



THE ETERNAL BATTLE FOR AN ^{T822} IRISH IDENTITY ^{MOOS6346NC}

*A Dissertation on the synthesis of Contemporary
Irish Culture in the Social/Political context
of the 1980's and 1990's*

Thesis
for the
DEGREE
of
B. DES
in
FASHION
DESIGN

by

EOIN Ó LAIGHIN

OLD STRUCTURE 4TH YEAR
FASHION DEPARTMENT
N.C.A.D.
C.N.E.D.

MÁRTA
1991

THE ETERNAL BATTLE FOR AN
IRISH IDENTITY

EOIN Ó LAIGHIN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
List of Illustrations	VIII
Acknowledgments	1
Preface	2
Note	4
INTRODUCTION: IDEOLOGICAL ASPIRATIONS	5
Part One:	
REVIVALISM V's MODERNISM	
IRELAND IN THE 1990's	
CHAPTER 1 URBAN ÉIRE	9
CHAPTER 2 MORAL ÉIRE	11
CHAPTER 3 REPUBLICAN ÉIRE	16
CHAPTER 4 CULTURAL ÉIRE	21
CHAPTER 5 PASTICHE ÉIRE	25
CHAPTER 6 AMERICAN ÉIRE	29
Part Two:	
POSTMODERNISM	
IRELAND IN THE 1990's	
CHAPTER 7 POSTMODERNISM	33
CHAPTER 8 CULTURAL POLICY	36
CHAPTER 9 EUROPEAN REGIONALISM	43
CHAPTER 10 PLURALISM	45
CONCLUSION: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 1990	
A CASE STUDY	47
FOOTNOTES	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	60

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 19th Century poster depicting Ireland as Woman.
- Fig. 2 Maire O'Neill in the role of Pegeen Mike in an early Abbey production of *The Playboy of The Western World*.
- Fig. 3. The Potato Diggers by Paul Henry
- Fig. 3A Republican being led away by Free State Soldiers, Civil War 1922.
- Fig. 4 His Holiness John Paul II with Cardinal O'Fiach at Dublin Airport.
- Fig. 5 Pro Life Pamphlet 1983.
- Fig. 6 Anti Amendment Pamphlet 1983.
- Fig. 7 Gay Byrne.
- Fig. 8 I.D.A. promotional posters.
- Fig. 9 Banking and Computer posters 1987.
- Fig. 10 Proclamation of Provisional Government 1916.
- Fig. 10A Charles Haughey with Tony Gregory 1980.
- Fig. 11 Margaret Thatcher at the Brighton Bomb Memorial Service 1984.
- Fig. 12 Ian Paisley.
- Fig. 13 'Night Ship' by Kathy Prendergast 1984.
- Fig. 13A Traditional Cottage Dresser.
- Fig. 14 Neo-Celtic Artwork by Jim Fitzpatrick.

Fig. 15 Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill - Irish language poet.

Fig. 16 Cartoon from Dublin Opinion.

Fig. 17 Bunratty Folk Park.

Fig. 18 Bunratty Medieval Banquet.

Fig. 19 Durty Nellys and Bunratty Castle.

Fig. 20 Bungalow - A (Galway).

Fig. 21. Bungalow - B (Kerry)

Fig. 22 Bungalow - C (Galway)

Fig. 23 Ruined Thatched Cottage.

Fig. 24 Spanish Resort Architecture.

Fig. 25 Spanish Resort Architecture.

Fig. 26 Chat Magazine.

Fig. 27 Smurfit Fountain.

Fig. 28 Blanket Bog.

Fig. 29 Blarney Woollen Mills.

Fig. 30 Carraig Donn Knitwear 1990.

Fig. 31 Heritage Knitwear 1990.

Fig. 32 Jacquard Sweater - Inis Meain.

Fig. 33 Aran Islanders - Inis Meain.

- Fig. 34 Classic 1970's Flatbed Aran - Gaeltarra.
- Fig. 35 Electronic and Handknit - Gaeltarra 1989.
- Fig. 36 Fair Isle Gaeltarra.
- Fig. 37 Traditional Cloaks & Petticoat from Cleo.
- Fig. 38 Cleo Handknits 1989.
- Fig. 39 Cleo Handknits 1990.
- Fig. 39A Westwood Cut and Slash Knitwear, Spring 1991.
- Fig. 40 Richard Harris, John Hurt and Sean Bean in a scene from THE FIELD (Jim Sheridan/Noel Pearson) 1990.
- Fig. 41 Molly Malone Statue (Grafton Street).
- Fig. 42 Characters from GLENROE 1989.
- Fig. 43 Georgian Doorways.
- Fig. 44 Stephen's Green Shopping Centre - Interior.
- Fig. 45 The Customs House.
- Fig. 46 Destruction of Shannon Lodge, Carrick on Shannon 1963.
(Family home).
- Fig. 47 St. Patrick's Day Postcard.
- Fig. 48 Sybil Connolly Evening Wear 1953.
- Fig. 49 Sybil Connolly Daywear 1953.
- Fig. 50 Men's Knitwear / Lainey Keogh 1990.

- Fig. 51 Cotton Crochet / Lainey Keogh 1990.
- Fig. 52 Yohji Yamamoto's Crochet, Spring 1990.
- Fig. 53 Presidential Inauguration Ceremony, Dublin Castle, 3 December 1990.
- Fig. 54 President Elect Mary Robinson at the R.D.S. (transfer count).
- Fig. 55 Lenihan on the Campaign Trail.
- Fig. 56 Robinson campaigning on Inis Mór, July 1990.
- Fig. 57 President Mary Robinson supporting the Widows Association 1991.
- Fig. 58 Arch-bishop Cahal Daly welcoming President Mary Robinson to ceremony in Armagh.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Kitty Joyce of Cleo for taking time to explain in a most educational conversation about their relentless commitment to traditional handcraft styles and techniques.

Many thanks also to Cniotáil Gaeltarra Teo. for their photographs.

PREFACE

My choice of subject for this thesis is largely a result of 4 years as a student, spent observing the transience and fickleness of the fashion world, with its continual shift in identity from season to season and year to year. Fashion is about redefining, reshaping, restructuring - an endless search for new modes of expression within dress; discarding yesterday's styles only to rediscover them at a whim and reject then at leisure. Although eager at times to be validated as high culture, fashion is about adapting its colours to meet the needs of a financially astute consumer society. Fashion has to keep well abreast of the cultural, political and economic trends in society and the diversity of identity and quality within the industry is a direct reflection of these social circumstances.

As a knitwear designer, I am especially curious about the expedient invention of tradition which has been a universal characteristic of the marketing of this craft in the Twentieth century. In an Irish context this is evident in the proliferation (even still) of stage-Irish design work, and in the broader debate on what, if anything, constitutes an Irish identity in the various fields of Art and Design, Literature, Music, Politics and Social Culture. Although my initial idea for this thesis centred around decoding the artificiality of Irish 'ethnic' knitwear, I found I could not do this satisfactorily without examining to some extent, the far wider and more complex issue of Irish culture in a social and political context. In the end I decided to concentrate on this.

I quickly became absorbed in an analytical overview of Irish culture which took me back through decades of emotional debate to pre-independence Ireland in an attempt to unite common strands of argument from such wide-ranging areas of expression as politics and poetry. I intend to show how our insecurity on a cultural level is directly related to the historical make up in religious, social and political terms and how everything we say or do is reflective of some form of Irish identity. My main task is to expose the many conflicting interpretations of this national identity and to examine why we are so preoccupied with establishing a hardline definition of it. I have kept the discussion relevant to today by concentrating on the 1980's and 1990's, but have referred back where

necessary to prerequisite strands of thought in earlier decades of the century.

Overall I found that this discipline provided a most useful insight into Irish society and was an excellent way of establishing the relevance of my own particular design concern i.e. knitwear, to other forms of national activity.

NOTE

I have divided the text into two main parts with further chapterised subdivisions in a broad attempt to differentiate between what has by and large been the common experience up to now and what appears to be a fresh influence gathering momentum. However, I am not suggesting that the problems of the eighties have been resolved and I would like to point out that many of those experiences common to the eighties are still with us.

My usage of the name Éire in the chapter titles, Part One, is a purely personal touch; a satirical play on the concept of a utopian Gaelic Order which was so clearly out of context in the dirty eighties. Revivalism, Modernism and Postmodernism seemed to be most appropriate descriptions with which to summarise the multifaceted conflicts in Irish society. Equally, however, the terms Traditionalism, Libertarianism, and Pluralism could have been used.

Finally, I decided to conclude with a case study of the Presidential Election 1990, as I feel it summarises quite neatly in itself how Irish society is battling to disentangle itself from an extraordinarily complex web of history, myth and current affairs.

INTRODUCTION

IDEOLOGICAL ASPIRATIONS

IDEOLOGICAL ASPIRATIONS

Defining who or what is Irish has never been as straightforward as it would appear. There is a multiplicity of identities claiming the title from the warriors of ancient folklore and the Bards and Minstrels of the Eighteenth century to the Anglo Irish literary geniuses. When the Normans came and conquered they claimed to become more Irish than the Irish themselves, and there has been a fair share of Viking and Saxon blood mixed in as well. Indeed one might ask how Irish is the Unionist community in the North East of the Island? What is clear however is that Irishness has come to mean quite a lot of different things to different people. To be Gaelic is to be Irish (1) but to be Irish is not necessarily to be Gaelic, no more than to be Irish is to be Catholic, contrary to the puritannical beliefs of many so called Traditionalists. It is important to first acknowledge the subtle differences between such identities as Celtic, Gaelic and Catholic if one is to even attempt a comprehensive overview of Irishness which is really an indigenous term for the population as a whole, and includes such identities as Anglo Irish and Presbyterian. What this effectively means for example is that such writers as Shaw, Berkeley and Swift do not owe their literary achievements to some mysterious racial pre-eminence i.e. Celtic, but can be considered relatively Irish nonetheless because they adopted this country as their own and were directly or indirectly influenced by their Irish environment.

At the turn of the century, the Celtic Dawn movement of which Yeats was a devotee, proposed the conversion of the people nation to Celticism which was exemplified by such qualities as spirituality, occultism and sensuality. The Gaelic League advocated a Gaelic identity based on linguistic and historic traditions, to which Pearse and his followers added the concept of a "Cúchulainn Baptised" (2) i.e. the resurrection of Ireland through sacrificial Catholicism. The format of the Easter Rising 1916 underlined this desired supremacy of Catholicism in a New Ireland. The coincident elevation of the peasant to idealised symbol of Ireland's true essence resulted in contradictory depictions of what this entailed. The personification of Ireland as Woman (a legacy of 18th century Gaelic poetry) led to exaggerated notions of purity and virginity as THE embodiments of the Nationalist ideal. This duality of priest and peasant was a far cry from the physical embracing of sensuality suggested by the

SEE FIG.1

likes of Synge in The Playboy of the Western World and Joyce in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. "The peasant", according to Joyce "has earned a reputation for chastity simply because masturbation is a private vice". (3) To advocate any path to freedom in which such individual desire took precedence over the Nationalist cause was to be vilified by both priest and politician.

SEE FIG.2.

After 1922, the dominant cultural forces were the farmers' values of familism and Catholicism. Fr. Higgins identified the authentic Irish people as "those of the Gaelic speaking West who came to stand for the purity of a Gaelic-Catholic Ireland standing against the savage factors who beat their orange drums in fealty to the Crown." (4)

More realistically, Sean O'Casey argued that the Voice of Ireland was "in the hunger cry of the nation's poor". (5) He deplored the glorious rhetoric of the new republic, when Dublin boasted a higher infant mortality rate than Calcutta in the same period. Joyce reacted vehemently against the heavy influence of clericalism in the new state, and in Ulysses, the succumbing of Molly to Leopold Bloom in the concluding scene embodies a sense of the nation celebrating the sensual rather than the sacrificial.

The official identity for the new Ireland was summed up by Paul Henry's traditional landscapes and romantic peasants and the significance of a rural ethos was confirmed in 1928 by the choice of Percy Metcalfe's wildlife designs for the new coinage. In fact cultural life in the new State was dominated by this vision of Ireland. There was an obsession with the Western Coast and islands as being representative of the real Ireland, despite the contradictory social realities i.e. enforced desertion of The Great Blasket Island.

SEE FIG.3.

The Catholic Church with her authoritarian control over society, offered a way to be Irish which was clearly distinguishable from the British, a fact not so easily achieved economically or visually. Ireland continued to avail freely of British mass produced textiles and furniture. The pious conservatism of the 1930's can partly be attributed to the fact that many parish priests at the time would have been trained in Maynooth in the 1890's. Typical of the strict morality of the Free State was the Censorship Bill 1929, orchestrated not so much by the political parties as by members

of Catholic vigilante societies. The censorship criteria employed puritannical Catholic values rather than literary and aesthetic guidelines. There was an almost Stalinist antagonism to Modernism, Surrealism and Modern Cinema. The drafting of the 1937 Constitution was a result of Fianna Fail collaboration with the Catholic Hierarchy, and indeed it was politically expedient for the party to co-operate thus as many Fianna Fáil T.D.'s had endured episcopal condemnation during the Civil War. In 1943, De Valera was happy to articulate his now famous dream of the nationalist ideal;-

SEE, FIG. 3, A

"... people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit; a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with sounds of industry, the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths, the laughter of comely maidens; whose firesides would be the forums of the wisdom of serene old age," (6)

In retrospect, the lack of imagination and dynamism among the Establishment, during these formative decades of the Republic, encouraged people to emigrate; to escape from the one dimensional, stifling atmosphere of Irish society. In fact when De Valera left office, he left Ireland looking almost exactly as he had found it.

However, the new post-war generation was not so easily satisfied. Ireland, under Sean Lemass flung open her economy to embrace foreign investment. Rock and roll invaded the national consciousness. The Late Late Show added fuel to an ever increasing blaze of global culture influences. The creation of the Kilkenny Design Workshops scheme in 1962 was indicative of the reawakening of Ireland to her role as a modern international nation. In 1966 the 50th anniversary celebration of the Easter Rising highlighted the transition from the old regime to the new order. Two years later, the new Provisional IRA. took up arms in a freedom struggle that has persisted into the Nineties, forcing Nationalists to confront and redefine their views on Partition.

1979 was to be a year of contrasts, Ireland teetered on the edge of a breakdown in Church/State relations. Fianna Fáil introduced a Bill on contraception in accordance with the ruling of the Supreme Court 1973,

and Pope John Paul II arrived to reiterate the Vatican's view on such matters. He received a tumultuous reception. The next ten years were to see the reappearance of a regressive divide in Irish society.

SEE FIG. 4.

It is to this battle between Traditionalism and Libertarianism, that I now turn my attention.

PART ONE

REVIVALISM V's MODERNISM

IRELAND IN THE 1980's

CHAPTER 1

URBAN ÉIRE

By the year 2000, eighteen cities in third world countries will each have a population of over 10 million. Over half the world's population will be living in urban ghettos. For example it is estimated that Mexico City will swell to 31 million and Tokyo to 26 million (8). In Ireland the population increased by half a million during the Eighties, resulting in suburban wildernesses like Tallaght at the foot of the Dublin mountains - the size of Galway City but without any appreciable facilities.

The Fianna Fáil government's White Paper on National Development 1977 proposed an extensive programme of foreign borrowing. Their economic projections for the next 3 years, gambled on (a) the acceptance by Irish workers of sub-inflation wage increases so as to carve out a broader niche for Irish exports in world trade and (b) uninterrupted development in the Western economy. Unpredictably however, the oil crisis in 1979 sent prices on the world's stock exchanges plummeting towards the darkest recession since the Thirties. This country promptly nose-dived into dire financial straits. Between 1979 and 1982 unemployment in the Republic rose by 77% and by December 1984 the national figure totalled 208,000 which was 6% ahead of the overall EEC figure of 10.3%. By the end of 1983 the National Debt amounted to £6,703 million and an EEC report the same year showed that one million people were dependent to some degree on social welfare payments, with 70% relying totally on them. The customary escape route to Britain was blocked by a similarly depressed economy there and Gardaí here reported an alarming rise (50% annually in some Dublin areas) in urban crime; for example, 1,822 people were charged with drug offences in 1983 compared with 71 people in 1970 (9). The fragility in the financial affairs of the State coupled with political instability (3 elections in 18 months), had a reverberating backlash effect on society in general, reminiscent of the grim Fifties. The problem this time seemed to lie in the absence of a consolidating and reassuring workable self image for the nation, as, unlike the Fifties Gaelic, Catholic, Rural Ireland was not to be taken for granted anymore.

"As we passed through the recessions of the Seventies and early Eighties with the Government borrowing wildly to keep the party going somehow, while unemployment grew weekly and the North rumbled on, people seemed dazed like sleepwalkers and were afraid to think. Chatter about unemployment, wages and prices, the bankruptcy of the public finances, political scandals, divorce and abortion and Northern violence filled the air." (10)

The social extravagances of the preceding two decades had created time bomb problems, not least of which was the increasing marginalisation of the poorer sections of the community - notably the small farmers and unskilled labourers who in the 1980's comprised a group of social inferiority only echoed in the hills and slums of Portugal and Greece. By the close of the decade a third of the population was living below the poverty line and in 1984 an Economic and Social Research Institute study (11) showed that in Dublin, movement from the working class to the professional class was twice as less likely than in England or Wales. Middle class dominance was strongly evident at Leaving Certificate standard with three quarters of the children from professional backgrounds entering 3rd level institutions, compared with a meagre 4% from unskilled households (12).

CHAPTER 2

MORAL ÉIRE

Dublin has been described as the largest village in the world; an image which suggests how traditional rural values from the country have stunted the emergence of a genuine urban identity. However, the leader of the Workers Party, Prionsias de Rossa recently claimed of Mary Robinson's Presidential victory that it showed that Ireland had now become an urban society and was willing to shake off these rural values (13). This is clearly a political simplification of the complex assemblage of Irish society. It is worth noting though, that what constitutes a 'rural' ethos - the sanctity of the family, the supportive community, religious fervour and a sense of patriotic duty, is not a residue from the ancient Gaelic order, but is of quite recent origin, dating back to the devotional revolution of post-famine Ireland. For example, the traditionalism and religious conservatism associated with the western seaboard and so evident in the results of the abortion and divorce referenda is a comparatively late development, given that Nineteenth century Connacht was the region with the lowest Mass attendance in the country with as low as 20% in some parishes (14). The centralisation of hierarchial control under Cardinal Cullen in the late nineteenth century, brought the Church squarely into line with mainstream Roman Catholicism. But it was only after the establishment of the Free State that the ideological equation of Catholic Church and Irish Nation was so clearly drawn and not in fact the reverse as has been the common presumption for so long. As Richard Kearney points out - between the Twenties and the Fifties "the former political threat to our national integrity was replaced by a moral threat" (15). Sexual purity became synonymous with national purity and the self-righteous assumption was easily sustained that the root cause of all our evils came yet again from across the Irish Sea.

Inevitably when the winds of change finally began to blow and social and economic standards leap-frogged into modernity, a new transitional phase of high risk cultural mobility upset the traditional and unintellectual apple cart of Irish Catholic doctrine with its heavy reliance on censorship and authoritarian control, and in its place emerged a much more lax and casual Church. Between 1966 and 1974 vocations to the priesthood and

religious life declined from 1,409 to 545 (16). Research among university students in Dublin in 1976 on their attitudes to the moral teachings of the Church on sexual ethics revealed that less than one in five believed sex before marriage to be wrong and 58% felt contraception to be morally acceptable (17).

After the 1979 oil crisis had bled the State coffers dry and caused exorbitant foreign borrowing to jackknife social and economic prosperity into a state of jeopardy once again, the cultural disquiet created by a society which had over-modernised too rapidly to allow its citizens to settle comfortably into urbanised attitudes, erupted in the guise of regressive and moral absolutism constituting a return to repression for those intent on keeping Ireland in the modern world. Chronic unemployment and emigration, terrorist kidnappings and sectarian violence, the Stardust fire, the Granard tragedy, the Kerry babies controversy, the moving statues, the bitterness of the abortion and divorce referenda, the dismantling of the of the Welfare Services, the lack of cohesive political leadership, the new censorship mentality and the cutbacks in educational and cultural policy didn't help the national self confidence (18). "Symbols of stability become crucial in times of instability and in the Ireland of the 1980's instability became almost the most stable fact of life"(19). The popular support garnered by such right wing pressure groups as P.L.A.C. (20) and S.P.U.C. (21) needs to be assessed in this context. Following the abortion referendum in 1983, a visible divide between Ireland's urban and rural communities had appeared. The debate was conducted in a bitterly divisive manner with a pious coalition of laity and clergy self cast in the didactic role of moral guardians of the nation, inspired by memories of the Papal visit in 1979, and locked in heated confrontation with a far from insignificant liberal and largely secular middle class minority, mostly from the greater Dublin area. The Traditionalists viewed the 1937 Constitution as an important bulwark against the rising tide of immorality.

SEE
FIG.5 and
FIG.6.

Followers of Tridentine Archbishop Lefebvre supported the marriage of nationalism to religious martyrdom as a distinctive trait in Irish Catholicism and well rooted in nationalist history. For example, Patrick Pearse had explicitly linked his sufferings to those of Christ:-

"Dear Mary that did see thy first born
Go forth to die amidst the scorn of men
Receive my first born son into thy arms
Who hath also gone out to die for men
And keep him by thee till I come to him" (22).

Archbishop Lefebvre attributed the troubles in the North quite simply to the betrayal of Catholic principles to Protestantism - "Once you admit the Protestant doctrines, then you bring in destructive forces." (23) Ironically many of the 1916 leaders, especially Connolly and even Pearse had stressed the need for a non sectarian atmosphere in an independent Ireland.

The circulation of offensive hate mail and such vulgarities as used condoms to the homes of prominent anti-amendment supporters was one of the more unsavoury aspects in the sour pro-life debate. The eventual 2:1 victories for Traditionalists in both referenda gave a solid reassurance that Catholic values were being upheld; but the abstention of a third of the electorate from voting, the successful family planning legislation 1985 and the recent acknowledgement by the Government of its duty to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Law 1990 and remove the ban on homosexuality and the resurrection of the divorce issue lend credible evidence to the fact that Ireland continues to slide into the grip of a secular society. It is estimated that the majority of lapsed Catholics is comprised of the young, the urban and the skilled. The statement by Bishop Cathal Daly at a session of the New Ireland Forum in February 1984 that "We have not sought and we do not seek a Catholic state for a Catholic people" (24), although a relief in tone to the abortion amendment rhetoric, fell on deaf ears in the wake of the referendum result. John Kelly's quip that the questions and answers format of the Forum caused the bishops to have to think on their feet for the first time since St. Patrick, was an uncomfortably accurate observation as the bishops failed, when pressed, to come up with any convincing reasons as to why Protestants in the South couldn't be granted the same civil rights as their Northern counterparts (25). To claim that they "would strongly object to any constitutional proposals which might infringe or might imperil the civil and religious rights and liberties cherished by Northern Protestants" (26) was ideologically laudable but realistically unbelievable.

Richard Kearney points out the need to distinguish between the campaigns for official legislation on thorny moral issues and the actuality of everyday life (27), with its veil of hypocrisy and double standards at no time more tenable than throughout the Eighties. Such an isolationist image of Holy Rural Ireland was clearly at odds with the new cosmopolitan consumer's avid interest in materialism. Political corruption, blackmail and sexual flippancy, though the ingredients of an average Dynasty T.V. episode watched by millions were topics whose very existence we preferred to ignore in Irish society, but which nonetheless spilled over into the national consciousness in the disturbing revelations about Joanna Hayes and Ann Lovett which portrayed Ireland in the sobering light of a juvenile state still hopelessly entrenched in pre-war sexual hang ups. The death from childbirth in the churchyard of Granard, Co. Longford in 1983 of the teenager Ann Lovett, unleashed a flood of devastating letters of similar trauma from across the country to Gay Byrne's morning radio programme which, when broadcast, aroused considerable public uneasiness. Then, in 1985 came "the most painfully revelatory event of the decade, the Kerry Babies Tribunal, - a judicial enquiry into how a young Kerry woman had come to confess to the murder of a new born child that could not possibly have been hers" (28). This generated avaricious public debate reminiscent of the Lindy Chamberlain case in Australia and culminated in numerous analytical publications on the topic. What was extraordinary about the Hayes family was their instinctive enactment of the nationwide phenomena of silence which tends to surround social and sexual morality and which, from a wish to conceal embarrassments has led to double standards being the norm especially in small, close knit communities.

It is from this awkward silence that Gay Byrne, much to the chagrin of the clerics, merited the role of confidant for the nation's guilty confessions about sin and sex. Much too has been made of the dilemma whereby, although abortion was outlawed, a pregnancy outside wedlock was still frowned upon with such distaste as to amount to social death, as experienced in 1987 by the female teacher dismissed by her school board due to the immoral example shown to her pupils by her 'condition' (29).

SEE FIG. 7.

The 1980's revealed such prejudicial views as harmful rather than beneficial to the stable fabric of the community. But the prospect of

healing the moral divide was not likely in the atmosphere of two such volatile and polarised ends of the social spectrum. "By natural law," claimed Loretto Browne of the P.L.A.C. group in 1980, "We couldn't have that many misfits in society - there's something wrong with people who think they are gay if they're not actually physically deformed. There couldn't be that many physically deformed people in society (30). One of the bizarre offshoots of this puritannical mentality was that in the early Eighties sexually explicit scenes were still being cut from films of real merit, while brutal horror movies and gratuitous violence were still apparently permissible by the censor. Perhaps this anomaly reflected the national preference for Mars rather than Venus.

CHAPTER 3

REPUBLICAN ÉIRE

Between the resurgence of Irish nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century and the social transformation of the 1960's, Ireland was a single imaginable entity. The dominant cultural and political orthodoxy was Gaelic, Catholic and Nationalist. But contrary to conventional history, it had not always been so. The origins of modern Ireland stretch back to the Gaeil first as Pagans than as Christians and ultimately descended from a "certain shadowy figure called Milesius who had come to Eire across the sea" (31). In the 4th century, their tribal descendants crossed to Scotland and colonised it, naming the first territory Oir-Ghaeil (Argyll) meaning Eastern Gaeldom. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Norman and Saxon invaders settled in Ireland and adapted the Irish ways of life. They came to be known as the Old English and were quite a separate community from the Presbyterian and English Planters of the 16th and 17th centuries who did not intermarry with the locals to the same extent. In preserving their own traditions these later became known as either Unionists, predominantly in Ulster, or Anglo Irish elsewhere. By the time the 19th century revival of nationalism attempted to recreate the ancient concept of Eire, most people were speaking English and calling themselves Irish (of one sort or another) but not Gaelic. The unravelling of these multi-faceted layers of the national identity is a process which continues today in a cultural and political attempt to establish a collective self-image of the island of Ireland.

In a 1980 interview, Robert Ballagh suggested that those who judge Ireland by her promotional images must risk a certain cultural schizophrenia; "You have the I.D.A. out in the U.S., selling Ireland as a modern, progressive, go-ahead, capitalist society. And you have Bord Failte eulogizing roads where you won't see a car from one end of the day to the other; its almost as if they're advertising a country nobody lives in" (32). The most striking feature of this I.D.A. promotional campaign was that it actively perpetrated the myth about Romantic Ireland, incorporating both Modernity and Tradition, a policy described as industrialisation without urbanisation. (In the Eighties the west and midlands were the main target areas for industrial employment.) Invocation of an ancient past grew

more pronounced in IDA literature with the absurd juxtaposition of images like dolmens with digital computers. This approach comprised a sort of neo-traditionalism which abolished real history and in its place substituted an assimilated series of fabricated images deliberately plucked from the past according to how they could be manipulated to suit the dictators of the present. This bogey of Traditionalism and rural values is the inherent result of an urban sensibility that yearns for the simplicity of a primitive community. After all "it was urban-based writers, intellectuals and political leaders who created Romantic Ireland and perpetrated the myth that the further west you go the more you come into contact with the real Ireland" (33).

SEE FIG. 8
AND FIG. 9.

In the Eighties this expression of fundamentalism was internationally in Vogue with the Victorian values of Thatcherite Britain and Ronald Reagan's call for a "return to the range" in the U.S. (34). To have admitted otherwise, especially in the former era of DeValera, that life was not an idyllic affair of cosy homesteads, would have been to realise the contradiction of emigration. However as Fintan O'Toole points out, "the notion of the peasant and of the country was an artificial literary creation largely made in Dublin for Dubliners" (35) who were mostly of rural extraction anyway, being often no more than a generation removed from the countryside and for whom "a visit to the Abbey was a travelogue into a collective past" (36).

The invocation of this glorified past is of course one of the more controversial weapons of the **Provisional I.R.A.**, a title borrowed from the 1916 proclamation of the **Provisional Government of the Irish Republic**, which referred to the "dead generations from which (Ireland) receives her old tradition of nationhood" an extended genealogical link with the Fenians of the preceeding century, the United Irishmen of 1798, the patriotic Wild Geese and the legendary heroes of Celtic Érin - Oisín, Cúchulainn, Mannamán, Caitlín Ní Uíallachán and Fionn MacCumhaill and his formidable Fianna. This mythical nucleus in Republican ideology is firmly rooted in symbolic and sacrificial martyrdom; some might say suicidal. however, as Eamonn MacCann recalled in **War and an Irish Town** - "one learned quite literally at one's mother's knee, that Christ died for the human race and Patrick Pearse for the Irish section of it" (37). And in fact in the immediate aftermath of 1916, numerous posters with the caption **All Is Changed** were plastered around Dublin depicting the martyred Pearse in a pieta position supported by the mythical figure of Mother Erin. The confusion of the association of the current IRA organisation with that of 1916 has become an embarrassment for the State

SEE FIG. 10.

and indeed the preparations for the 75th commemoration of the Rising this year have largely concentrated on the cultural rather than overtly political nature of the insurrectionists.

The alienation of the Catholic nationalist minority in the North and the constitutional moderation of Southern politicians under Jack Lynch during the Seventies stimulated a change of direction for North/South and Anglo-Irish relations in the Eighties. The accession of the controversial figure of Charles Haughey to the office of Taoiseach set the ball rolling. He met with the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher twice in 1980 and in a joint communique they proposed official studies "covering a range of issues including possible new institutional structures, citizenship rights, security matters, economic co-operation" (38) and referred to the "totality of relationships within these islands" (39), a phrase which aroused substantial new interest in the Troubles. However, the election of Long Kesh H-Block prisoner Bobby Sands to Westminster with a massive 30,000 vote and his subsequent death on the 5th May 1981 from hungerstrike for political status, disrupted the cordial relationship between the two governments. Nine other IRA prisoners followed Sands to their graves, generating widespread international sympathy and national indignation for the intractable stand taken by Margaret Thatcher on the issue. Ironically, in retrospect, it was precisely her insensitivity which fuelled their aspiration to the cause of martyrdom.

SEE FIG. 10F
1

"Standing in their filthy cold tombs their blankets cloaked about them as they chanted Gaelic phrases and prayers from cell to cell like some chorus in an ancient tragedy (they) must have seen themselves at moments at least as sacrificial victims of a fallen and divided nation." (40)

Oddly enough active membership of the I.R.A. at the time amounted to a meagre 200 in comparison with 20,000 British troops, 7,000 armed police and twice the number of Loyalist paramilitaries, not to mention the Irish army and Garda Síochána in the Republic. However, it vehemently remains their belief that "it is not those who inflict the most but those who suffer the most who will conquer". (41)

The unsettling swing towards the Provisional IRA which reached heights not seen since Bloody Sunday in 1972, and which in July 1981 erupted onto

remains their belief that "it is not those who inflict the most but those who suffer the most who will conquer". (41)

The unsettling swing towards the Provisional IRA, which reached heights not seen since Bloody Sunday in 1972, and which in July 1981 erupted onto Dublin's streets with large-scale rioting outside the British embassy prompted the Taoiseach, Dr. Garrett Fitzgerald to try and deflate the emotive atmosphere by softening the antagonistic edge of the Unionists. He proposed by means of a referendum to remove articles 2 and 3 from the Constitution, thereby alleviating the Republican gripe with Unionist rhetoric about sectarian politics. In a meeting with Mrs. Thatcher in November 1981 he agreed that "any change in the Constitutional status of Northern Ireland would require the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland" (42). Simultaneously, Sinn Fein in Dublin proposed to abandon their traditional policy and contest local elections for the Dail, Westminster and Stormont - the seats which if won would not be occupied. "Is there anyone here," asked their publicity director "who objects to taking power in Ireland with a ballot paper in one hand and an armalite in the other" (43).

Significantly alarmed by the prospect of being electorally squeezed by Sinn Fein, the S.D.L.P. reached agreement with the southern parties to establish an All Ireland Forum in an effort to define the constitutionalist position regarding the six counties. A central aim for Southern Nationalists, as identified by the Forum's final report, should be the recognition and accommodation of the wider diversity of cultural and political traditions particular to the North. However, to the dismay of the Forum contributors, Margaret Thatcher in December 1984 (for reasons which were clearly not helped by the IRA, assassination attempt on herself and her cabinet earlier the same year) promptly dismissed their three recommendations for a Unitary State, a Federate State and Joint Authority. Two years later however, a placatory compromise was reached, much to the consternation of the Unionist majority, in the signing of the Anglo/Irish Agreement which allowed Dublin to have a consultative and advisory role with Westminster in the social and political administration of the North. A secretariat for such was duly established at Stormont. The Unionists continue to object vehemently to this interference by a 'foreign' State in part of the United Kingdom, insisting that:

SEE FIG. II.

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL ÉIRE

"Nothing is more monotonous or despairing than the search for the essence which defines a nation" (45), said Seamus Deane in 1979, pleading that it was time to abandon the whole idea of essence - "that hungry Hegelian ghost looking for a stereotype to live in" (46). However, this same search has preoccupied Irish intellectuals for most of the Twentieth century, and has constituted, in Seamus Heaney's words, "a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament" (42), "Poetry", he said in 1974 "is a restoration of the culture to itself an attempt to define and interpret the present by bringing it into a significant relationship with the past" (48). It is this dilemma of how to become modern and yet return to sources; how to respect an old dormant civilisation and take part in a universal civilisation, that has confused and distorted interpretations of Irish cultural history.

It is now acknowledged through hindsight that those who only look backwards become the victims of cultural collapse. The concern of contemporary Irish intellectuals has been to put an end to national artifice and illusion. Heaney has commented that the violence in Ulster "is the tail end of a struggle between territorial piety and imperial power whose embodiments have been variants on Mother Ireland and a new male cult ... whose godhead ... is incarnate in a Caesar resident in a palace in London" (49). Seamus Deane concludes that although the abstraction of race and past created the republic, "the losses now outweigh the gains. It is time to change ground before it opens up and swallows us" (50). The redundancy of the old inspirational ideology is caught in Michael O'Loughlins acerbic verse:-

"If I lived in this place for a thousand years
I could never construe you, Cúchulainn,
Your name is a fossil, a petrified tree
Your name means less than nothing
Less than Librium or Burton's Biscuits
Or Phoenix Audio Visual Systems -....
.... But watching TV the other night

And your heart beats so slow
through the rain and fallen snow
across the fields of mourning
to a light that's in the distance
Oh don't sorrow, no don't weep
for tonight at last
I am coming home" (56).

In Tom Murphy's Bailegangaire 1986, the familiarity conveyed through the traditional cottage kitchen is jarred by its proximity to the Japanese owned computer plant in the village, and although the central focus is on an old peasant woman evocative of the Sean Bhean Bhocht, the demythologising of these very symbols of national culture is the clear objective and the sense of national paralysis is dramatised through the clever device of having the old woman Mommo locked into a narrative whose conclusion she is incapable of facing. SEE FIG. 13A.

"Sometimes I am accused of betraying the nation", says poet Paul Durcan, "because I don't support the traditional sense of nationalist identity. The very word nationalism fills me with disgust" (57). Consequently Durcan is more likely to focus on the comedy of Modern Ireland and is well known for such tabloid narratives as "Wife of Ten gets jailed for raping Bishop" (58).

Robert Ballagh believes "that earnestly questing for an Irish cultural identity can be counter productive... a distinctive identity will surface quite naturally if the artist speaks his/her own voice about his/her own experience and environment ... filling empty modernist vessels with 'Irish' contents or inscribing Celtic decoration on modern art objects or the slavish adaptation of international styles can only substitute a spacious counterfeit for the real thing" (59). Neil Jordan points out that almost all his work "has been as escape to an alternative landscape to a space or time not associated with the traditional themes of great Irish literature" (60). Indeed it has become common practice to continually assess contemporary Irish works of art in politicised contexts such as North versus South and East versus West and in so doing the primarily personal dimensions of art can be overlooked in this constant anxiety to analyse, define and label. For instance, the "very incompleteness of the self" was sufficient reason for SEE FIG. 14.

Patrick Kavanagh in the Sixties to advocate the abandonment of this obsession with national identity.

The unfortunate irony of this whole question of a stable identity is nowhere seen more clearly than in the issue of the Irish language, with as few as 30,000 native speakers speaking it daily and less than 2% of parliamentary and civil service business transacted through the medium (61). Yet, it remains constitutionally cherished as the first language of the nation. Without looking at the social and economic reasons for its continuing decline after 70 years of independence, it is sufficient to note that language preservation in the midst of a recession has never merited priority treatment. Little more than lip service has ever been paid to the notion of its survival. The position of the artist writing in Irish was poignantly put by the Irish poet who said "we can read them (English writers) but they can't read us" (62), and sadly it is probable that the relative profusion of contemporary writers working in Irish is a last flowering of a language now in the throes of extinction. Brian Friel's play Translations (1980) deals with this destruction of one language by another and projected the idea of language as both a means of and a barrier to communication.

SEE FIG. 15

CHAPTER 5

PASTICHE ÉIRE

From the long overdue modernization of this country under the guidance of Sean Lemass in the 1960's, grew the misconception that the nation's prosperity could be measured in bricks and mortar, and the false equation that anything 'new' is desirable and anything 'old' discardable. The speed with which Ireland acquired her new affluent attire has resulted in a situation where cement walls race unremittingly through the Burren and across the Aran Island; the nationally adapted symbol - the traditional thatched cottage has vanished, usurped by Southfork and Falcon Crest dwellings from which even the likes of Angela Channing might conceivably recoil. The lack of any serious perturbation in the local planning authorities is explained away by the simultaneous increase in themeparks and their accompanying 'interpretive' centres, the latest of which are scheduled for Lough Tay - Co. Wicklow, the Burren - Co. Clare and Dun Chaoín (for the Great Blasket Island) - Co. Kerry. The most controversial was the Rock of Cashel one where, according to Frank McDonald (63), local opinion favoured the ill planned scheme refusing to concede that it raised an issue of national importance. If the tourists are keen to see a thatched cottage, then there is ample parking space for tour buses at these sites, where they can disembark in peace and savour at leisure delights like Bunratty Folk Park (recently visited by the estimable Raisa Gorbachev) and then retire to the folksy interior of Durty Nelly's for refreshments. Similarly in Cong, Co Mayo the attraction is an identical reconstruction of the thatched cottage featured in The Quiet Man (1952) and scene of domestic drama between John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara; the irony that this is a double tiered illusion i.e. a faithful replica of a Hollywood replica of an Irish cottage does not appear to greatly disturb the money-making venture.

SEE FIG. 16.

SEE FIG 17
FIG 18
FIG 19

Jack Fitzimmon's book Bungalow Bliss has gone into seven editions and been the subject of sore controversy since 1971. A basic bungalow plan from the hundreds of styles featured costs £100. Thus armed, a young aspiring couple with a plot of land garnered from either of their parents and readily available tax free labour can build a house far more cheaply than they could buy one. During the last 25 years the reversal of

population decline and a higher affluence in living standards have resulted in urban workers and retired people either moving to the countryside permanently, or building holiday houses there. Small towns and villages along the arterial routes to the capital have mushroomed considerably and conspicuously with new houses no longer clustering around the town centres, but stringing out indiscriminately into open countryside while keeping within commuting distance of the capital. Areas with extraordinary scenic appeal especially in Cork, Clare, Connemara and Donegal have experienced apparently uncontrollable sproutings of bungalows in prominent view-obstructing sites. "Landscape quality is the most nebulous element but a vital one however difficult to define and quantify" (64). Although it is high time that grant aid for farmhouse conversion employed stricter criteria so as to halt the destruction and disregard for traditional farm buildings, and that local planning authorities exercised their consciences more along the lines of their British counterparts than the gombeen man of small town Ireland, all exhortations by experts to these ends have been utterly ineffective. Obsolete cottages are dismissed as being too painful a reminder of former generations lost into the black hole of emigration to warrant any thing but decay on the part of their descendants. The urge to build where you can be seen and admired is stronger than a respect for conservation and landscape.

SEE FIG. 20.

FIG. 21.

FIG. 22.

SEE FIG. 23.

The bliss for bungalow owners is in the ostentatious and unrestrained interior decor which is selected as a showpiece for the neighbours. The Irish tradition of rarely using the front room except on formal occasions is still much in vogue, with the bone china and imitation King's Pattern cutlery sets locked away in mahogany cabinets; the ubiquitous lace curtains shielding the bourgeois privacy and the family trophies on the mantelpiece, often alongside a bewildering array of ornaments. For my own part, I know of at least two parlours where the plastic covers are still kept on the velveteen settee for some precious purpose of preservation.

The disturbing factor is that so much of this amateur design and decor is influenced by such dubious elements as American mini series, continental sun holidays, low brow British magazines like Bella and Chat, and Australian soaps. The extent of this phenomenon is also disquieting - in 1976 5,500 new private bungalows were built; in 1981 - 11,517 new homes

SEE FIG. 24.

FIG. 25.

FIG. 26.

landscapes untouched by man are becoming rare in Europe, Ireland's (blanket) bogs represent a major scenic resource" (67). With the exception of Western Scotland, these Connemara bogs are unique because their counterparts in Germany, Holland and Britain have been destroyed. Although the roundstone bogs have been venerated by the likes of David Bellamy and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, local businessmen continue to push ahead with Clifden Airport which will seriously disrupt surrounding wildlife habitats. Since 1936 14% of all hedgeregrows have been ruthlessly cleared away and replaced with electric and barbed wire fencing, in the name of agricultural expansion (68). Voluntary conservation organisations are effectively out of their depth when attempting to counteract this sort of regional governmental and EEC legislation.

SEE Fig. 28.

and in 1982 40% of all homes built in the Republic were bungalows, 11% only of which were designed by an architect (65). The apportionment of blame is not easy.

Governmental attitudes have been influenced by a stubborn adherence to the libertarian concept of the absolute rights of private property owners - which has resulted in such debacles as the Smurfit sculpture plonked in O'Connell Street. Ironically the disintegration of our inner city and the increasing trends in pastiche, whereby developers prefer to imitate rather than preserve the past, are hypocritically blamed on the provincial sector living in suburban districts who lack genuine urban sensibilities - an anti-rural bias which is a mean feature of the national inferiority complex. Another feature is the belief of the local authorities and city engineers that 'modernity' implies the subservience of the urban heritage to the requirements of the car. This lack of national sensitivity is said to be at one with a weak sense of civil duty and a disinterest in aesthetics; such deficiencies are frequently acknowledged yet simply ignored, thereby encouraging a distinct visual deprivation (Kilkenny City being the exception to the rule) which is still lazily attributed to the allegedly demoralising colonial experience.

SEE FIG. 27.

Thaddeus O'Sullivan, director of the film December Bride (1990) spoke of the land as "not simply a backdrop but a part of the narrative" (66), and it is this very tradition in our history - the equation of land and property with status and position which has ironically subordinated concern for the environmental landscape to the private rights and whims of the individual. Ireland's half-hearted response to EEC imposed environmental regulations is partly as a result of being spoilt with an abundance of natural landscape that we simply take for granted. In the industrial heartlands of Holland and Germany for instance, the pace and scale of organisation have precipitated in immediate national concern. It has been argued that enthusiasm for Green issues flourishes in post Christian societies forming a spiritual substitute for conventional religion, which would account for the lack of such an emotional niche in Ireland where coherent ecological ideas could be fostered. For example 1/6 of the land area in this island is bogland. "The preservation of a range of totally untouched bogs is urgently required to meet not only scientific, wildlife and archaeological interests but landscape considerations too. Since

CHAPTER 6

AMERICAN ÉIRE

"The Professor", wrote Benedict Kiely in The Dogs in the Great Glen (1963) "had come over from America to search out his origins and I met him in Dublin on the way to Kerry where his grandfather had come from and where he had relations including a granduncle still living" (69). It is a feature of life in the United States that an ethnic identity other than that of being American is an essential part of one's social make up. The concept of the hyphenated American is a familiar one, but the actuality of such can be underestimated by Europeans who are by and large accustomed to a single national identity. "I feel impelled right away, " said the Professor "to find the place my grandfather told my father about. You wouldn't understand. Your origins are all around you" (70).

The reality of emigration to America has always been the abandonment of familiarity and the prospect of absorption into a melting pot of worldwide immigration. The most potent way of creating a sense of belonging in such an alien situation is the reconstruction of a particular type of ethnic personality. However, objectivity was never a primary ingredient in the American identification of an 'Irish tradition'. The mixture of half truths, myths and illusions which it fostered served only as a compelling source of comfort and provided a tangible explanation of 'roots' to the descendants of the 19th century emigrant ships. Irish - Americans' complacent view of Ireland as a sort of Celtic Disneyland is clearly an invented notion. But by whom ? There is an increasing perception that we have fuelled this idea through the prostitution of our cultural inheritance for mercenary considerations. When we celebrated Dublin's millenium we relied heavily on the reliable old cliches about famous writers, bitter wit and Georgian ghosts. There was little of contemporary value included because the event was a money making racket aimed at tourists with little input for real Dubliners. The Irish- American view of the history of Ireland is frozen in time, comprising a selective snapshot sequence where the most distinguishable events are the famine with its tales of epic strife, the 1916 rebellion and the War of Independence – full of bravery and bloodshed and the more accessible music, poetry, drama and fiction of this century. John Hickey says that from his experience with the

Irish-Americans, "many do not go 'home', because they do not want to have their illusions shattered" (71). Nevertheless, we have become remarkably adept at cashing in on how we are perceived from across the Atlantic and even if they do opt to stay at home, Irish-Americans can rest assured that their illusions will be nurtured by us. We wear their emigration like a badge of identification - curiously it is a phenomenon that works both ways. As Fintan O'Toole points out, our notion of America is as much a self-delusion as is their perception of Ireland. "If you stand for long enough on the Western coastline, watching the powerful Atlantic breakers, someone sooner or later is bound to take your elbow and searching the horizon with a look of consequence say 'The next parish is America' " (72). We are obsessed with the occupation of projecting a good image. But that image is rooted firmly in the superficiality of putting on a show for the visitor. One recalls Ballyporeen in 1982. That John Kelly called the Millenium celebrations in 1988 as tantamount to inviting in the neighbours "to admire our rags and rubbish" (73), is not a scenario that seems to have disturbed. As Rashers Tierney in James Plunketts Strumpet City (1969) says "I have the ill fortune to live in the most misbegotten kip of a city in the whole wide world" (74). One suspects little has changed.

The 'culture' we sell to visitors in our craftshops, of which there has been a huge increase in the last 20 years, is a recent invention assimilated from vague impressions of a handcraft tradition of whose existence there is no doubt but about which few are well informed, with the odd remarkable exception like Kitty Joyce of Cleo's in Nassau Street,. There has been an upsurge in knitwear manufacturers in the last decade. Altogether - 80 companies are now licensed to use the Woolmark label. In 1989 knitwear exports amounted to a record £28 million, up 25% on the previous year (75). The vast bulk of this comprises 'tourist' knitwear which is a controversial topic among manufacturers who prefer to think of their designs as embodying a distinctive Irish ethnic fashion theme. This is sad. It is also misguided. The only distinctiveness common to this form of knitwear is its unabashed application of general island techniques, from Fair Isle and Shetland to the Channel and Guernsey islands, adding a dash of Aran, using 'rustic' yarns and packaged as uniquely and traditionally Irish. Come off it ! Even the cream computerised honeycomb and rope cable sweaters flogged as 'traditional' Arans are wearing that label

SEE FIG.29.

SEE FIG.30.

uncomfortably, since it has been established that the origins of this structural knitting most probably originated in Boston within an expatriate European community and were brought back to the Aran islands by two returned emigrant girls in the 1920's (76). Incidentally not one sculpturally knitted bainin geansai is worn by any of the islanders in Robert Flaherty's film Man of Aran (1936) which I have seen twice.

The three leading companies in this field are Gaeltarra in Tourmakeady - Co. Mayo with an annual turnover of £3 million (78), Heritage Knitwear in Castlebar - Co. Mayo and Inis Meáin Knitwear, with annual sales mostly to Japan worth £1/2 million (79). "We are using traditional skills and traditional designs in a new way" (80), says Tarlach de Blacam of his Inis Meáin sweaters which would appear to come commercially closest to the idea of working the past and the present in tandem. however, what Japanese customers shopping for these garments by TV in their Tokyo apartment may not realise is that the yarns come from the Yorkshire mills and Peru, and what the label "handloomed in Ireland" effectively means is that the garment was one of many produced by a computer programmed jacquard machine. What you read is not effectively what you get. Gaeltarra sell mostly to Americans and their name is synonymous since the early seventies with the Irish ethnic theme. Ironically in succeeding to do this they have relied on the services of both an American and an English designer. They monitor the international fashion forecasts closely and select the appropriate story into which Gaeltarra can most easily slot its formula of stitch structure, Fair Isle and intarsia. That they are moving further away all the time from their original brief passes unnoticed. For example, what the Americans will be buying from them next year will be Navaho Indian motifs mixed with aran cables and diamonds. One wonders how this can be interpreted as an 'Irish tradition'.

SEE FIG. 31.

SEE FIG. 32.
FIG. 33.

SEE FIG. 34.

SEE FIG. 35,
FIG. 36.

Interestingly, Kitty Joyce of Cleo tells of how on a recent trip to the Far East, she came across a Chinese workshop where "they had obviously done their research" (81), and were expertly producing virtual replicas of the original 1930 bainin sweaters around which the subsequent 'tradition' was built. Cleo is a three generation family-run operation and for their sources they unashamedly look directly to the past, mostly to the folk collection at the National museum from which they have copied extensively, to produce garments in original clothes and yarns which are

SEE FIG. 37.

avidly sought after by cultural enthusiasts like the English film director, John Boorman. That Cleo's policy would be anathema to the higher profile companies with their 'thematic' ethos, I have no doubt but it is a method which won for the British Vivienne Westwood the distinction of Designer of the Year 1990 and it is high time that such activity was actively encouraged here.

SEE FIG. 38.
FIG. 39.

SEE FIG. 39
A

Tarlach de Blacam says he learned early on the value of selling the beguiling image of the islands as much as the intrinsic qualities of the knitwear (82). But as Jim Sheridan has pointed out in relation to the The Field (1990), the landscape is much more than a visual experience - it directly and indirectly influences the action (83), similarly one wishes the Western shoreline were used less for propping up a deficient knitwear industry and that the industry were first and foremost truer to its origins.

SEE FIG. 40.

CONTENTS

POSTMODERNISM

PART TWO

POSTMODERNISM

IRELAND IN THE 1990's

CHAPTER 7

POSTMODERNISM

The use of this term in Ireland is difficult, as it suggests a phase of cultural fatigue that comes after the subsidence of a once dominant Modernism. Ireland however never really experienced a socially engaged Modernism. There was little tangible interaction with the European avant garde movements of the early twentieth century i.e. Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism etc. So the natural confrontation with bourgeois conventional culture and the celebration of mass production, technology and science which these schools of thought implied, did not actually surface in post partition Ireland until well into the Sixties and only then as the inevitable consequence of the governments economic modernization drive. Simultaneously, however, Modernism as a global movement had run its course and dispensed with its radical origins, so that Modernism in Ireland was more an adaptation of international trends than as a cohesive reaction to existing traditionalism and the cultural nationalism which masqueraded unchallenged as THE socially desirable aesthetic. Its champions were the advocates of consumer capitalist society hellbent on the notion of prosperity in the optimistic atmosphere of the post war boom.

"Such (were) the contradictions of Irish modernisation that we have prematurely entered the post-modern era at the cultural level - the nostalgia and historicist pastiche of 'post-modernism' without the astringent purgative of modernism. We have entered the future walking backwards" (84).

So what in effect is Postmodernism ? It is a consciously eclectic (and Western) amalgamation of the idioms of both Modernity and Tradition, concurrently endorsing the future and elevating the past to create a 'Super Age'. However, the emancipatory ideal of Modernism to achieve new narratives of existence through experimentation with new forms, and the critical eye necessary to analyse and evaluate tradition in a contemporary context have become fuddled under the tag of Postmodernism. Bland imitations and pseudo inventions have tended to be the result. "History

has stopped, one is in a kind of post history which is without meaning" (85), said Jean Baudrillard. Similarly the historian Oliver Mac Donagh emphasises that "the tendency to collapse the past into an ever-receding present is one of the distinguishing features of Irish political culture" (86).

The religious culture of Ireland has also suffered greatly from self-deceiving fixities of identity. The Catholic Church has for the most part of the twentieth century wrapped itself up in rigid doctrinal and ethical views, denominational and national chauvinism, distrust of the individual and prejudicial censorship of minority groups. The feelings of many contemporary Irish Catholics have been directly or indirectly channelled by these cauterizing characteristics into anger, anguish and confusion. The restorationist movement within the Catholic Church is reflected in recent Vatican policies in the appointment of conservative Bishops, the disciplining of wayward theologians and the promotion of such dubious movements as Opus Dei. What is most disturbing about this trend is its narrowly sectarian interpretation of Catholicism and its stoical adherence to tradition. Irish Catholicism bears these traits i.e. the imposition of Catholic ethics in legislation and through Catholic control of hospitals and schools, the opposition to denominational schooling, the identification of Christian as Catholic and the refusal to concede to Church/State differentiation. The theory is that the Church is growing smaller but stronger. Catholic institutions are coming back to the exclusive control of those who alone have a right to them, namely those Catholics who are completely loyal to Rome. These postmodern Catholics juggle elements from tradition in a citatory manner with the modernist apparatus of Vatican II. What is disconcerting about this new vitality is the belief that the Church, since it is not a human institution but a divine one, can do no wrong.

Postmodernism can be diagnosed as the cultural side effect of capitalism, i.e. a cultural aesthetic set of pleasures and practices created by and for a particular social group at a determinate movement in its collective history. "Most post-modern culture is first and foremost a production of and for a numerically large and privileged population" (87). In the post-war boom years the international phenomenon of expanding urban populations demanded the need for affordable space and the policy of suburbanization provided an effective solution. Postmodernism is the

inevitable cultural expression of the nuclear families who inhabit these neighbourhoods and whose favourite cultural occupation is watching TV in the privacy of their living rooms. The American cartoon series The Simpsons is a bullseye parody of this robotic existence. "Nothing epitomizes the utter subsumption and fragmentation of the public sphere at the hands of the market more succinctly or conveys the ideology of consumerism more effectively than the television" (88).

The postmodern consumer is typified by a salaried mental worker whose relative position on the labour ladder is reproducer of "capitalist culture and capitalist class relations" (89). The effects of this can be seen on the streets of Dublin. The city has mislaid her identity and, in a panic to re-establish it, has resorted to a cult of imagery, typical of a consumerist economy. Dirty ole' Dublin is a parody of what it once was. It sells itself as a tourist sideshow even to Dubliners. Are the brassplates of Leopold Bloom which gild the pavements a sign of Modernist consciousness? Should we view Anna Livia bathing outside the GPO as a Modernist reworking of ancient mythology? Quite simply this sort of artificiality is an attempt to validate and pander to the culture cravings of the bumptious Businessman and the Bank. All the new yuppie pubs, bookshops and pedestrianized zones are indicative of the emerging class consciousness which is exclusive of the have nots. Behind Grafton Street, there are back street slums.

SEE FIG. 41.

CHAPTER 8

CULTURAL POLICY

In a recent interview about the arts in Ireland (90), the Taoiseach Charles Haughey explicitly committed himself to reaching the Arts Council's target figure of £12 - £13 million annual grant aid, "reasonably rapidly and as circumstances permit" (91). He rejected the idea of a ministry of the arts and warned against being "too concerned about structures and infrastructures" (92). In 1987 grant aid to the Arts Council comprised of £4,999,000 from the Government and £1,800,000 from the National Lottery (93). In 1990 the sum totalled almost £10 million (94).. (Incidentally, over a third of this aid is used for drama.) So, statistically speaking the Governments contribution to culture is accounted for. However, there is a substantial imbalance between the £17 million spent refurbishing the Governments new offices in Merrion Street and the miserable £3 million budget with which Dublin is supposed to celebrate European City of Culture for 1991 (the National Lottery provided the bulk of this sum) (95).

The UNESCO conference on cultural policy held in Venice in 1970 proclaimed the right to culture as a human right and defined cultural welfare as an integral aspect of man's social well being (96). This right to culture implies a responsibility on the part of governments to ensure that individuals have the means of exercising this right. While a liberal climate has created a more benign environment in Ireland for the artist to work in than earlier in the century, it is arguable that an overkill of critical analysis, explanation and institutionalism can remove the mystery from the arts i.e. "The kiss may imprison more securely than the last" (97). And Seamus Deane says that the artist in Ireland is no longer alienated from society but "wears his isolation as the businessman wears his suit, regularly and expectedly" (98). The demise of the avant garde artist (albeit in limited supply) has given us the post modern artist in a consumer context. Art's capacity for subversion can ironically be stifled by an excessive degree of nurturing.

"The importance of broadening the concept of the arts into culture and removing them from association with leisure cannot be underestimated" (99). Culture is a broader concept and includes not only society's arts and

sciences but also its laws, political philosophies and family customs, in short the diverse expression of its ideas and values through social behaviour.

Irish culture is preoccupied with defining a broadly acceptable base of identity from which to project a unified front. The problem for many of our emigrant writers is one of nationality - living abroad but still being considered Irish (William Trevor, Brian Moore, Edna O'Brien). While a United Ireland may be a cultural aspiration and heroic idealism still abounds, most people are unwilling to assist economically or socially to bring this about. Instead we tune in quite complacently to British and European satellite TV channels, unperturbed by the fact that RTE has the lowest ratio of home produced programmes to imported programming in the European Broadcasting Union (100). RTE's piecemeal policy applied to drama (relying too much on the mass appeal of soap operas - Fair City and especially Glenroe) is particularly depressing in view of the rich tradition that is so lauded by everyone. "A survey for one week in 1983 indicated that out of 109 hours broadcasting time, 2 hours were devoted to Irish language programming. This compares with 22 hours per week of Welsh language programmes at peak viewing times in Sianel Pedwar Cyrmu" (101). This situation has marginally improved with the emphasis now on bi-lingual programmes like Bibi and Puiríní and Scaoil Amach an Bobailín. Undoubtedly recent Governmental interference with R.T.E.'s income is not assisting their programming. However, the new age attitude is that the T.V. viewer and radio listener should be increasingly treated as a consumer rather than as a citizen with political and cultural rights in the realms of information and education. Hence the success of the video channels like Sky and M.T.V. The future for broadcasting as a viable marketing commodity no longer lies solely with attracting mass audiences, but targetted 'narrowcasting' to specific consumer groups with specialist, film, sport and current affairs channels. Politicals say that culture is a weapon in the class struggle; "the musical literary and artistic tastes of the dominant class are accorded positive evaluation while the typical cultural tastes and pursuits of the subordinate class are negatively evaluated" (102). However, this argument belongs to the period i.e. when the likes of the BBC had monopoly of the airwaves; when the view of T.S. Eliot predominated - "it is an essential condition of the quality of culture that it should be a minority culture" (103). The suggestion that "the

SEE FIG. 4.2.

modern media are major contributors to some general brutalisation of taste, that they put entertainment above education, that they trivialise culture" (104), is not a new argument and certainly not distinctively Irish. There is no doubt however that T.V. culture is largely aimed at the post-modern consumer viewer and the debasement of 'high culture' is only the logical side effect of a capitalist society.

Despite the Governments insistence that the arts are properly funded and supported at an official level, there remains a huge network of privately financed groups (An Taisce; The Heritage Trust; The Royal Society of Antiquaries; The Georgian Society etc..) topping up the inadequate Oireachtas funds and co-ordinating conservation schemes wherever the Government has failed to do its duty. Ireland is the only European country which has no significant grant system to help individuals committed to the repair and upkeep of historic buildings and no legislation that recognises and protects the vast majority of historic buildings (105). When Charles Haughey says "there is a great (cultural) upsurge in Ireland at the moment everywhere I go I see evidence of that" (106), is it possible he is referring to the acceleration of the destruction of Georgian Architecture by local planners and self-interested developers? SEE, FIG. 43. "The arts", he explains, " have that function of helping us to recognise ourselves, to see what we're at, what we're achieving or failing to achieve - holding a mirror up to our society" (107). One wonders if he has ever consciously looked into this mirror. Rather, one suspects, it is the looking glass of the construction industry, which the Government finds so beguiling as it seems to regard Dublin as a veritable gold mine for developers and dual carraigeways.

In his introduction to Frank McDonald's book Saving the City (Tomar 1989), Bob Geldof writes:

"The destruction of Dublin is a terrible savagery,
perpetrated by the greedy, the corrupt, the stupid,
the uninspired, the mediocre, the cheap, the tawdry,
the vulgar but mainly the indifferent" (108).

12 years ago 20,000 people marched to save Wood Quay but the Corporation still built Sam Stephenson's 'bunkers'. 3 years ago, despite

overwhelming opposition from residents, the Corporation pushed through its controversial plans for a dual carriageway through Patrick Street, New Street and Clanbrassil Street. The house on Usher's Island in which James Joyce set his story The Dead is just one of many which will be lost in this £12 million scheme scheduled for completion this year (109).

The huge new Financial Services Centre being built beside James Gandon's Customs House, is an awesome block of fortified state-of-the-art technology. Behind it lies one of the most derelict and socially deprived areas in the inner city. A more blatant expression of capitalist development is hard to find. "There is a Third World in every First World and a First World in every Third World" (110). The new shopping centre complex in Tallaght The Square has also raised many eyebrows. "Almost a metropolis in itself" (111), scream the adverts. The Square is a mega construction standing 3 stories high with tiered car parking spaces for 2,200 cars and a 12 screen multiplex cinema, countless fast food joints and every gimmick imaginable from escalators to panoramic bubble lifts and trees in tubs on balustraded balconies to waterfalls with sandstone and limestone rock formations. "No design control was exercised over the shop fronts; which make use of almost every material and run the gamut from ultra modern to neo traditional" (112). When it was completed 2 years ago, the Stephen's Green Centre was billed as the biggest and the best. SEE FIG. 44. Now The Square has dwarfed it and there are more promised for Santry, Blanchardstown, Lucan, the City Centre and as Frank McDonald points out, "If the developer Tom Gilmartin gets his way we will see the biggest shopping centre of all in Palmerstown, with 1.5 million square feet and parking for 10,000 cars" (113). It would appear that in the future we will spend all our available free time escaping the vulgarities of reality by commuting to these shopping centres with their makebelieve townsquare and shopping street interiors. No need to hike to Wicklow anymore to see a waterfall, just pop into your nearest megacomplex where you can throw pennies at a safe distance into the alkaline fountain. Frank McDonald says that a company called Twenty First Century Arcade Projects Limited has been formed to pursue plans to cover Henry Street with a glazed roof! (114) In a couple of years they might as well enclose all of Dublin in a bubble, so surreal has everything become.

The recently appointed National Heritage Council has a miniscule budget and only an advisory role. It awaits statutory powers. Only nationally recognised cultural monuments (estimated at about 150,000) are protected by legislation under the National Monument Act (1930 - revised 1954 - updated 1987) (115). However, maintenance does not automatically follow protection and only 1,300 are in State guardianship. Compare this level of support with Denmark, only half the size of Ireland and with 25,000 prehistoric monuments alone fully protected (116). So while government funded restoration has concentrated on such noteworthy buildings as the Casino - Marino, The Customs House and The Royal Hospital - SEE FIG.45. SEE FIG.46, Kilmainham, ordinary historic buildings have been decimated and it is this attitude towards the common lot that divides the great cities from the mean ones. There are no comprehensive photographic files to record buildings lost through urban development. Only a limited collection (prehistoric to medieval) is kept at the National Parks and Monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works, and The Architectural Archive needs State support to compile more extensive records than it can presently afford to keep.

There is inadequate communication between the Government and voluntary associations, resulting in a lack of awareness on both sides of the valuable and potential strength of community resources - were they to be actively acknowledged and supported. Connemara West was such a voluntary community project which successfully tackled unemployment during the mid 80's, in one of the most depressed and stagnant areas of the West coast - Letterfrack, Co. Galway. Assets now include holiday thatched cottages and a compact industrial centre specialising in carpentry and crafts.

Coras Trachtála was established by the Government in the late Fifties with responsibility for the development of industrial design. Because of their success in design, a Scandinavian advice group was invited by C.T.T. to visit Ireland in 1961 and make recommendations for improving the quality of Irish product design. Their 5 man team report Design in Ireland, published by the Export Board in 1962 (117), was based on a selective but well balanced survey of factories, colleges, museums and shops and recommended that the raising of design standards could best be achieved through an educational policy to create consumer awareness. Their report

also commented on the continuing use of early Christian motifs and concluded that these lost their appeal in modern reproduction and were out of harmony with reality. The National College of Art and Design was criticised for using methods of education which were completely out of date.

The Government chose to ignore most of these observations but proposed instead the short term solution of setting up a specialist organisation to improve existing product design. The Kilkenny Design Workshop scheme was duly launched in April 1963 and was allowed to operate from the outset as a private company backed by public finances. This was to allow independent initiative in the solving of design problems. However, KDW concentrated on the craft industry which did not produce the bulk of export goods. Also the exclusive prices which K.D.W. charged for their craft products gave them an elitist reputation among the consumer public. However during the seventies they set up a successful award scheme for student designers and opened shops in London and New York. Inefficient Government interference in the management and financing of K.D.W. throughout the 1980's led to the closure of the workshops in 1987.

The initial idea of C.T.T. to develop design skills through an idealistic set up like K.D.W. was laudable, but the resulting 25 years of State intervention proved to be of no use to companies involved in mass production, because of the lack of crossover contact between K.D.W. and the major industrial estates around the country. The current absence of a responsible semi-state monitoring body like K.D.W. is reflected in the quality of design applied in something like An Post's St. Patrick's Day postcards (1991). SEE. Fig. 47.

According to Terence Brown in 1985, "the recent move of the National College of Art and Design to newly converted premises in Dublin brought a sense of optimism and new life to what was an area of Irish higher education long associated with conflict and frustration" (118). Six years later there is more of a sense of disillusionment and pessimism engulfing the NCAD, than any dewy-eyed optimism. Severe cutbacks in the colleges finances have squeezed the blood out of all resources. Cramped facilities, shoddy equipment, restrictions on staff hours and impractical course aims are hardly what one would describe as a responsible educational policy.

Perhaps it is time another Scandinavian team came over on a visit in the hope that some foreign criticism might stir the Department of Education and college staff into action.

Finally, if one were to cast a critical eye over the current flock of Irish fashion designers, one would perhaps be struck by the absence of any traditional Irish identity; any commitment to Irish handcraft skills and styles or any usage of Irish textiles. The reasons for this are manifold and not unrelated to (i) the lack of an official co-ordinating policy for outworkers and (ii) the near bankrupt existence of most cloth and yarn manufacturers (Connemara Tweeds and McNutts have each gone into liquidation in the past year). Nevertheless if Sybil Connolly managed in the Fifties to promote in internationally acclaimed collections, Irish made poplin, tweek, lace, crochet, knit, bainin and linen; it is extraordinary that no one nowadays (except Paul Costelloe to a degree) is doing likewise. Ib Jorgenson, Richard Lewis, Thomas Wolfangel and Pat Crowley all import the vast bulk of the fabrics they need in their Couture businesses, and the ready to wear collections in The Design Centre (Powerscourt Townhouse Centre) are generally a shoddy mix of imported fabrics and ideas save for some of the knitters like Glynis Robbins and especially Lainey Keogh. The latter was the first in the field here to realise the neglected potential of Irish crochet but not before the Japanese had made it a new international trend. What is so unexciting about contemporary Irish fashion designers is this absolute reliance on international seasonal trends for ideas and the inability or unwillingness to even look to native traditions and skills, so that what filters down eventually to the consumer is inevitably second rate plagiarism. While Sybil Connolly's Washerwoman designs (1953) may be sniggered at now as being absurdly stage-Irish, it is important to recall the freshness with which they were executed and received in the Fifties. Her real legacy to today is not so much her fashion styling as her ability to work convincingly with Irish fabrics and techniques. Paul Costelloe is well known for his tweeds and linens but his work is very much in the British dressage mould, and indeed he is as much a British designer as an Irish one.

SEE FIG. 48.
FIG. 49.

SEE FIG. 50.

SEE FIG. 51.
FIG. 52.

CHAPTER 9

EUROPEAN REGIONALISM

The abolition of customs and national borders in 1992 will be the first step towards greater integration along the road to the 'United States of Europe' concept. It is not surprising that a nation like Ireland with such an insecure and parochial understanding of national identity should balk at the intimidating prospect of being sucked into a mass-produced European homogeneity. Paradoxically, while the move towards unity may imply a bureaucratic centralisation of policy making, it is the intention that the very opposite will occur; a decentralisation of legislative assemblies and "the emergence of strong, more autonomous regional and local structures (119). The reasoning behind this is to harmonise the existence of potentially conflicting communities, from within a large encompassing identity rather than leave each to a precious separate and antagonistic nationalism. So while nations come together under the one banner and their political differences fade, their cultural characteristics, as defined by language, music, art etc are preserved. In Ireland 'decentralisation' has been understood in the context of sending out public bodies on visits to provincial areas with a view to regional development which has usually been executed by a faraway policy bureau doing something TO a region rather than a region doing something FOR itself. The major task for European integration will be the full democratization of the central power structures. This idea is known as regionalism and the focus in a United States of Europe will be on the localised region. "When the community is criticised for being bureaucratic," says John Hume, "the real issues that such critics are raising is not the European ideal but the inappropriate nature of existing arrangements" (120). He prefers to think of the New Order as a Europe of the Regions rather than some ominous pact between Nation States.

Inclusion in a United Europe offers a small country like Ireland the choice of either contributing positively to the debate or being glossed over by her continental counterparts. This country will have to stir itself into action if it wants a slice of the cake. The reality of the hyphenated European is not so far removed from now. Soon we really will be Irish-Europeans. The military question of neutrality is one which needs to be revitalised in this

European context; either we seriously adapt a positive neutral stance, or we give it up altogether. Our complacent lip service won't stand up under international security. Our whole national identity needs to be adapted to survive in what could potentially become George Bush's New World Order. Already the world has shrunk in a new Global Culture Age. As John Hume says, we need now to "reinvolve ourselves in a European outlook and vision which was lost in our oppressive and obsessive relationship with Britain" (121). Already we have come a long way since the blinkered days of De Valera when an isolated self-sufficient Utopia was the goal. Indeed much of our early history shows a once happy relationship with Europe and it is no secret how we have recently harnessed the tourist appeal of once being The Island of Saints and Scholars sending forth our zealous missionaries to convert heathen Europe.

In the foreseeable future it is inevitable that the whole concept of national identity will broaden to include local, regional, ethnic, national, European, planetary and humanistic aspects. This diversification of the national interests will be known as Pluralism.

CHAPTER 10

PLURALISM

Ireland is one of the most centralised and homogenous States in the Western World. In the Irish Republic, over 93% of the population has a Catholic background (122). Because of our history of colonial occupation and the absence of an imperialist backlash inheritance in the guise of widespread immigration (most people want to get out not get in to Ireland), Irish society could be described as ripe fodder for fascist and xenophobic prejudices to feed on. There is only one major conflicting identify; that of the Unionist community in the North East of the Island but it is sufficiently at odds with the rest of the country to warrant endless sectarian hatred and bitterness. However, even under the homogeneous veneer of the Southern community there have developed highly polarised warring camps in the battle of Libertarianism and Traditionalism. We have a strong sense of inferiority as a nation (possibly due to centuries of subjection) which constantly manifests itself in sexual and social hang ups. Idealistic talk of European pluralism is all very well until you look long and hard at this reality of Irish cultural society and then the theoretical equations lose their credibility somewhat. There is no doubt that the very sharp divide which splits Irish society is proof enough of the need to crossover, combine and heal the wounds under the Pluralist banner. Whether this can become a viable reality remains to be seen.

In a pluralist society like America, one can identify the traits which most alarm Irish conservatives. The US is seen as a personally liberating but simultaneously alienating society. Life is fast and free and exciting; opportunities abound but only at the expense of a breakdown in community values. However, Ireland's obsession with Tradition and Community can be viewed not as positive protection of the individual but as handicapping the individual to his/her detriment in a far from ideal world. Hence our arrival at Postmodernism in intellectual evolution, in which elements of the Traditional are recognised as valuable and as essential components of the Modern. This effectively means Traditionalists being able to acknowledge the diversity of communities common to urban modernization policies, and Libertarians realising the

virtues of a Traditional Society and applying these in tandem with a Modern outlook. As Richard Kearney so keenly observes:

"There is no unitary master narrative of Irish cultural history but a plurality of transitions between different perspectives. This very plurality is perhaps our greatest cultural asset" (123).

We should turn these multiplicities of expression to our advantage by allowing for open tolerance and so dispelling the grievances of all hostile factions within society. The non-sectarian rising against colonialism in 1798 surely stands as a historic symbol by which to inform the future. It is also suggestive of that elusive 'fifth province' concept which propogates all-island reconciliation on a level reminiscent of a 'sixth sense'; i.e. a solution about which we are aware but cannot or will not see. This invisible province is a refreshing challenge to the nationalist ideal of "4 green fields" (124).

In 1986 Bishop Donal Murray wrote, "The supreme aim of society is not simply to be tolerant. It is to build the kind of community in which human beings may flourish and develop their potential to the full" (125). This shows that Church teachings can remain separate from State Law in a pluralist society. As Frank Barry puts it;

"Belonging defines community; choice implies diversity; together they comprise the communitarian pluralist vision of a diversity of communities, or a community of communities" (126).

This is a hard enough goal to strive for in the Republic. In the North, where the obstinate deafness of the Unionists mirrors the one dimensional attitude of the Nationalists, it will require a great deal of talking. The current 'Brooke initiative' in this regard has degenerated into a talks about talks situation and actually offers nothing but pessimism for an alternative restructuring of Northern Irish society.

CONCLUSION

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 1990

A CASE STUDY

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 1990

"We have passed the threshold of a new pluralist Ireland" (127).

said President Mary Robinson in her inauguration speech in Dublin Castle SEE FIG. 53.
on 3 December 1990. Perhaps we have, but one suspects we have only entered the hallway and that there is still quite a journey ahead.

"She's the biggest hypocrite in the campaign.
She's pro-divorce, pro-contraception, pro-abortion.
Is she going to have an abortion referral clinic in
Aras an Uachtaran ? " (128)

screamed Fianna Fail TD John Browne. No doubt the accession of a liberal SEE FIG. 54.
woman candidate of the left to the highest office in the land enraged many conservatives and the humiliating defeat of the Fianna Fáil election machine caused much embarrassment. Equally, the failure of Austin Currie, the Fine Gael candidate (in light of the fact that his ability and suitability were widely acknowledged) to poll even 20% first preferences (129) can only be explained in that the contest after the phonecall debacle developed into a clear 2 horse race and nothing in an Irish context is ever more impassioning or gripping than a yes or no debate, as was clearly evident in the 1980's referenda. While Mary Robinson's victory does not enable her to do anything of great importance in the Park, and most realise she had more power as a libertarian outside it, the very fact that she is in the Park at all is the victory and that according to Eoghan Harris "is the abyss that's opened up between modern politics and old politics" (130).

In fact the whole Presidential election campaign exposed many old skeletons in the nation's closets and, because of the low-key issue at stake (i.e. the Presidency as opposed to high moral principles) it was the perfect vehicle for the dusting of antiquarian attitudes without recourse to insulting people's beliefs. The Northern accent (not to mention background) of Austin Currie was sufficient to reveal a latent and enduring partitionist mentality. Brian Lenihan's daft insistence under 'mature recollection' that he had been 'mistaken' in his colourful account

of the ¹Áras phonecalls in 1982, was blatantly tongue-in-cheek, but apparently succeeded nonetheless in convincing almost half the electorate and exposed a widespread indifference to low standards in high places. Meanwhile Mary Robinson's liberal associations revealed the hysterical insecurity of the more desperate of the Traditionalists. SEE FIG. 55.

The diversity of electoral support for Mary Robinson was refreshing, with the furthest reaches of Connemara and the Aran Islands echoing the vote of the Dublin constituents. For example, in the Gaeltacht area of Lettermullen she polled 7% ahead of Lenihan (Robinson 42%; Lenihan 35%; Currie 21%) and up the road in the English speaking Moycullen she almost doubled Lenihan's vote (Robinson 54%; Lenihan 28%; Currie 16%). Lenihan's best constituency win was in Donegal North East (Lenihan 55.3%; Robinson 27.6%) and Robinsons in Dún Laoghaire (Robinson 54.6%; Lenihan 28.4%) showing a clear reversal of voting patterns and indicating the vast difference between these two communities (130). SEE FIG. 56.

Many commentators noticed how women marched into polling stations across the country knowing almost exactly what they wanted. After the result, while there was almost unanimous celebration among women of all parties, I recall nonetheless a certain recalcitrance amongst Fianna Fáil women to join in. "Quite a few male commentators are throwing cold water on the idea of the women's vote but it is there and things will never be the same again" (132), said Monica Barnes TD. Indeed it is ironic that parties which have worked so hard to create a prosperous middle class capable of self education should fail to recognise the extent to which the class has grown and its demands have become more sophisticated. However, it is an old fault of Fianna Fáil to fail to look Irish society in the eye. For instance, though they are presently in coalition with the Progressive Democrats, they prefer to call it a partnership and continue to dream of the day when they can govern as one party again.

When Dick Spring first sought out a young, active and assertive figure to contest the Presidential seat, usually awarded by the Government to a favourite long serving party member as a retirement bonus, he was attempting to engender some realistic and opportunistic debate on the whole relevance of the Presidency. Mary Robinson's campaign from the outset was about questioning fixities of national identity; about taking up

the issues which had been fudged in the Eighties. For the most part, the honest Robinson agenda was adopted by Currie and Lenihan, resulting in each of the three candidates promising the same kind of active populist Presidency. This left a vacuum which was in turn filled by negative and smear tactics and competitive P.R. campaigns. The cost of newspaper advertisements alone totalled £209,000 (74% for Lenihan, 25% for Currie; 1% for Robinson) (133). Her limited budget restricted such a heavy approach, so her campaign team concentrated on high profile publicity articles including the enviable Hello Magazine spread. Their policy was to present their candidate in an instantly appealing manner and never allow her to be photographed with people in sweaty macho clothes like rugger buggers and G.A.A. geriatrics (134). It was an acutely opposite approach to the gaudy Fianna Fail literature which showed Brian Lenihan next to the most cliched image of all; the ole' thatched cottage. SEE Pg. 57,

MARY ROBINSON'S election as President has not changed Irish society below the surface. There are still vast divides between illusion and reality in the realm of social welfare, education, health, the arts, civil law and politics. The only concrete change was the removal of Brian Lenihan from the Government, but that was a self-made problem and for the moment the dust of revenge has settled and Charles J. Haughey is still at the helm. However to attribute her success to some passing whim of the electorate or indeed to Lenihan's misfortunes is to underestimate the significance of her victory. It is indicative, one would like to imagine, of the European winds of change blowing in our direction. It is a situation unimaginable in the early Eighties when Ireland was embroiled in the battle for a viable identity or even in the prosperous Seventies when most women TD's were widows of deceased deputies and the most visible women in public life were RTE's continuity announcers and Aer Lingus air hostesses.

HER ELECTION shows we have ridden the storm tossed Eighties and are capable of accepting new symbols of identity. After all, she is now our official ambassador at home and abroad and holds the most democratic post in the country. "The recent revival of the old concept of the fifth

province expresses this emerging Ireland of tolerance and sympathy" (135), she said in her inauguration speech. One wonders how long before this new Ireland fully emerges. Incidentally, in the same week as the Presidential election, the staunchly conservative figure of Dr. Cahal Daly was appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland. At 73 he SEE FIG. 58, is the oldest appointee to the position in 170 years and his selection is regarded as typical of the Vatican's new policy to bring the Church back to a conservative stronghold.

So, while,

"mná na hÉireann ... instead of rocking the cradle, rocked
the system and came out massively to make their mark
on the ballot paper and on a new Ireland" (135),

it would appear that the Bishops are holding onto their mitres for all they are worth !

The next ten years should be interesting.

FOOTNOTES

1. I am not dealing with the Scottish Gaelic experience here.
2. David Cairns and Shaun Richards; Writing Ireland: colonialism, natioanlism and culture Manchester, 1988, p.106.
3. Quoted in Cairns and Richards, *ibid*, p.85.
5. *Ibid.*, p.133.
5. *Ibid.*, p.130.
6. Quoted in Terence Brown, IRELAND: A Social and Cultural History 1922 - 1985, London 1981, p.146.
7. Brown, *op.cit.*, p. 304.
8. Curriculum Development Unit, URBAN IRELAND: Development of Towns and Cities, Dublin 1982, p.9.
9. Brown, *op.cit.*, pp. 326 - 328.
10. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 329.
11. Brown, *op. cit.*, p.331.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Quoted in Michael Foley, De Rossa says Victory is a Milestone, Irish Times, Sat. Nov. 10 1990.
14. Richard Kearney (ed). ACROSS THE FRONTIERS: Ireland in the 1990's (Cultural/Political/Economic), Dublin 1988.
15. Richard Kearney, TRANSITIONS: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture, Dublin 1988, p. 245.

16. Brown, op. cit., p. 301.
17. ~~Ibid.~~, p. 303.
18. The Stardust Discotheque Fire in 1981 killed over 40 young people and injured many more; A 15 year old teenager girl Ann Lovett died in 1983 after giving birth alone in the Church Porch in Granard, Co. Longford.; Joanna Hayes was wrongfully accused in 1985 of murdering her baby; There were widespread reports in 1985 of miraculous moving statues in Ballinspittle, Co. Cork.
19. Fintan O'Toole, A MASS FOR JESSE JAMES: A Journey Through 1980's Ireland, Dublin 1990, p. 19.
20. Pro Life Amendment Campaign.
21. Society for the Protection of Unborn Children.
22. Quoted in O'Toole, op. cit., p. 37.
23. Ibid.
24. Quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 348.
25. Paul Arthur, PARTITIONISM REMAINS A FACTOR, Irish Times, Saturday November 10. 1990.
26. Quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 348.
27. Kearney (TRANSITIONS) op. cit., p. 238.
28. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 8.
29. The Irish Catholic, February 4, 1988, p. 13.
30. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 56.

31. Desmond Fennell, THE REVISION OF IRISH NATIONALISM. Dublin 1989, p. 75.
32. Quoted in Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 210.
33. Ibid., p. 208.
34. Ibid., p. 218.
35. Ibid., pp. 208/209.
36. Ibid., p. 209.
37. Kearney (TRANSITIONS), op. cit., p. 212.
38. Quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 336.
39. Ibid.
40. Kearney (TRANSITIONS), op. cit., p. 230.
41. Quoted in Ibid., p. 235.
42. Quoted in Brown, op. cit., p. 338.
43. Ibid., p. 339.
44. Quoted in O'Toole, op. cit., p. 64.
45. Quoted in Cairns and Richards, op. cit., p. 142.
46. Quoted in Kearney (TRANSITIONS), op. cit., p. 272.
47. Quoted in Cairns and Richards, op. cit., p. 143.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Quoted in Kearney (TRANSITIONS), op. cit., p. 281.
53. Fintan O'Toole, PUBLIC SPACES AND PRIVATE PLACES, Irish Times, Saturday February 23, 1991.
54. Interviewed by Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 188.
55. Ibid.
56. Bono, A SORT OF HOMECOMING from THE UNFORGETTABLE FIRE ALBUM by U2, 1985.
57. Interviewed by Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 195.
58. Profile of Paul Durcan by Eileen Battersby, Irish Times, Saturday November 10, 1990.
59. Interviewed by Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 204.
60. Ibid., p. 197.
61. Tim Pat Coogan (ed.), IRELAND AND THE ARTS, London (no date), p. 11.
62. Quoted in Ibid.
63. Frank McDonald, IS OUR HERITAGE THREATENED BY IT'S GUARDIANS ?, Irish Times, Monday February 19, 1991.
64. Colm Thomas (ed.), RURAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES, Blackrock 1986, p. 215.

65. O'Toole, op. cit. p. 108.
66. Interviewed on THE LATE SHOW, (Arts programme) - Report on Dublin as a City of Culture B.B.C.2., Monday 19 February, 1991.
67. Thomas, op. cit., p. 228.
68. Ibid., p. 221
69. THE DOGS IN THE GREAT GLEN from A JOURNEY TO THE SEVEN STREAMS (collection of short Stories) by Benedict Kiely 1963.
70. Ibid.
71. Thomas, op. cit., p. 186.
72. O'Toole, op. cit., p. 82.
73. EDITORIAL, Irish Times, 20th January 1988.
74. James Plunkett, STRUMPET CITY, London 1969.
75. Deirdre McQuillan, WRAP UP IN WOOL, The Sunday Tribune, November 18, 1990.
76. Richard Rutt, A HISTORY OF HANDKNITTING, London 1987, p. 198.
77. Vincent O'Neill, Managing Director, Cniotail Gaeltarra Teo, Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo.
78. Deirdre McQuillan, MAN OF ARAN, The Sunday Tribune, March 25 1990.
79. Quoted in Ibid.

80. Kitty Joyce, CLEO, 18 Kildare Street, Dublin, 2.
81. McQuillan, (MAN OF ARAN), op. cit.
82. Interviewed on THE LATE SHOW op. cit.
83. Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 229.
84. Quoted in Ibid., p. 205.
85. Ibid.
86. Fred P. Feil, ANOTHER TALE TO TELL: Politics and Narrative in Post Modern Culture, London 1990, p. 107.
87. Ibid., p. 104.
88. Ibid., p. 105.
89. Charles Haughey interviewed by Paddy Woodworth, THE TAOISEACH TALKS ABOUT THE ARTS IN IRELAND, Irish Times, Monday December 31, 1990.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Quoted in THE LATE SHOW, op. cit.
95. Anne Kelly, CULTURAL POLICY IN IRELAND, Dublin 1989, p. 16.
96. Quoted in Cairns and Richards, op. cit., p. 23.
97. Ibid.

98. Kelly, op. cit., p. 71.
99. Brian Farrell, COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND. Dublin 1984, p. 113.
100. Qutoed in Kelly, op. cit., p. 82.
101. Quoted in Farrell, op. cit., p. 113.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid., p. 112.
104. Kelly, op. cit., p. 58.
105. Quoted in Paddy Woodworth, op. cit.
106. Ibid.
107. Qutoed in Dan Cruickshank, CALL THIS A CITY OF CULTURE ?, The Independent, Wednesday November 21, 1990.
108. Cruickshank, op. cit.
109. Quoted in Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 224.
110. Quoted in Frank McDonald, SHOP TILL YOU DROP, The Irish Times (Weekend), Saturday February 9, 1991.
111. McDonald (Shop Till You Drop) op. cit.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Kelly, op. cit., p. 58.

115. Ibid.
116. Ibid., p. 40.
117. Brown, op. cit., p. 355.
118. Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 151.
119. Ibid., p. 53.
120. Ibid., p. 56.
121. The Irish Catholic, op. cit.
122. Kearney (TRANSITIONS) p. 16.
123. From W.B. Yeats, KATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN, The Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats, Macmillan 1934, p. 81.
124. Quoted in Kearney (ACROSS THE FRONTIERS), op. cit., p. 142.
125. Ibid., p. 144.
126. Quoted in PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION - 2, The Irish Times, Tuesday, December 4, 1990, p. 3.
127. Quoted in THE LONGEST TEN DAYS OF HER LIFE, The Sunday Press, December 2, 1990, p. 3.
128. STATISTICS from HOW THE STATE VOTED, The Irish Times, Saturday November 10, 1990, p. 6.
129. Interviewed by John Waters, THE ROBINSON RECONSTRUCTION: A MESSAGE IN NEW POLITICS, The Irish Times, Saturday November 10, 1990, p. 8.
130. Michael Finan, CONNEMARA VOTE DEFIED TRADITION, The Irish Times, Saturday November 10, 1990, p. 7.

131. Quoted in Maol Muire Tynan, THE PEOPLES CHOICE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 17 YEARS, The Irish Times Saturday, December 19, 1990, p. 11.
132. Ibid.
133. PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION - 2, op. cit.
134. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - 1, (Text of Acceptance Speech)
The Irish Times, Saturday November 10, 1990, p. 2.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Brown, Terence.
IRELAND: A Social and Cultural History 1922 - 1985.
Fontana Paperbacks, London 1981
2. Cairns, David and Richards, Shaun.
WRITING IRELAND: colonialism, nationalism and culture.
Manchester University Press, Manchester 1988
3. Coogan, Tim Pat (ed).
IRELAND AND THE ARTS.
Namara Press, London (no date given)
4. Farrell, Brian (ed).
COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND.
The Mercier Press Limited, Dublin 1984
5. Feil, Fred P.
ANOTHER TALE TO TELL: Politics and Narrative
in Post Modern Culture.
Verso, London 1990
6. Fennell, Desmond.
THE REVISION OF IRISH NATIONALISM.
Open Air, Dublin 1989
7. Kearney, Richard (ed).
ACROSS THE FRONTIERS: Ireland in the 1990's
Cultural/Political/Economic.
Wolfhound Press, Dublin 1988
8. Kearney, Richard.
TRANSITIONS: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture.
Wolfhound Press, Dublin 1988

9. Kelly, Anne.
CULTURAL POLICY IN IRELAND.
The Irish Museums Trust, Dublin 1989
10. O'Toole, Fintan.
A MASS FOR JESSE JAMES: A Journey Through 1980's Ireland.
The Raven Arts Press, Dublin 1990
11. Rutt, Richard (Bishop of Leicester).
A HISTORY OF HANDKNITTING.
B.T. Batsford Limited, London 1987
12. Thomas, Colin (ed).
RURAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITIES: Essays presented to
Desmond McCourt.
Irish Academic Press Limited, Balckrock 1986.
13. Unit, Curriculum Development.
URBAN IRELAND: Development of Towns and Cities.
O'Brien Educational Limited, Dublin 1982.

ARTICLES

1. Cruickshank, Dan.
CALL THIS A CITY OF CULTURE ? (Architecture 17).
The Independent, Wednesday, 21th November, 1990
2. McDonald, Frank.
CITY OF CULTURE, HOW ARE YEH ?
The Irish Times, Friday 4th January, 1991
3. McDonald, Frank.
SHOP TILL YOU DROP.
The Irish Times (Weekend), Saturday 9th February, 1991
4. McQuillan, Deirdre.
MAN OF ARAN.
The Sunday Tribune (Galway supplement), 25th March 1990

5. McQuillan, Deirdre.
WRAP UP IN WOOL.
The Sunday Tribune, 18th November 1990
6. O'Toole, Fintan.
PUBLIC SPACES AND PRIVATE PLACES.
The Irish Times (Weekend) Saturday 23rd February, 1991
7. Woodworth, Paddy (An interview by).
THE TAOISEACH TALKS ABOUT THE ARTS IN IRELAND.
The Irish Times, Monday, 31st December, 1990.

NUMEROUS ARTICLES ON THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION IN THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS

1. The Irish Times, Saturday 10th November, 1990
2. The Sunday Tribune, 11th November, 1990
3. The Sunday Press, 2nd December, 1990
4. The Irish Times, Tuesday 4th December, 1990
5. The Irish Times, Saturday 29th December, 1990