
di dare alle classi povere l'assistenza oculistica
nella sua Repubblica; non potevano permettersi,
come lui,
di andare a Zurigo
per farsi fare visite regolari e
occhiali senza montatura.

Decenni prima
mi avevi portato a vederlo
sfilare per Newmarket-on-Fergus
mentre attaccava la banda di ottoni e strumenti ad ancia,
guance rosse e tese fino al punto
che un bambino si chiedeva se
potessero scoppiare, nel soffiare in
quei tromboni.
La Processione del Sacro Cuore e de Valera,
mi dicesti, erano le uniche occasioni
in cui i loro strumenti venivano
rispolverati dalla capanna di lamiera arrugginita
dove erano stati riposti in attesa
delle esigenze di Stato e Chiesa.

Molto prima, avevi dormito,
tra fossi e ricoveri sotterranei,
pregato in preda al terrore durante le imboscate
con chi più in là avrebbe discusso

se de Valera fosse stato fortunato o geniale
a far ricordare ai britannici
d'essere americano.
E quelle discussioni non sarebbero durate molto
nei campi di concentramento a Newbridge
e nel Curragh, dove bruciavano materassi
mentre gli usurai capivano che il nuovo Stato
era cosa buona
anche per gli affari.

Nel refettorio del St. Joseph
lasciavano le patate in mezzo al tavolo
in un piatto, verso cui
tu e tanti altri Repubblicani
tendevate mani fiacche e tremanti.
I tuoi occhi bassi mentre le pelavi
con l'unghia lunga del pollice che molte volte ti avevo
visto usare per incidere la pelle da te rinforzata per farci le
scarpe.
Gli occhi quando mi guardasti
erano lontani migliaia di miglia,
ora totalmente abbattuti,
ancor più dei tempi in cui venivi
respinto, quando a sessant'anni
cercavi lavori che non trovavi mai,
troppo debole per guidare i camion, o per star dietro
alle esigenze della vendita.
E ricordo
quando tornavi da me,
abituale tuo compagno in quelle occasioni,
dicendo: "Mi ritengono troppo vecchio
per quel lavoro. Gli ho detto che avevo cinquantotto anni
ma sapevano che ne ho più di sessanta".

Un corpo pronto a esser trasportato,
buono solo per una bara, il che rendeva
troppo scomodo
farti morire in casa.
La vergogna di uscire in una bara
attraverso una finestra ti aveva spinto qui,
dove mia madre mi disse che avevi chiesto
fosse solo la sua mano fredda
a reggerti la testa.
Ed ero lì quando chiesero
se farti un funerale repubblicano,
nel mese in cui sei morto,
tra la fine del Primo Programma di Espansione Economica
e il Secondo.

Guardo la tua foto adesso,
 scattata all'inizio di giorni bui,
 con i compagni sopravvissuti
 a Limerick.
 Il tuo volto mi ossessiona, come quei ricordi;
 tutte cose incise
 nel mio cuore,
 e non ho speranza di scordare
 quel che fu, dopo tutto,
 un tradimento.

Traduzione di Enrico Terrinoni

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“On the brink of the absolutely forbidden”: In Conversation with Mary Morrissy

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Abstract:

Mary Morrissy (Dublin, 1957) belongs to the generation of women writers excluded from the *Field Day Anthology* in the 1990s, only to be included in a dedicated volume in 2003. By then she had become a distinguished literary voice in Ireland (having published a collection of short stories, and two novels). After *The Rising of Bella Casey* (2013), Morrissy returned to the short story in the form of an adaptation of Joyce's "An Encounter" (2014), and a collection of short stories entitled *Prosperity Drive* (2016). Situated where history, biography and fiction intersect, her works deal with Ireland's recent cultural developments and situations of marginality risking social exclusion, gender inequality, an indelible past and the dominance of religion. Standing "on the brink of the absolutely forbidden", her protagonists, like her writing, yearn to break taboos and liberate the imagination, and they do so in a daringly powerful way.

Keywords: 1916, Creative Process, Historical Novel, Irish Short Story, James Joyce, Mary Morrissy

When a story and its characters stand on the brink of the absolutely forbidden there is little doubt as to their power to seize a reader's fantasy and win his/her heart. Page after page, this is what Mary Morrissy achieves with her audacious writing, skilfully crafted, wisely daring and bewitching. Today, this award-winner who received a Hennessy Award for short fiction in 1984, and the prestigious US Lannan Literary Foundation Award in 1995, is among the most authoritative literary voices from Ireland. Over the years Morrissy has refined her art and experimented with different genres and styles, allowing her creative impulse to find expression on the page, while also carrying out extensive reading and research work. Her literary debut dates back to 1993, when she published a collection of short stories entitled *A Lazy Eye*. In 1995 she pub-

lished her first novel *Mother of Pearl*, based on a true story she read about in a local newspaper. Set in the 1950s, the novel tells of a baby who is stolen from a hospital in Dublin and recovered by chance four years later, with terrible consequences for both the child and the child's two mothers. In 2000, Morrissy's *The Pretender* recounted the fictional biography of a woman, a Polish factory worker who led the world to believe that she was the Grand Duchess Anastasia Romanova, the last surviving daughter of Tsar Nicholas. Similarly, her subsequent novel dealt with a biographical reconstruction. *The Rising of Bella Casey* (2013) recounts the troubled life story of the eponymous character, the sister of Irish playwright Séan O'Casey. A year later, Morrissy accepted an invitation to adapt James Joyce's "An Encounter" for the *Dubliners 100* tribute volume (Morris 2014), and in March 2016 her second collection of short-stories was published by Jonathan Cape. So far, reviews of the latter have been enthusiastic (so much so that she has been compared to Anton Čechov and Hilary Mantel), and the public too have been showing significant appreciation of her new work. Morrissy's readership, to-date, is almost exclusively Anglophone, with the exception of Danish, Dutch, French, German, Persian and Polish readers, who can access most of her work in translation (a French translation of *The Rising of Bella Casey* was published earlier this year, on St. Patrick's Day). As far as Italy goes, no translations of her work are available as yet, but there seem to be good hopes as Morrissy gains higher popularity on this side of the Alps. She visited Trieste, Florence and Sassari in 2015 as part of the "Irish Itinerary", a cultural trail promoted by EFACIS, the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies, and it was during her stay in Sardinia, in October, when she visited the Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche e Sociali, Università di Sassari and gave a reading at the literary festival "Ottobre in Poesia", that the following interview took place. This was Mary's second official visit to the Island (in 2013 she had been a guest speaker at the University of Sassari), and I felt it was a good time to acknowledge her literary merit and introduce her to a wider audience. The interview was conceived as an informal, thought provoking conversation with the writer. It replicates Morrissy's peculiar use of chronology, therefore beginning from the end and going back to where it started. The first question, in other words, is about Mary's most recent work, *Prosperity Drive*, which had not been published yet at the time, but which she presented at a reading night in a public library near Sassari. For the occasion, she read from a story entitled "Diaspora", and when she spoke the words that give this interview its title, her world, characters and stories came under a new light, simply yet superbly so. The questions go back in time to revisit the different stages of Mary's literary career, to investigate her depiction of women and gender issues as well as her fascination with history and "the grey area between fact and fiction". Readers will hopefully know and appreciate the energy, passion and sweet obsession of the artisan who plays with words, masters them beautifully and lets them flow, seduced by what she terms "the alchemy of writing".

L: Let us begin from the end, and from your most recent literary effort – a collection of short stories entitled Prosperity Drive – that is where I came across that wonderful line, “on the brink of the absolutely forbidden”, which seems to be a perfect description of where your writing and your characters are.

M: Yes, I’d agree that the territory I’m exploring in *Prosperity Drive* is close to the transgressive, particularly the sexually transgressive. The characters to whom this line refers – a teenage couple overcome by lust – draw back from the forbidden but many of the characters in these stories – the mother of the boy of this couple, for example, in the story “Assisted Passage”, or the character Gabe in “Lot’s Wife”, go into the area of taboo.

L: Indeed, your characters often and deliberately challenge and break taboos. It has to do with curiosity and courage, and with being true to one’s self too. I wonder whether this also applies to you as a creative writer?

M: I don’t know about that big word, courage. I think the rather down-beat nature of a lot of my fiction is being true to my view of the world, although off the page I’m more cheery. When I look back over my work I see a curiosity about form, about playing with form. The linked short stories in *Prosperity Drive* are about seeing how you can push the boundaries of the short story form while the novels, inspired by real people and events, play with fictional biography or biographical fiction.

L: The line – “on the brink of the absolutely forbidden” – is taken from a short story entitled “Diaspora”. I remember when we first met – in 2013 – you were already working on “something about diaspora”. Would you say something about the genesis of your forthcoming collection?

M: Well, the stories started as separate, discrete entities and then as I was writing them, several of the characters reappeared and so I thought I’d make a short story cycle out of them i.e. a collection where all the stories could stand on their own but that when read together, they would have a cumulative effect. The stories spring from a fictional suburban street in Dublin but, of course, it’s impossible to write about Ireland without coming up against the theme of emigration. And some of the stories are set during the Celtic Tiger, so you have the experience of immigration as well, mostly from Eastern Europe. Not exactly a new phenomenon – in my childhood in the 60s there were refugees from Hungary, followed by the Vietnamese boat people in the 1970s – though people tend to forget that now. So the ‘diaspora’ theme is built into the content, and also reflects the form of the stories which is like a scattering from a fixed point.

*L: That is a delicate issue, especially now, across the European continent. And yes, we seem to have forgotten what it used to be like in the past. History repeats itself, but... What strikes me in your description of the new stories is that somehow the architecture of the narrative has changed: in *The Rising of Bella Casey* the form of the story is cyclical – it ends where it begins. Now the stories ‘scatter’ from the centre. How does this reflect your own experience with writing? Your first published work was a collection of short stories (*A Lazy Eye*, 1993) and now you go back to that same genre.*

M: After writing three novels, returning to the short story was a great relief. There is the relatively instant gratification of working in the short form, though the main difference between the stories in *A Lazy Eye* and *Prosperity Drive* is that my stories have got much longer. Also I suppose with a short story cycle I was trying to stretch the form, see how elastic it could be, how it might mimic the characteristics of the novel in some respects.

L: And the result was?

M: Well, my editor at Jonathan Cape called the result an “exploded novel” – I quite like that. It implies the shattering of both forms.

*L: That makes me think of Joyce – the stretching and shattering of narrative forms, especially of the short story. Recently you have been asked to rework Joyce’s “An Encounter”, for the collection *Dubliners 100*. Did you choose that particular story? How influential is Joyce to you as a writer?*

M: As an Irish writer, it’s impossible to escape Joyce’s influence and his stories really impressed me when I read them as a teenager, particularly “Araby”. That’s the story I would have chosen, but it was gone by the time I was invited to join the project. I’m delighted it was because it gave me a chance to read “An Encounter” closely – as a reader and as a writer – and it has now replaced “Araby” in my affections.

L: Speaking of literary influences, who else, apart from Joyce and perhaps also Shakespeare, inspires you? What book tells you something different, each time you read it anew?

M: I always think it’s for others to cite influences on a writer’s work. I can tell you the writers who most impressed me. In my teens – a time when I think you’re wide open to influences – I devoured the work of Flannery O’Connor and Carson McCullers, both purveyors of the Southern gothic, and some of that influence must have crept into my work. I really admire the short fiction of Alice Munro and I return to it again and again – not only be-

cause her work repays attention but because she has developed and stretched the short story form in deep and resonant ways. The work of Hilary Mantel – all of it, not just the historical fiction – is another source of inspiration, in that Mantel never writes the same novel twice.

L: Dubliners 100 celebrates a century of Irish culture through a rewriting of Joyce's 15 stories from a contemporary perspective. The experiment comes to terms with change and the past in a globalized New Ireland while also trying to keep alive the dialogue between then and now.

M: For me, *Dubliners 100* was an act of homage; trying (and failing) to match what Joyce called “the scrupulous meanness” of the original. Where I feel the story does succeed is in its rather melancholy evocation of place, of Dublin in particular, which was part of Joyce’s intent in *Dubliners*.

L: In your version of “An Encounter” Joyce’s protagonist becomes a young girl, also called Jo Dillon. It is often the case that female characters are central to your stories. In this particular instance, would you say that Ireland has become a less patriarchal country where women have gained equal rights (socially as well as culturally)?

M: I write about women because I’m a woman and know the inside of that condition. Things have improved hugely for women in Ireland since I was young in terms of social and labour legislation. I remember a job interview in 1980 – for a copy editor’s job on a national newspaper, an all-male preserve then – where I was asked had I a boyfriend, was I thinking of getting married and did I intend to have children? It would be illegal – and unthinkable – for a female interviewee to be asked those questions today.

Divorce has been introduced here, but abortion is still forbidden except in very limited and medically dictated circumstances. I have nieces involved in the latest campaign to repeal the 8th amendment to the constitution on abortion – so that’s a battle that I’m hoping their generation of feminists will win.

L: That is hard to believe, especially considering the outcome of the recent “Yes campaign” for marriage equality in Ireland (in Italy we seem to have the opposite issue: abortion was legalised almost forty years ago but same-sex matrimony and adoption rights are still a huge matter!). Speaking of abortion and unwanted pregnancies, I can’t help but think of Isabella Casey. Would she ever have opted for termination of her first pregnancy, do you think?

M: Well, I think this is impossible to say. In fact, I doubt very much Bella Casey would have even considered the idea of an abortion, given her religious and cultural background and the period in which she lived. At least in this

day and age, women have access to information even if they have to travel to the UK to get an abortion. But abortion is an exclusively female issue, unlike marriage equality reform, and female equality has always been lower down the political agenda here. The campaign to change abortion legislation has been going on since the 1970s and we've already had three constitutional referendums on the issue (1983, 1992 and 2002); compare that to the swiftness with which the marriage equality act was campaigned for and passed.

L: The idea of giving women visibility lies at the heart of your reconstruction of Bella's life in The Rising of Bella Casey. Your writing about her seems to be an act of just retribution: you rescue her from the murderous hands of her brother Séan, and yet your insight into O'Casey's troubled conscience makes him, in the eyes of the reader, a disturbing but also a captivating presence in the novel.

M: Sean O'Casey wrote harshly about his sister Bella in his autobiography and then killed her off ten years before her time. This literary sororicide was what prompted me to write *The Rising of Bella Casey*. I felt his was a failure of the imagination; he couldn't understand what had prompted her downfall and he hadn't the capacity to see beyond appearances. That disappointed me but in the writing of the novel I realised that O'Casey was also writing out of disappointment – the disappointment of his very elevated and unrealistic expectations of his bright, clever sister. He'd placed her on a pedestal and couldn't bear to witness her fall, so he opted for silence.

L: He was also very disappointed at himself, though. I am thinking at that wonderful scene at the end of chapter 10 where he gets very frustrated with his work, but then he starts all over again. Writing must have been extenuating for him, painstaking even, almost as much as being Bella's brother.

M: The way I depict O'Casey's writing process is pure fiction. I think, in reality, he probably found writing a great release of pent-up feeling and conviction. Certainly the autobiographies – all six volumes of them – appear on the page as an unstoppable outpouring of exuberant language. The point I was making in the novel was that contrary to the rest of his work, writing about Bella might have been a real difficulty for him.

L: The Rising of Bella Casey is a contemporary historical novel set between fact and fiction. How do you combine the two, what inspires the encounter of real and imaginary worlds?

M: I think of *The Rising of Bella Casey* – and my other novels, *Mother of Pearl* and *The Pretender* – as inhabiting the grey area between biography and fiction. So though I write about real people, there are inevitably gaps in

the narrative, and in those gaps, the fiction happens. I often think I must be very unimaginative because in my novel-writing I'm generally working with ready-made plots and a laid-down story. The 'real' story is a blueprint from which I depart when one of these gaps in the narrative appears. The trouble with a lot of historical characters – like Bella Casey or Anna Anderson, the fraudulent Anastasia Romanov whom I wrote about in my second novel *The Pretender* – is that they often appear unknowable. We have external evidence of them, of course, but sometimes it's hard to imagine their interior lives.

The key word here is imagine. I see that as what I do, imagining myself beyond the official record, and into the interior of these characters' lives. With historical figures, particularly those pre-20th century, that requires two willed acts – an imaginative leap into a pre-modern world and a creative kind of forgetting – forgetting about Freud and Jung etc., whose psychology has become part of the mainstream, part of everyday thinking.

On a practical level and to aid that imaginative process, I generally write the story first and then do the research so that the research doesn't swamp the imaginative process. Also I'm lazy about research; I only do as much as I need to. I'm not one of those authors who gets distracted by the minutiae of history. A lot of the time research is a chore; something in service to the narrative, the story, which is primary for me.

L: I find this particular aspect interesting, Mary. You use gaps – spaces in between, empty areas – creatively. Beaver, for instance. His GPI (Joyce again?) causes him a fatal loss of memory and he eventually is “lost, somewhere, in the folds of time”. That line is absolutely marvellous, powerful in its capacity to define Bella's condition too, before you “rise” her and rescue her from oblivion.

M: One of the things about writing about real people is that I feel I owe it to them to be true to the facts of their lives, as they are known. So, in real life, Bella's husband, Nicholas Beaver, contracted syphilis and died of GPI, so all of this is true, rather than a novelistic trope. Of course, the novelist can invest emotional and symbolic resonance in the facts. People lost in the folds in time; yes that's a good description of my creative territory – women caught in the shadow of history.

L: The shadow of History, a place where untold and forgotten stories are found. And The Rising is also about stories located “in the underneath of History”, to use Nancy Cunard's words. The private and the public intertwine in your novel. “The Easter Rising”, for instance, is seen from the perspective of ordinary Dubliners, and of women belonging to the Protestant minority whose children went fighting in the Great War abroad. Is that past an open wound, too painful to be remembered? And is this part of the reason why it is so prominent in the novel?

M: For many years, this was, not so much a wound as a silence. At the time, Irish soldiers who survived the Great War and came home were treated as traitors and outcasts in nationalist communities because they were seen as having supported an Empire that was oppressing their countrymen. (It's important to note, however, that thousands of Irishmen from both sides of the divide – nationalist and unionist, Catholic and Protestant – fought and died together in the trenches).

In the past decade there has been huge healing around the Irish contribution to the Great War. In 2011, for example, Queen Elizabeth made an official visit to Ireland – itself an historic occasion – and visited the National War Monument in Islandbridge in Dublin (which for many years, tellingly, was left abandoned and derelict) which commemorates the Irish fallen in the First World War. On the same visit she also paid her respects at the Garden of Remembrance which honours the Republican men and women who fought to end British rule in Ireland.

This was one of the most important public gestures of recent times that recognized the wound of divided loyalties that has lain at the heart of historical Irish identity. So I suppose all of this was in the ether as I was writing the novel.

The depiction of the Rising in the novel from the view of Bella and her family – Protestant, working class, loyal to the Crown – who don't support the revolution and don't understand it, is unusual, and deliberate. The Rising was a glorious failure, mismanaged and favoured by only a small minority of the population; what turned it into a success was the fact that the leaders were executed by the British – and it was this act that turned popular opinion. But even at that stage, it's unlikely that Bella Casey would have changed her loyalties. For her, the Rising would still have been an illegal challenge to what she would have considered legitimate British rule. (Unlike Sean O'Casey, her brother, who absolutely supported the break with Britain so you could say the Casey family is a microcosm for all the political divisions of the country at that time).

L: To what extent, would you say, does that past experience – thirty years' work for The Irish Times – influence your work as a creative writer?

M: My experience as a journalist has mostly been in the production side of newspapers but I started my career as a reporter and feature writer so I learned early the discipline of working to a deadline and got used to the notion of writing daily. When I started writing fiction, I switched to being a copy editor because it was too difficult to spend all day writing as a journalist and then going home to put on my fiction writer's hat. That said, I'd always had an interest in editing. The precision of editing, of choosing the right word, of not using several words when one will do, is enormously helpful when redrafting my own work. With my short fiction, I will often do 8 – 10 drafts, and most of the redrafting is cutting and honing; being an editor by trade has meant I've learnt to be

ruthless with my own writing. My editing experience has also made me a better teacher, I think. Given me a cold eye, maybe – but often that’s what young and new writers need and want when their work is being reviewed – a cold eye.

L: I suspect that you are equally demanding of your own writing, which explains how, sometimes, the artifice of writing is at its best with made-up characters. Reverend Leeper, for instance, who’s another case of Divine Justice in that novel. Is there any intentional reference to the scandal of Irish paedophile priests?

M: Yes and no. First of all, although the Reverend Leeper is my creation, he does spring from a reference O’Casey makes in his autobiography about a clergyman at Bella’s school who was very demanding. His demands were not specified, but it provided an opening for me to speculate and to invent. There are echoes of church sexual scandals in this element of the plot, I suppose, though it’s important to note that Leeper is a Protestant minister whereas the child abuse scandals that have dominated in Ireland for the past 20 years have, for the most part, involved Catholic clergy. And to be fair to him, Leeper is not a paedophile; in fact, as with a lot of sexual predation, he is abusing his position of power and authority.

L: We are back to the question of equality and gender, and also to that area where fact and fiction intersect. Your early work, Mother of Pearl, is also based on a true story.

M: I’ve always been interested in re-envisioning real stories or using them as a leaping off point for fiction. In fact I came across the story that inspired *Mother of Pearl* in a newspaper so I suppose you could say I’ve used my journalistic training as a resource, or maybe it’s just a paucity of imagination. I like to take a story as given and look at it from a different angle. Engage in the ‘what ifs’.

L: You teach Creative Writing to MA students: are those young writers also prompted to play with and engage with the ‘what ifs’? Does your academic experience somehow contribute to the workings of your imagination? In other words, would you say that your work lies between fact, fiction and the artifice of writing?

M: Teaching creative writing keeps you in touch with what’s happening now in writing. You get to learn what enthuses young writers and you see new styles and genres opening up. You see students bursting with ideas and some of that energy brushes off on the teacher. As to where my own stories lie – maybe that’s for others to decide. For me they’re a mix of truth and lies. Emotionally true, factually suspect. Isn’t that the alchemy of writing? Unlike my novels, my short fiction often starts with something very small – an image, something witnessed, even a first line. In that sense the short story

is much closer to the poem in conception. Then it's a process of following your nose, so to speak. Seeing where the narrative takes you. In that sense it's a lot freer as a process than the novels, where the trajectory of the narrative is often laid out. For the most part, my stories are contemporary, rather than historical, although I have been tinkering of late with some historical short stories. But even those concern fictional characters, not real people. I want to maintain that freedom to be absolutely fictional in the short form.

L: Since you mention "what is happening now in writing", I'd like to know your view on how Irish literature has changed in recent years from when you started writing fiction.

M: There are many more women writing and being published – exciting and ground-breaking new voices like Eimear McBride, Belinda McKeon, Sara Baume, Danielle McLaughlin. Daring, thoughtful, savage and unashamedly female. The breaking open of this female voice is very exciting to witness as when I started out, you were often singled out as being a 'woman writer' as if it was a special category apart from the mainstream. (I'm of the generation of Irish women writers who were famously excluded from the Field Day Anthology in the 1990s, only to be afterwards included in the extra 'women's' volume published in 2003). And for women themselves, there was a lot of hand-wringing about what it meant to be a 'woman writer' as if it bore special responsibilities because we were so few. So by sheer numbers, those gender distinctions and that identity anxiety has been swept away.

L: To conclude, what's in store for you, after Prosperity Drive? Are you doing any specific research work at the moment?

M: I'm working on a novel – I'm in the early stages so am superstitious about saying too much about it. I think of it as being a contemporary novel, but of course it's set in the 1990s so that's nearly historical by now!

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Various Authors, *Signatories*, preface by Eilis O'Brien, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2016, pp. 137. € 20.00. ISBN 978-1-910820-10-0.

William Butler Yeats, *L'opera poetica (vol II: 1904-1914)*, versione di Carlo Franzini, testo inglese a fronte, Ro, Book Editore, 2015, pp. 153. € 14. ISBN 978-88-7232-732-6.

Recensioni / Reviews

Vittorio Di Martino, *Romand Ireland*, Cork, The Collins Press, 2006 [2003], pp. xi+208. € 15. ISBN 1-905172-19-2.

Vittorio and Roswitha Di Martino, *Irish Rome. Roma irlandese*, Roma, Arbor SapientiaE, 2015, pp. 194. € 38.00 ISBN 978-88-97805-54-0.

L'Irlanda e Roma, Roma e l'Irlanda. *The Romans in Ireland, the Irish in Rome*. Due rotte, due popoli, due lingue per rappresentare la varietà degli elementi presenti nei lavori di Vittorio Di Martino, uno dei quali realizzato in collaborazione con la moglie Roswitha. Da anni i due studiosi si interessano alla ricostruzione di relazioni ed influenze reciproche tra Irlanda ed Italia contribuendo all'arricchimento del variegato campo di studi culturali italo-irlandesi in ambito internazionale.

Con una discussione attenta della preziosa biografia di Agricola lasciataci dal giovane poeta Romano Tacito, Di Martino apre il suo *Roman Ireland* stabilendo il I secolo d.C. come inizio dell'incontro di due civiltà che da allora, a fasi alterne e seguendo il corso della storia pre-medievale europea, hanno incrociato conoscenze, saperi, lingue e molto altro. Per gli storici e gli studiosi di archeologia si tratta di un'ipotesi controversa ma che l'autore supporta adducendo varie prove a dimostrazione dello sviluppo di contatti tra Impero romano e popolazioni celtiche ben prima della cristianizzazione dell'Irlanda. Dei due lavori discussi, *Roman Ireland* è un'importante e originale opera di ricostruzione-elaborazione storica, in cui si presentano conclusioni spesso recepite in modo radicalmente diverso dagli esperti del settore. Nel recente *Irish Rome*, l'attenzione si sposta sullo sviluppo, nel corso dei secoli, di una genuina cultura irlandese 'romana'. Anziché riprendere il modello di scansione tematica nella quale le ipotesi sulle 'colonizzazioni' romane dell'Irlanda si alternano alla descrizione di reperti archeologici e analisi linguistiche a sostegno delle stesse (in *Roman Ireland*), Roswitha e Vittorio Di Martino scelgono luoghi e personaggi entrati a far parte del patrimonio umano e culturale sia irlandese, sia della Capitale.

Scritti a oltre un decennio di distanza l'uno dall'altro, *Roman Ireland* e *Irish Rome* figurano come due sguardi complementari sullo stesso oggetto; ma se da un lato ciò sembra rispecchiare l'intento di chi ne ha pensato e curato la realizzazione, dall'altro il fatto che questa analogia si scontri con un diverso sviluppo tematico-strutturale stimola inevitabilmente chi legge a porsi e porre interrogativi di natura metodologica per quanto riguarda *Roman Ireland*. An-

ziché a confermare o contravvenire alle diverse vedute di storici e studiosi delle due culture, Di Martino ci invita piuttosto a considerare la rilevanza di reperti di provenienza romana rinvenuti sul territorio irlandese e di altri ritrovamenti per attribuire all'Irlanda un retaggio storico-culturale più ampio di quello comunemente riconosciuto, "a picture that strains and ultimately dissolves the myth of a primitive Ireland, isolated and substantially motionless in a golden age" (2006 [2003], 45) – un'ipotesi agli antipodi di quella condivisa dai primi geografi e storici (46). In questa come in altre occasioni all'interno del volume, l'insistenza del nostro studioso sulle probabilità di un'entrata in Irlanda dell'Impero romano fin dagli albori dell'era pre-medievale corre il rischio di offuscare quegli elementi della cultura e della storia autoctoni, a discapito delle radici culturali celtiche dell'isola. Tuttavia, anche una lettura di questo tipo risulterebbe insufficientemente esaustiva, se si considerano l'originalità e la sincerità di una scrittura mai auto-referenziale, ma che anzi si preoccupa di condurre chi legge attraverso la scoperta di un campo di indagine pressoché illimitato.

Di Martino risulta in particolar modo convincente quando sostiene l'inconsistenza di certe tesi storiche che ipotizzano un'avanzata dell'Impero romano in Inghilterra priva di ricadute per la vicina Irlanda; e in effetti, la trattazione di una probabile spedizione romana prima della fine del I secolo d.C. nel capitolo che apre *Roman Ireland* risulta uno dei momenti più efficaci dell'intero volume. Altrettanto lo è la discussione, nel capitolo successivo, di tecniche di tintura della lana purpurea (37) che avrebbero aperto la strada a una serie di influenze della moda romana del tempo sul vestiario irlandese: un elemento da leggere in parallelo al ritrovamento di specchi, pettini, e oggetti di bellezza rinvenuti nella zona di Lagore – nelle parole dello stesso Di Martino, "the most common small objects to be found on archeological sites" (43). Successivamente, lo storico della cultura riprende una serie di tappe chiave della storia pre-medievale irlandese, tra cui il passaggio dall'utilizzo di strutture residenziali a pianta rotonda a strutture con pianta quadrata, con cui ipotizza un graduale adattamento dell'edilizia irlandese in direzione di modelli tipici dell'edilizia dell'Impero, oppure la diffusione di tecniche di agricoltura che costituirebbero prime prove inconfutabili di uno 'stravolgimento' della civiltà irlandese, dell'arrivo di una civiltà (quella romana) che contribuì a trasformare in modo permanente "the Irish landscape and the Irish way of life" (74). Molti altri sono gli esempi e i generi impiegati a dimostrazione di questa controversa tesi: i legami tra alfabeto romano e le prime iscrizioni *ogham* (Capitolo 4); una seconda invasione dell'Irlanda, riguardo alla quale la mancanza di fonti scritte è compensata dall'evidenza archeologica, circoscritta alla zona di Tipperary e alla celeberrima Rock of Cashel (Capitolo 5); i ritrovamenti di monete da cui si potrebbero ipotizzare reti del commercio di merci anche appartenenti all'uso quotidiano, ma anche di schiavi (Capitolo 6); l'interessante e originale questione delle contaminazioni esistenti tra divinità celtiche e romane (Capitolo 7); per finire, l'arte dei millefiori, tratta a fare parte di quella irlandese nel già citato primo secolo (Capitolo 8).

In un altro importante momento quasi a conclusione di *Roman Ireland*, anch'esso tra i più convincenti e solidi dello studio di Di Martino, l'autore ricorda la nascita di alcune divinità celtiche e romane per dimostrare i modi in cui "Romans, with their need for natural representation, gave for the first time a face to many Celtic gods, and by assimilating them with Roman ones, created a new Romano-Celtic religion" (2006 [2003], 137). Come in altri casi, si tratterebbe allora non soltanto di riscoprire e riconoscere il ruolo fondamentale svolto dalla civiltà romana nello sviluppo di tradizioni tipicamente irlandesi, ma anche di considerare al contempo l'influenza del contesto in cui le relazioni Roma-Irlanda si sono svolte per lungo tempo; in altre parole, di attestare il contributo di conoscenze 'europee' itineranti alle quali si espongono nei loro viaggi gli esponenti di entrambe le culture, prima di fare ritorno al paese di origine, o di spostarsi in direzione di un altro.

Poiché è indubbio che ci troviamo anche di fronte a un 'viaggio', il racconto di Di Martino in *Roman Ireland* riesce infine a convincere proprio in quanto 'racconto', in quanto conferma di un irresistibile impulso allo *story-telling* così caratteristico della cultura irlandese e così discusso nel campo degli studi culturali. Lo stesso desiderio di raccontare costituisce il cuore pulsante di *Irish Rome*, il secondo dei due lavori discussi. Qui, la presenza di Roswitha Di Martino arricchisce il sistema di connessioni italo-irlandesi gravitanti attorno alla città di Roma e alla sua storia: un percorso-racconto attraverso luoghi ed epoche, vero e proprio 'story telling' urbano'. Scritto in inglese e in italiano, *Irish Rome* è generosamente arricchito da un apparato fotografico di altissimo valore, grazie al quale la narrazione quasi episodica sviluppata nei diciannove capitoletti acquista un carattere documentario di indubbio interesse anche per un pubblico non accademico. Uno degli aspetti più piacevoli del lavoro è infatti la cura con cui gli autori hanno cercato di dar vita a uno strumento fruibile che unisca la ricostruzione storica documentata al piacere della lettura. In questo modo, *Irish Rome* apre le porte, tra gli altri, delle strade percorse dai Francescani in visita alla chiesa di Sant'Isidoro, di Villa Spada, sede dell'Ambasciata irlandese, delle reliquie di San Patrizio, fino agli emblemi della cultura letteraria dell'isola in visita nella città eterna – Oscar Wilde e James Joyce. La discussione delle pietre tombali del Cimitero Acattolico è tra le più suggestive, per il modo in cui pone l'accento sul racconto di vite e storie di chi ha vissuto la città e il suo passato, spesso provenendo da contesti socio-culturali anche molto diversi fra loro. Roma vista con gli occhi dei Di Martino è una città fatta anche di pittori e artisti, di donne e uomini che hanno condiviso il loro amore per una terra 'vicina' all'amata Irlanda. Una vicinanza che sembra voler continuamente trovare nuova espressione attraverso il racconto di chi ne sa e ne vuol cogliere la lunga e coinvolgente storia, attraverso tempi, luoghi, vite.

Samuele Grassi

AA. VV., *Tra una vita e l'altra. Un'antologia italo-irlandese*, introduzione di Catherine Dunne e Federica Sgaggio, Parma, Guanda, 2015, pp. 176. € 13. ISBN 978-8-8235-1157-6.

Dei tanti ricordi del viaggio in Irlanda dello scorso aprile 2015, fatto assieme ai miei amici poeti del Gruppo 77 di poesia di Bologna, diretto da Alessandro Dall'Olio, su invito del poeta William Wall (a seguito del nostro incontro a Bologna di qualche mese prima, citato nella nota finale di questa antologia in "L'Italo-Irish Literature Exchange: una condivisione") i migliori sono due: una fotografia e una canzone.

La fotografia ci ritrae tutti insieme sulla spiaggia: è il primo oceano per me. È un giorno che piove (smette, ripiove), e nessuno di noi, tranne William e sua moglie Liz, ha abiti adatti all'aprile irlandese, perciò il vento ci gonfia come improbabili aquiloni sotto le cerate. Chi di noi non ha il berretto, ha chiove inselvatichite, e i miei amici camminano un po' più avanti sulla sabbia. William rimane indietro assieme a me. Mi indica un 'laggiù' particolare, all'orizzonte, e mi dice 'la vedi, l'America, là?'. Ne sorridiamo.

La canzone, invece, si canticchia sottovoce. Siamo stretti in un abbraccio che ci fa amici, dopo l'incontro con le istituzioni di Cork, in seguito alla nostra partecipazione al Cork World Book Fest, e William intona una canzone partigiana: la cantiamo, ribelli e divertiti. L'abbraccio è la melodia che la porta fino a qui, due anni dopo.

C'è qualcosa che accade, quando si incontrano persone speciali in ambiti speciali. Accade in un luogo preciso, alla bocca dello stomaco. Per me, spesso, significa una sorta di male piccolo: mi dà coscienza di essere, col mio corpo, esattamente in quel luogo e in quel momento, e mi dice di prestare attenzione, perché quell'incontro sarà importante nel tempo. Questo è quello che è successo quando abbiamo conosciuto William a Bologna, a giugno 2014. Ecco perché non posso che comprendere l'entusiasmo con il quale Catherine Dunne e Federica Sgaggio, nella introduzione a *Tra una vita e l'altra, un'antologia italo-irlandese*, anticipano i racconti contenuti e le tematiche trattate dai 15 autori, parlando di "cose in comune" e del "desiderio dei due paesi di costruire legami letterari più saldi" (7).

Se, come giustamente qui si sottolinea, il tema ricorrente nei testi è l'estraniamento (l'alienazione, il distacco, l'emarginazione) e se l'antidoto all'estraniamento è l'amore, allora questa vicinanza di parole dà alla scrittura la sua perfetta ragione d'essere. Scrivono, infatti, Dunne e Sgaggio:

La scrittura è traduzione, la traduzione dell'esperienza in parole, immagini e metafore... (8)

Se ogni racconto è un tutto a se stante, nel loro insieme i testi sono un caleidoscopio della società contemporanea: fotografano come ci si orienta negli spazi tra l'imma-

ginazione e le realtà terrene della nostra quotidianità, osservano i contorni dell'estraniamento geografico e del dolore della perdita emotiva e fisica. Affrontano la sofferenza e il lutto, la negazione e la morte – il sommo estraniamento – e lo fanno con energia, passione ed empatia. (13)

Così non possiamo che entrare in questi microcosmi così ben intrecciati e riconoscerci affini, nonostante le differenti ambientazioni, proprio nei sentimenti di estraniamento e di marginalità che descrivono l'individuo, nel suo ricercare uno spazio, una spiegazione del suo essere nel mondo.

Dice Federica Sgaggio, nel bellissimo racconto "Madrelingua": "Non si guardò entrando, ma uscendo poteva farlo appena apriva la porta. Così, a sorpresa, per capire se era bella e che luce aveva" (116).

E, ancora, Afric Mc Glinchey in "Un'altra pelle": "Adesso guardo la pioggia, / tamburello con le dita, Parigi lontana, la tua intensa / attenzione – non sono mai più stata vista così" (59).

Ed è questo tentativo di sguardo esterno verso se stessi, quello che, forse, gli autori ricercano, dando vita a personaggi talmente vivi da consentircene una realtà fisica, immaginandone la voce, l'accento, la postura: in questo vedere altri, vediamo noi.

Si provano insieme, infatti, antipatia e compassione, per la dottoressa glaciale di "Nel guscio di noce dello spazio infinito" (un titolo come una poesia), di Gaja Cenciarelli, terrorizzata da ogni forma di contatto, tanto con l'altro che con il proprio corpo: "Il letto è il distacco dal corpo. Il pigiama non ha mani. Le sfiora la pelle, innocuo. Supina, si tira su il piumone fin sotto al mento, poi immerge le braccia sotto il lenzuolo stando ben attenta a non toccarsi" (47).

E quasi detestiamo "Il donatore" del racconto di Nuala Nì Cohonchúir, mentre ci rattrista il "Cuidador" di "La nave" di Giulio Mozzi: è il fratello per il quale non abbiamo fatto abbastanza, e sua madre e suo padre sono nostra madre e nostro padre, oppure rimaniamo schiacciati da qualcosa come "ora, vedo cancellata quasi ogni traccia. Entro pochi giorni la cancellazione sarà completa" (84), e non troviamo scampo e ogni cura pare inutile. Questo troviamo ancora, anche più avanti, dentro il 'terribile', amarissimo racconto di William Wall "L'addio all'isola": "la verità è che la tomba è un bene come un altro. È un piccolo lotto di terra in cui mettere una bambina. Ha una lapide con il suo nome. Vi è registrato il tempo trascorso. È un archivio completo. Contiene carne, ossa, ricordi e la parentesi di nascita e morte" (120). Non è probabilmente possibile immaginare un estraniamento più potente della morte, morte raccontata da chi rimane a sopravvivere – "Io fui quella che vide. Mi arrampicai sul muro della torre di guardia perché era la cosa più alta dell'isola. La vidi da lassù" (121) –, a volte con dolore, con rassegnazione e senso di vuoto, altre con incredibile ironia.

L'antologia, infatti, si chiude con lo stupefacente "Amanita", di Fabio Viola, leggendo il quale più di una volta mi sono sorpresa a ridere rumoroso-

samente, e a pensare che avrei davvero voluto incontrare (se non fosse che vivono “su più piani dimensionali”, 150), la splendida nonna e Altiero, il ragazzo, protagonista del racconto, catapultato a pupille dilatate in una totale *srealtà*. La chiusa di questo libro è sua, ed io non trovo parole migliori che queste, per invitare alla lettura: “In qualche modo arrivo a casa. In piedi sul pianerottolo scrivo un sms a mio padre: Non torno. Resto dalla nonna. Mi risponde pochi istanti dopo: Ti ho visto attraversare il cortile. A quel punto tanto vale entrare” (151).

Gianmario Lucini, compianto poeta e coraggioso editore, amava ripetere che l’arte porta un messaggio, che si scrive sempre in funzione di qualcuno che leggerà, e che l’autore ha la responsabilità di questa sua capacità di sguardo e di parola sul mondo, che deve denudare il reale, denunciarne le nudità per descriverlo, in maniera che esso possa essere comprensibile. In un’epoca, come quella attuale, nella quale – e soprattutto nell’ambito della scrittura e della poesia – sembra si tenda a rinchiudersi sempre più in recinti ombelicali ed egotici di autopromozione e di isolamento, esperienze come questa, di lavoro comune e di coralità, sono allora esattamente l’antitesi amorosa (l’antidoto, come scrivevo prima) all’alienazione e all’estraniamento. Soltanto attraverso la condivisione è possibile il valico delle barriere: linguistiche, tradizionali, culturali e personali. Nella condivisione avvengono gli incontri e ci si scopre simili: i diversi autori fra loro, e gli autori ed i lettori fra loro, ed i personaggi e le persone che accolgono la storia, fra loro.

Un male piccolo, alla bocca dello stomaco, ci avverte, quando questo accade, che vivremo qualcosa di importante. “Una delle cose che dimentichiamo è che il mondo è più assurdo di qualunque parto della nostra mente” (William Wall, 122).

Silvia Secco

Afric Mc Glinchey, *La buona stella delle cose nascoste*, prefazione di Raphael d’Abdon, traduzione di Lorenzo Mari, Forlì, L’arcolaio, 2016, pp. 189. € 13. ISBN 978-88-99322-12-0.

Non tutti i viaggi partono dal luogo della cova;
alcuni iniziano con la punta verde di una stella
che indica in direzione del fiume
 (“La buona stella delle cose nascoste” / “The Lucky Star of Hidden Things”, 158)

Si comincia a incontrare poesia, con Afric Mc Glinchey, già leggendo il titolo di questo libro: *La buona stella delle cose nascoste*. Si tratta, come ci

viene indicato nella nota di apertura, di Sadalachbia: stella dal colore verde che, in primavera, indica il principio del disgelo e, quindi, del nomadismo.

Poi, il nome stesso dell'autrice ci conduce esattamente nei luoghi di questo reportage di viaggio: l'Africa – che lei chiama “casa” – e l'Irlanda, che appaiono quasi come una doppia radice, unita a dare linfa alla struttura dell'intera raccolta ed alle quattro sezioni.

Nella prima, Afric ci fa entrare immediatamente, come ben dice Raphael d'Abdon nella prefazione, in una dimensione temporale “crepuscolare e rarefatta” che appartiene alla sfera onirica (“Nei miei sogni viaggio verso casa, in Africa” / “In my dreams I travel home to Africa”, 18-19) e che ci porta, però, l'eco distinto della grande voce di Yeats, nelle descrizioni di ambienti e paesaggi trasfigurati dalla poesia in ambiti quasi magici, quasi leggendari. Tanto che ci si può spingere a dire che queste, condotte alla parola poetica e fatte segno, sono memorie antecedenti il sonno o immediatamente seguenti. Memorie dai contorni sfumati, “racconti del cuscino”, dove il reale ed il percepito, dell'infanzia e del passato, si fondono attraverso un modo “differente” di raccontare, che naturalmente significa un modo differente di vedere le cose, e che caratterizza l'intera poetica di Mc Glinchey, al punto che lo ritroviamo ben espresso anche più avanti, nella terza sezione (“Noi che abbiamo visto” / “We who saw”):

Quello che vedi tu non è quello che vedo io
[...]
l'occhio si sposta verso l'interno,
verso la dimensione della memoria.
Un modo cieco, differente
di vedere. (123)

Se questo è plausibile, se, cioè, il vedere avviene a palpebre chiuse, in un tempo successivo all'esperienza, allora la poesia della raccolta (e di questa prima sezione in particolare) è tutta immersa in una luce opaca, morbida, di verosimiglianza, dove i piani sensoriali sembrano sovrapporsi sinesteticamente, a dar vita ad un paesaggio che soltanto alcuni termini tornano a descrivere geograficamente in maniera precisa, ed il viaggio si compie continuamente tra il qui e l'altrove, in una deriva di “strada” (“asfalto che si scioglie”, “aria polverosa”), di “canicola”, che altro non so definire se non, usando la stessa parola di Afric, “miraggio”:

[...] sopra questa strada di sabbia
[...] dove io dissotterro una storia.
[...]
Io dissotterro una storia,
setacciando, come fossero farina, vecchi ricordi.
 (“Dopo la tempesta di sabbia” / “After the sandstorm”, 33)

Qui, sovente guardiamo (attraverso il suo sguardo chiuso che ricorda), figure mancanti. Quella del padre, prima di ogni altra. È splendida, in “Pietra zodiacale” / “Birthstone“, ad esempio, la sequenza di chiusura, nella quale il suo ‘riflesso’ viene riportato quasi fisicamente agli occhi ed ai sensi della figlia, dall’anello – oggetto preguo di elementi simbolici e lasciatole in eredità a memoria –

[...] a girare l’anello sul tuo dito troppo gracile.
Ora lo giro sul mio, ripasso la lingua
sulla sua superficie liscia,

finché non ne nasce una nuova prospettiva -
e qualcosa nella sua luce, un barbaglio,
riporta indietro il tuo riflesso. (21)

O quella della figura femminile di “Contando” / “Counting”:

[...] Ora sono io a contare: per scoprire

che la terra ha girato mille
quattrocento e sessanta volte,
attorno allo spazio che ti sei lasciata alle spalle. (43)

Nella seconda e nella terza sezione (“La strada” / “The road” e “Noi che abbiamo visto” / “We who saw”), siamo portati a memorie probabilmente più recenti. La poetessa dice un tempo presente o immediatamente passato, e dice azioni: in “Corsa libera” / “Free running” (80-81), specialmente, è quasi sincopato il ritmo dei risalgo/mi tuffo/atterro/salto/aggiro/scavalco, ed abbiamo evocati con potenza, tanto da poterli quasi toccare, oggetti veri e “cose” (come in “Scintille” / “Sparks” (84-85): le gomme, la ruota, il martello, l’acciaio, il finestrino retrovisore), o vere attività, come nella bellissima “La brigata della tinta bianca alla carica” / “Charge of the white paint brigade”. Anche qui, però, l’evocazione e la suggestione sono la chiave che rinomina il mondo e sono la poesia. Così accade che l’azione descritta (in questo caso la ritinteggiatura delle pareti), trovi ben altri margini di significato: il respiro dello sforzo fisico si fa “mantra di madre”, le pareti prima ammuffite e sporche si arrendono ai colpi bianchi del pennello come “agnellini levigati”, le gocce di colore colate sui fogli di giornale a protezione del pavimento, cancellano “le cattive notizie” e le stanze rinnovate – “molto dopo, mentre festeggiamo” – arrivano a brillare “come parole dolci” (91).

Nuove assenze tornano a caratterizzare anche la quarta ed ultima sezione “Affacciandomi sul tuo mondo” / “Leaning into your world”, nella quale compaiono, delicatamente e mai disperatamente esposti, il dolore e la solitudine:

Mi sento come se fossi stata messa in attesa
soltanto che nessuno me l'ha detto
e non c'è nessuna musica a lenire...

Mi chiedo se riattaccare
perché non c'è campo nella tua caverna
... nient'altro che silenzio ...
("On hold" / "In linea", 163)

È un dolore piccolo, appena accennato. E questa è una sezione breve, dove i pochi testi – fra i quali il bellissimo "Yes (after James Joyce)" / "Sì (Alla maniera di James Joyce)" (176-179) – sembrano memorie ancora da compiersi: future, eppure già contemplate. Sono ancora racconti del cuscino, ma quasi "preghiere" prima di dormire, propositi preparatori alle esperienze di domani, dove la speranza è possibile. Ed è possibile, ad esempio, leggere poesie sporgendole verso la luce, prendere sonno al canto degli uccelli:

Depisto i dubbi;
una crepa nel cielo
è soltanto una piccola cosa
("Affacciandomi sul tuo mondo" / "Leaning into your world", 171)

Ho avuto il privilegio di conoscere Afric Mc Glinchey due anni fa, a Bologna, nel corso dell'evento "Sounds of worlds", uno degli incontri organizzati dall'IILE (Italo – Irish Literature Exchange), dove i poeti e scrittori irlandesi William Wall, Nuala Ní Conchúir, Mia Gallagher, Noel Monahan e, appunto, Afric Mc Glinchey, hanno incontrato i poeti del Gruppo 77 di poesia di Bologna del quale sono parte. Capita, a volte, che le vicinanze di parole che la poesia permette, si tramutino in prossimità di persone, e che, attraverso la cura dei rapporti che si vengono ad instaurare, questi incontri diventino abbracci durevoli, dai quali nascono collaborazioni, condivisioni ed amicizie. In seguito a questo primo conoscersi, infatti, molte sono state poi le occasioni di scambio. Per tutte queste ragioni, poter parlare dell'opera poetica di Afric Mc Glinchey è motivo di grande emozione per me e mi scuso per una recensione incompleta, che sfiora – per mia incompetenza – soltanto il testo tradotto in italiano e che manca, proprio per questo, di parole sulla musicalità e sul significante.

La sua è una poesia evocativa e concreta al contempo e questo libro, che nomina fin dal titolo un elemento immaginifico dall'enorme respiro, come sono le "stelle", è la promessa mantenuta della sensazione che avevo avuto sin da quel mio primo incontro con la poetessa: di una stella indiscutibilmente "buona".

La buona poesia è capace di fare esattamente questo: prende "le cose nascoste" in una memoria privata, le solleva ad altitudini siderali. Lì, nel lo-

ro brillare – verde, primaverile – tutti le possono distinguere da lontano, riconoscendole anche come proprie. In questo modo la poesia parla e dice. In questo modo si lascia cogliere:

[...] e lui ha trovato la sua strada
attraverso tutti i miei strati
e io potrei, ho pensato, sì
penso che dirò
sì. (179)

Silvia Secco

Vito Carrassi, *Un asino caduto dal cielo*, Giuliano Ladolfi editore, Borgomanero, 2015, € 12. ISBN: 9788866442240.

“In principio fu la Baia di Dublino, quindi, l’una dopo l’altra, spuntarono dall’Oceano le contee della vecchia e cara Irlanda” (7), nella Genesi del romanzo di Vito Carrassi, il cielo e la terra biblici sono quelli della vecchia e cara Irlanda, vera protagonista di questo romanzo così nuovo e così antico insieme. L’autore ripercorre la storia dell’isola e la storia dell’uomo attraverso le peripezie di una strana coppia: “un asino caduto dal cielo”, come recita il titolo, e un “perdigiorno”, Cormac McAlister. I due si incontrano in mare, il 20 agosto, quando Jude the Asscade dal cielo, appunto, non prima di essersi librato in volo per qualche lunghissimo istante; così, come fosse la cosa più naturale del mondo, un asino che sbatte le sue lunghe orecchie ed eclissa, per un istante, il sole, il corpo celeste che dà vita alla nostra piccola Terra. Una piccola Terra e una piccola Irlanda popolata, nel libro, da esseri umani piccoli e meschini, ognuno perso dietro la propria quotidianità fatta di “impegni, vincoli, incombenze, obblighi, gravami, incarichi, doveri, compiti, responsabilità, ingiunzioni, impicci e impacci, lacci e lacciuoli, faccende e faccenduole” (9), pulci di terra e puntoli, esclamerebbe Nietzsche¹, o una colonia di formiche, per usare un’immagine di Luciano da Samosata, autore caro a Vito Carrassi e citato in epigrafe².

Il romanzo di Vito Carrassi punta il dito verso la contemporaneità, verso l’avvento del Nuovo Mondo, “quello delle magnifiche sorti e regressive” (9), così come lo definisce il narratore nel romanzo variando la citazione leopardiana, dove tutto è profitto, euforia, sfarzo. E lo fa seguendo il casuale peregrinare di un perdigiorno che, dopo aver salvato un asino caduto in ma-

¹ F. Nietzsche, *Sull’utilità e il danno della storia per la vita*, Milano, Adelphi, 2003, 66.

² Luciano, “Icaromenippo”, in Id., *Racconti fantastici*, Garzanti, Milano 1995.

re, inizia a vagare per Dublino col suo compagno, animale dall'“indolenza dolce, suadente, inebriante” (208).

L'autore smaschera l'inconsistenza dei falsi miti d'Occidente con tutte le armi della narrativa e della retorica. Il peregrinare dei due protagonisti si snoda attraverso la casualità degli incontri che, questa volta non per caso, porteranno Cormac a scoprire la storia dei dodici asini (gli apostoli della tradizione cristiana o i dodici apostoli d'Irlanda del VI secolo? O solo i Dodici Asini d'Irlanda di questa Irlanda verissima e allo stesso tempo *fictional* per definizione?) e raccontarci che essi sono la reincarnazione dei dodici scrittori più influenti della cultura irlandese: Jonathan S., Oscar W., George Bernard S., William B.Y., John M.S., Sean O'C., James J., James S. e Brian O'N.³ e che si trovano di nuovo sulla terra nei corpi di asini nel fallimentare tentativo di salvare quest'Irlanda e questo Nuovo Mondo ormai allo sbaraglio. E l'autore, fatalmente, non può che costruire la trama di questi più o meno casuali incontri attraverso il più attraente e insidioso degli artifici: la digressione.

Carrassi sceglie questo espediente tecnico-stilistico⁴ come principio costitutivo del suo romanzo. Perché la digressione, verbale, sintattica o narrativa che sia, permette da una parte di scandagliare la realtà, di analizzarla in tutte le sue sfaccettature, mentre dall'altra essa è anche il tema centrale del romanzo perché descrive il caos dell'esistenza umana che non può essere ordinato, che non *deve* essere ordinato. È l'emblema della vita dell'uomo contemporaneo, tutto preso, sin dal Settecento di Linneo, dalla mania di etichettare, incasellare, ordinare, eppure inevitabilmente preda della caoticità della vita e del suo stesso essere; l'unica possibilità, negata dalla mania contemporanea dell'ordine, della parcellizzazione (del sapere, della 'proprietà', del tempo), è quella che il protagonista incarna, il suo essere un perdigiorno, il suo lasciarsi condurre dagli eventi senza cercare caparbiamente di capirli, senza avere paura di perdersi nello spazio e nel tempo. Così, attraverso la digressione, l'autore permette al reale di proliferare e di espandersi, riuscendo a rappresentare non solo e non tanto il caos della vita dell'uomo, ma piuttosto l'ottusità di chi questo caos lo vorrebbe arginare, contenere, 'addomesticare' attraverso la pace illusoria della logica del consumo e della incessante produttività.

Nel libro si trovano infiniti esempi di questa espansione-proliferazione a livello verbale, sintattico e narrativo. A livello verbale, vale l'esempio che ho citato della descrizione della vacua quotidianità dell'uomo, tutto preso da “impegni, vincoli, gravami [...]” (9). L'autore slabbra il linguaggio, appro-

³ “[...] il quale, non si sa per quale privilegio, si presentava allo stesso tempo come uno e come tre, era il nono asino ed era contemporaneamente il nono, il decimo e l'undicesimo asino, ora era Brian O'N., ora Flann O'B., ora Myles Na C. e ora tutti e tre insieme” (216), ci spiega il narratore nell'ultimo capitolo.

⁴ Cfr. N. Fusini, “Cinque schede sul *Tristram Shandy*”, *Studi inglesi* 1, 1974, 137.

fondisce il significato di ogni parola affiancandola ad altri mille sinonimi, omonimi, scarti semantici, diminutivi e vezzeggiativi.

Lo stesso gioco di esplorazione infinita si ritrova a livello sintattico. Ad esempio, nel capitolo I, quando il narratore ci presenta Cormac, “un perdigiorno solitario di primo livello, una vera primizia per i nostri tempi” e, poi, inaspettatamente, devia dai “nostri tempi” e inizia a descriverci, per opposizione, i “tempi di una volta”. L'autore intesse una trama sintattica insolita, fatta di paratattiche tutte introdotte dal sintagma “tempi in cui” (8). Carrassi sceglie la paratassi per introdurre miriadi di *a parte* che complicano la frase e, con essa, la lettura. Il lettore deve fermarsi, talvolta rileggere, per trovare i fili delle diverse trame e intrecciarli tra loro; perché quegli *a parte* sono quasi delle parentesi che potrebbero essere omesse senza che questo causi un'alterazione della trama. Eppure, è proprio in quelle parentesi che risiede il senso del romanzo. La digressione è strumento e contenuto, appunto, significante e significato, ci insegna che la vita è fatta di pause, fili interrotti, trame slegate e legatissime a un tempo e ci obbliga a fermarci senza guardare l'orologio, fa, anche di noi lettori di questo velocissimo mondo contemporaneo, dei felicissimi perdigiorno. E nelle digressioni ritroviamo il ‘sugo’ della storia; in questa che abbiamo citato, l'autore ripercorre una immaginaria storia d'Irlanda (che però, diversi capitoli più in là, si farà ‘vera’, quando inscenerà, ad esempio, una pantomima della tigre celtica degli anni Novanta) anticipando quel che sarà il filo rosso del romanzo: la nostra impazzita contemporaneità, fatta di consumismo, velocità, incomunicabilità, cause legali e avvocati.

Ultimo sviluppo della digressione si ha a livello della trama. L'autore interrompe spesso le tappe del viaggio di Cormac e Jude per lasciarci sbirciare nelle vite, tutte complesse e tutte semplicemente umane, di Grainne, di Evelyn o anche solo di qualche passeggero di un treno che sta scendendo a Sandycove/Glathule, la stessa fermata di Cormac. Cormac che è su un treno perché ha perso la bicicletta, quella bicicletta che aveva trovato per caso, senza catene, appoggiata a un muro, quella bicicletta a cui tanto si è affezionato da parlarne come parlasse di una persona, quella bicicletta che è, guarda caso, la bicicletta che *qualcuno* ha rubato a Grainne che l'aveva lasciata appoggiata a un muro e che la spinge a cercarla per tutta Dublino in una peregrinazione tanto simile a quella di Cormac e che le farà incontrare prima Jude, poi Cormac e, infine, James Joyce reincarnato in un asino. Una bicicletta come personaggio, in omaggio a Flann O'Brien e alla bicicletta del *terzo poliziotto*, e poi una macchina come personaggio e un paio di coperte e così via. Gli oggetti diventano motore dell'azione, in questo enciclopedico romanzo, e portano i personaggi a farsi guidare dall'apparente casualità che governa l'esistenza a scoprire rotte inesplorate e inediti orizzonti.

Ho definito il romanzo di Vito Carrassi ‘enciclopedico’, perché l'autore costruisce con sapienza un gioco di rimandi e citazioni, un *pastiche* letterario che, come scatole cinesi, disvela il vuoto dell'esistenza e, allo stesso tempo, di-

venta, come una matrioska, custode della tradizione. In *Un asino caduto dal cielo*, il lettore attento troverà infiniti fili che collegano parole e opere anche le più lontane tra loro: da Enzo Iannacci a William Shakespeare, da José Ortega y Gasset a Orietta Berti, da Franco Battiato a Petrarca, da Dante a Leopardi, Montale, Joyce, Rabelais e chi più ne ha più ne metta. La scrittura onnivora di Vito Carrassi rende il lettore partecipe della costruzione della trama, perché ogni lettore saprà cogliere i riferimenti e i rimandi che il proprio vissuto gli permetterà di intuire e così scoprirà significati inediti e sempre diversi in quello spazio complesso del romanzo, fatto di stanze, scale e corridoi, cantine e ripostigli dove, a volte, si nascondono i veri significati, per usare un'immagine di Piero Citati⁵. La scrittura di Vito Carrassi è una scrittura serissima e divertentissima a un tempo, una scrittura in cui prevale il gioco e la riscrittura parodica di altri testi presi come modello da scoronare o da celebrare, a seconda dei casi. L'effetto di questo continuo rimandare ad altri autori, ad altri testi è un perenne straniamento del lettore che legge parole antiche (o solo datate) in un contesto del tutto nuovo che le rende inedite: da una parte il testo originario viene assimilato nel nuovo testo, dall'altra viene creato qualcosa di diverso, di nuovo.⁶ Perché *Un asino caduto dal cielo* è qualcosa di nuovo, appunto, nel panorama letterario italiano contemporaneo: così profondamente italiano nei rimandi (pensiamo ad esempio al *Finché la barca va* di Orietta Berti, appunto) e, allo stesso tempo, così irlandese (infiniti i riferimenti a giocatori di rugby, scrittori, musicisti irlandesi, per non parlare dei luoghi di Dublino visitati dai personaggi) arriva a chiamare in causa il lettore esplicitamente nella decina di note che troviamo nel testo. All'apparato di note è affidato un serrato dialogo meta-letterario tra scrittore e lettore dove i fili della trama vengono anticipati o svelati, messi in dubbio come "troppo scontati" dal lettore immaginario o da lui suggeriti, ancora una volta, in un gioco di critica aspra o attenta disamina della letteratura contemporanea: "Lo accetta un consiglio? Visto che la letteratura è il suo forte, ma perché si ostina a tenere gli occhi incollati su queste pagine? Ha idea di quante altre cose, molto più impeccabili e sconvolgenti l'aspettano tra gli scaffali delle librerie? Thriller, gialli, noir, gialli a tinte noir, noir a tinte gialle con una spruzzatina di rosa, fantasy, horror, cyberpunk, space opera, docu-novels, gothic novels, graphic novels, pulp novels, biopic novels, stupid novels, per non parlare dei recentissimi cazzata novels, minchiata novels e puttanata novels: ce n'è sicuramente abbastanza per accontentare anche i gusti più esigenti, i palati più fini, i più ineffabili esponenti della nutrita schiera degli eterni insoddisfatti" (148). Disamina dell'infinito proliferare dei generi letterari della nostra epo-

⁵ Cfr. P. Citati, *La civiltà letteraria europea*, Milano, Mondadori, 2005, LVII-XXIII.

⁶ Sul *pastiche* letterario, cfr. G. Genette, *Palimpsestes* (1982), trad. it. di R. Novità, *Palinsesti. La letteratura al secondo grado*, Torino, Einaudi, 1997, 107-114 e 134-139.

ca, certo, ma anche sensibile analisi dei lettori, cioè degli esseri umani, gli “eterni insoddisfatti” che, nella smania furiosa di pace si perdono in spirali di voracità. Letture compulsive, acquisti compulsivi: la legge della domanda e dell’offerta che vede chi offre rispondere alle richieste degli ‘acquirenti’ e, allo stesso tempo, influenzarne il desiderio attraverso ciò che vende sembra, in questo romanzo, aver pervaso tutto creando un vortice perverso che non darà mai pace ma solo sfrenato desiderio. Solo un perdigiorno come Cormac McAlister può conoscere la pace dell’ozio, delle giornate senza frenesia, la gioia d’imbattersi in una bicicletta, in una ragazza che assomiglia a sua madre o, addirittura, in un asino volante. Ed ecco spiegata la seconda epigrafe, i bei versi della canzone *Gli spietati* di Francesco Bianconi dei Baustelle, un’ode a chi sa ‘perdere tempo’, a chi non resta irretito nelle mille “luci della città”:
“Vivere così senza pietà / senza chiedersi perché / come il falco e la rugiada / e non dubitare mai. / Non avere alcuna proprietà, / rinnegare l’anima, / come i sassi e i fili d’erba / non avere identità”.

Elisa Fortunato

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