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Diamond War Memorial, Derry

Photo: Bryanna T. Hocking

Editor: Fiona Lankan
The *Irish Journal of Anthropology* is the organ of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. As such, it aims to promote the discipline of anthropology on the island of Ireland, north and south. It seeks to provide coverage of Irish-related matters and of issues in general anthropology and to be of interest to anthropologists inside and outside academia, as well as to colleagues in a range of other disciplines, such as Archaeology, Cultural Studies, Development Studies, Ethnology and Folk Studies, Gaeilge, Irish Studies, and Sociology.

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Editorial Note (Fiona Larkan)
This Autumn/Winter 2011 issue of the Irish Journal of Anthropology includes the winning entry for the Anthropological Association of Ireland’s Postgraduate Essay Prize. This prize is awarded annually to a postgraduate whose research strengthens the anthropological tradition in Ireland. Congratulations to Bryanna Hocking (see page 19) whose winning essay looks at ‘post-conflict’ efforts to re-imagine Derry’s Diamond War Memorial (front cover picture) as a relevant civic space for all. Ranmalie Jayawardana and Threase Finnegan are holders of the best undergraduate thesis awards at The Queen’s University Belfast, and NUI Maynooth respectively. In addition we are delighted to include papers drawn from an inter-disciplinary symposium held in March 2011 to commemorate the 101-year anniversary of Sir Roger Casement’s Putumayo journey to investigate allegations of atrocities connected with the rubber production activities of the Peruvian Amazon Company. Séamas ÓSíocháin writes of Casement’s commitment to what we would now call ‘indigenous rights’ while Juan Alvaro Echeverri depicts the legacy and memory of that period amongst today’s Putumayo Indians.

Biographies

Séamas Ó Síocháin was Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth. His publications include Roger Casement: Imperialist, Rebel, Revolutionary (Lilliput Press, 2008) and Social Thought and the Irish Question in the Nineteenth Century (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009).

Juan Alvaro Echeverri is a Colombian anthropologist who has worked in the Amazon region since the 1980s, mainly with the Witoto and other neighbouring indigenous groups of the Putumayo. He holds a Ph.D. degree from New School for Social Research in New York. Currently he teaches at the Amazon Campus of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Bryanna (Bree) Hocking is a PhD candidate in Irish Studies at Queen’s University Belfast, where her research focuses on the politics of public art and space in Northern Ireland. A former staff writer for the Congressional newspaper Roll Call, Hocking holds a bachelor’s from Georgetown and a master’s from the University of Limerick, where she was a George Mitchell Scholar.

Robert Power, IRCHSS Scholar, John and Pat Hume Scholar, is an interdisciplinary PhD candidate supervised by the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Spanish, NUI Maynooth. His PhD research focuses on the performance and dissemination of a plural medieval religious heritage during a new festival in Frigiliana, Andalusia.

Danielle Johnson completed a Diploma in Fine Art at Central St Martins, London, in 2005, and an MA in Social Anthropology at the University of St Andrews in 2009. She has subsequently moved to New Zealand, where she continues her own research into people/plant relationships and the social importance of gardening.

Hilary Foye is a PhD candidate in Social Anthropology at Queen’s University Belfast. Her research interests span issues of conflict, emotion, ritual and identity, particularly within Christianity. Her MA fieldwork was based in Northern Ireland and provides the foundation for her current project, entitled: ‘Christianity, Conflict and Community: Expressions of Faith, Emotion and Personhood in the Contemporary Church.’

Threase Finnegan is a Masters student in Anthropology, at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Her interests within anthropology include Irish traditional music, mumming, changing traditions, reciprocity and the concept of identity. She is also an Irish traditional music teacher, and flute player in the Irish music group ‘Anám’.

Ranmalie Jayawardana was born and attended school in Surrey before undertaking her bachelor’s degree at Queen’s University Belfast in Social Anthropology. She received an undergraduate scholarship from the School of History & Anthropology and the Anne Maguire Prize for her dissertation. She remains at Queen’s studying for her Masters.
Abstract: Marking the centenary of Roger Casement’s humanitarian investigations in the Putumayo region of the Upper Amazon, this article suggests that he not only recognized the abuses there as systemic but increasingly saw them as part of the wider features of exploitation which accompanied colonization and empire. His Putumayo work illustrated a long-term commitment on his part to what we would term today indigenous rights.

Key Words: Casement, Putumayo, Empire, Race, Indigenous Rights

Casement in the Putumayo, 1910
On 22 September 1910, a little over one-hundred years ago, Roger Casement arrived at La Chorrera, the local headquarters of the Peruvian Amazon Company (PAC) on the River Igaraparaná in the Putumayo region of the Upper Amazon, to investigate allegations of atrocities perpetrated by PAC employees in connection with the collecting of wild rubber. The main victims were the indigenous people of the area, used as a workforce by the company. Casement was representing the British Government and accompanying a company commission of investigation, also sent out from London. British involvement derived from two facts: that the PAC was registered in London and that many of its employees in the Putumayo came from the island of Barbados, a British colony.

From then until he departed the area on 16 November, he carried out intensive interviews of Barbadian employees, visited other rubber stations, observed his surroundings closely, and reflected and wrote constantly. He acquired the detailed knowledge of what he needed to know about Barbadian involvement in the Putumayo and about the rubber system itself. The year 1911 was spent writing reports on the investigation (to become part of the official Blue Book), campaigning about the Putumayo, and in a second visit to Peru in the autumn in an attempt to add momentum to the campaign.

Early in 1912, Randall Davidson, the (Anglican) Archbishop of Canterbury wrote to Casement with the following words of praise:

I rejoice … to think of the effect which has already been produced by your own competent and painstaking study of the question on the spot. I imagine that it is true to say that no one else now alive could have done quite what you have done.

On the publication of the official Putumayo Blue Book (July 1912), The Times of London wrote: ‘No one who reads Sir Roger Casement’s Report can fail to wish it means and power to extend its civilizing influence. The existing system cries aloud to heaven’ (quoted in Goodman, 2009:166). Casement himself greeted the publication of the Blue Book with more exuberant language: ‘I’ve blown up the Devil’s Paradise in Peru! … Putumayo will be cleansed – altho’ nothing can bring back the murdered tribes – poor souls.’ His contribution was rewarded by the British government with a knighthood. But the affairs of the Putumayo were soon to be superseded in his life, as he was swept up in the turmoil that started with the Home Rule crisis in Ireland and ended with the Easter Rising of 1916. Between these came his sojourn in Germany during World War One and at the end, his capture, trial and execution by hanging in August 1916.

Casement and the Putumayo, 2010
One hundred years on, the centenary of Casement’s Putumayo investigation was marked in Latin America by two major conferences, the first in Manaus, Brazil, and the second in Bogotá, Colombia. Apart from an Irish Times report on the Manaus conference, the only centenary publicity I am aware of in Ireland was a short piece in the Irish edition of the Sunday Times on 26 December 2010, when it carried a piece on Casement under the heading: ‘Casement “was no humanitarian”’. The stimulus for the piece was the publication of an article on Casement and the Amazon in the Irish Studies Review written by Lesley Wylie, a lecturer in Latin American Studies at the University of Leicester. Summarizing her general thesis, Wylie writes:

This article will suggest that Casement’s views on race and empire remained more or less consistent with British imperial ideology, at least with respect to non-Irish affairs, well after the Congo investigations were concluded. (316)

While there is much that is valuable and suggestive in Wylie’s analysis and while it makes a limited acknowledgement (grudging almost) of Casement’s humanitarianism, the thrust of her article is to suggest that behind the humanitarianism lay a basically unchanged imperial ideology, in other words that there is a major disjuncture between his feelings of sympathy and his formal imperialist and racist ideology. I suspect that a contributing factor to this interpretation is a reading of his personality. Wylie opens her article by referring to

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one of the commonly ascribed characterizations of his personality, his ‘dividedness’; other terms she calls on are ‘paradoxes’, ‘contradictions’, his ‘ambiguous middle line in the divisions of Irish life’, his being ‘marked by estrangement’ (re Ireland). All seem designed to convey an impression of inconsistency, and they set the scene for her thesis – of the non-humanitarian humanitarian. In all of this one misses a balanced recognition of the broader dimension of his work.

**Casement’s Contribution Assessed**

It is universally acknowledged that Roger Casement had a campaigning commitment to indigenous human rights, but there is more disagreement on whether he had a supporting theoretical framework. Two historians who have written perceptively about Casement have disagreed on the quality of his ideas. Andrew Porter has suggested that Casement failed to produce ‘any sustained or … mature reflection’ on imperialism and that he was not a systematic thinker (quoted in O’Callaghan, 2005:56–7). Margaret O’Callaghan disagrees: ‘Contrary to Porter’s claim’, she argues, Casement ‘does have a theoretical model of colonial expansion … He had, by any reckoning, probably made a greater contribution elsewhere than any other theorist of the evils of empire’ (ibid.: 57–8).

I would place myself somewhere between Porter and O’Callaghan. From reading Bernard Porter’s *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge*, first published in 1968, one can identify two reasons why Casement’s ideas are under-recognized. Firstly, Porter points out, most of the early critiques of empire he brings to light were totally unknown until the 1960s. And since, on the one hand, few of Casement’s writings were published until much later than the 1960s (for example the two volumes edited by Angus Mitchell, 1997, 2003) and since, on the other hand, his ideas are scattered through his writings, his neglect as a critic of empire is understandable. Secondly, Porter points out that Africa was the predominant focus of early critiques, while India and Ireland (let alone Latin America) tended not to be included, a bias he acknowledges in his own book (Porter 2008: xvi). Hence, even though Casement’s critique of Congo atrocities was known, because of the neglect of Latin America and of Ireland (especially given the importance of Ireland in Casement’s world view), it is again no surprise that his contribution was neglected. With regard to the significance of Ireland to Casement, Margaret O’Callaghan is insightful when she writes that: ‘the relationship between Casement’s consular career, his mounting anti-imperialism, and his increasingly more self-conscious nationalism, is complicated and dialectical, not linear and sequential’ (O’Callaghan: 49). He saw, for example, a direct parallel between the historical conquest of Ireland, especially the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the colonial processes in Africa and South America – it’s a theme that runs through his writing (ibid.: 48, 51).

Casement’s phrase, ‘more power to the Indians’, in the title of the present article, illustrates this, resonating as it does with the colloquial use of English in Ireland.

In this context, I wish to present what I consider to be some patterned ideas of Casement moving from his regional experiences to wider level: (i) exploitation in the Congo and Putumayo as systemic; (ii) his growing recognition of exploitation in other parts of the world; (iii) a range of ideas he expressed on such topics as ‘empire’, ‘capital’, ‘civilization’ and ‘land’ (see also Ó Siocháin 2005).

**Congo and Putumayo – Casement and the ‘System’**

Casement’s African career ended with his Congo investigation of 1903 (published in 1904), which provided the necessary evidence to substantiate accusations of abuses being levelled against the Congo Free State regime. The Report, drawing on Casement’s twenty-year experience in Africa, including in the Congo itself, outlined the nature of what he began to call the ‘system’. In a letter to the Governor-General of the State, written at the end of his voyage of investigation, he wrote: ‘I do not accuse an individual; I accuse a system’. Earlier, more emotionally, when his indignation boiled over during his stay in the Anglo-British India Rubber (ABIR) concession area, his Diary entry for 30 August reads: ‘16 men women & children tied up … Infamous shameful system.’

The ‘system’ comprised a number of components:

- The State was directly involved in the economy – State officials were encouraged to increase rubber production and the greater the rubber output, the greater their commissions;
- vast tracts of land were parcelled out to private capital (the concessionnaires), the State benefiting through what today we might call ‘interlocking directorships’;
- the economy was a siphon economy, with goods of very considerable value going out (rubber), but few trade goods coming in – and prominent in the list of imports being guns;
- the exploitation of local labour.

Casement’s Report builds up a picture of the unrelenting oppression of the Congo State system on the local population (for details see Ó Siocháin and O’Sullivan 2003). And, of course, the Report documents the integral role of force in making this system operate: the armed punitive expeditions, the standard placement of ‘forest guards’ or sentries in native villages, the keeping of women and children as hostages to ensure the work compliance of husbands, the confiscation of canoes and other objects of value (e.g. brass rods/money), the fines on villages, the flogging and imprisonment, the shootings and beatings, the cutting off of hands. When later he came to experience what he called the ‘grim tragedy’ of the Putumayo, rooted in ‘this
wretched rush for "black gold", it was, he felt, 'a bigger crime than that of the Congo, although committed on a far smaller stage and affecting only a few thousands of human beings, whereas the other affected millions'. It amounted to, he believed, an internal slave trade. Given the way in which he had come to recognize the systemic nature of Congo exploitation, it is not surprising that, though acknowledging the differences, he also came to describe Putumayo atrocities as systemic also. ‘The system,’ he wrote, ‘I should attribute to the company; the individual crimes were frequently excesses of degenerate men who were employed in a responsible capacity.’

If we focus on labour exploitation, we can see that Casement has recognized the enormous amount of labour supplied by the indigenous population. At one point he listed the various tasks:

From building these huge houses (this one is fully 45 yards long and as strong as an old three-decker) clearing great tracts of forest, making plantations of yucca, mealy, sugar cane, &tc. constructing roads and bridges at great labour, for these men to more easily get at them – to supplying them with ‘wives’, with food, with game from the chase, often with their own food just made for their own pressing wants, with labour to meet every conceivable form of demand. All this the Indians supply for absolutely no remuneration of any kind, this entirely in addition to the India rubber which is the keystone of the arch.

In Africa Casement had talked at times of the laziness of the people, but in the Putumayo his comments were on the constant work of the Indians and of the laziness of the overseers (an example of the trope reversals one finds in Casement, unacknowledged by Wylie). In exchange for their labour the Indians got little. From inventories he took of station stores, Casement concluded that virtually worthless items were given in payment for substantial loads of rubber. A tin bowl was given an Indian for an entire fabrico load – 70 to 80 kilos of rubber; the recipient threw it on the ground and left in disgust. He discovered, too, the degree to which the Barbadian employees were in debt to the Company.

And, as in the Congo, an integral part of the system was the use of force and great cruelty. There were the stocks (cépo), the routine floggings (‘welfare’), the shootings, cases of men being held under the water and half-drowned, the case of the burning of an old woman. Sexual depravity also: ‘concubines everywhere’, in Casement’s words; women, too, could be raped while in the stocks. The Barbadian employees were used ‘to help control the Indian population’. Casement stated that ‘all the men still remaining at the time of my visit were employed in guarding or coercing or in actively maltreating Indians to force them to work and bring in india-rubber to the various sections’. There is fear all round, he commented in the charged atmosphere of La Chorrera.

Beyond Congo and Putumayo

His experience of life in Latin America undoubtedly widened Casement’s perspective on the incidence of oppression in the world; he became increasingly aware that it was not confined to the Congo and Putumayo but was close to being global. In 1911, for example, when struggling against the rubber regime in the Putumayo, he was becoming increasingly aware of similar patterns of exploitation elsewhere in Latin America. During his evidence in London to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Putumayo, he said: ‘I believe there are very wrongful things taking place in that great forest in connection with getting rubber, and I would say wherever there are wild Indians the same methods are employed.’ Elsewhere, exhorting his friend Edmond Morel, he wrote:

These slave pits of the earth – Congo, French Congo, Mexico, Peru, possibly Korea and Formosa under the Japanese, Angola with Sao Tomé under the Portuguese – these damnable sites of the slave must be assailed … Tackling Leopold in Africa has set in motion a big movement – it must be a movement of human liberation all the world over … you must remember that the cause of human freedom is as wide as the world.

Given what was publicly recognized as a deep commitment to the case of the indigenous, it is not surprising that on 6 August 1913 Travers Buxton (acting for the Society) wrote, offering Casement a Vice-Presidency of the Anti-Slavery Society.

Dear Sir Roger, At the last meeting of our Committee it was unanimously resolved that you should be asked to accept the position of a Vice President of this society … You have already done such notable service to the cause of freedom for native races that it seems only fitting that you should, if you will, be connected with our Society.

Casement politely hesitated but ultimately did not accept the offer. And subsequent events overtook any further involvement along these lines.

Empire, Capital, Civilization, Land: Casement’s Comparative Framework

In addition to his key concept of empire, Bernard Porter lists a number of other topics that ‘usually attached themselves to (modern) imperialism’ and about which there were varied opinions among critics of empire. He includes ‘race, capitalism, modernization, “civilization”’ in his list (Porter 2008: xix). Scattered through Casement’s writings we can find fairly
consistent patterned ideas concerning empire and these related topics.

_Empire._ One of his earliest formulations on empire is found in a letter to his English friend, Richard Morten, written at the beginning of 1905, i.e. after his African life but before he was posted to Latin America. The letter also reveals the strongly moral character of his thinking (it deals with three empires – Roman, Spanish, British):

If you would study history more attentively you would see this. Rome centralised the wealth of the ancient world in herself – Italy became a beautiful garden filled with the villas of the rich, maintained by the labour of millions of slaves. And Rome fell. Spain, in her pride, exploited the mines of the Indies by Carib slave labour … and sent the wealth of Peru, Mexico and the Caribbean sea to Madrid. She had a monopoly of the gold of the world – but she did not know how to use it wisely – and Spain fell. Read Montesquieu’s _Considerations sur le decline and fall of Rome_ … and you will … find considerations in it which will make you tremble when you look at South Africa – and India.

His South American experiences deepened Casement’s antipathy to Iberian colonization. He believed that the tragedy of the South American Indian was ‘the greatest in the world today, and certainly it has been the greatest wrong for well nigh the last 400 years’. And: ‘Iberian civilisation is not Latin civilisation – and the coming of the Spaniards and Portuguese to South America with the resultant destruction of all the Inca, Aztec, Mayan and other civilisations has been an unmitigated loss to the world’.

And with a different target he wrote in 1913: ‘Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand are no parts really of an Empire – they are free peoples, learning the width and height and magnitude of freedom too – the Empire consists of Ireland, India, Egypt and the lands inhabited by the weak and exploitable people – and may England’s grip on all those lands and peoples be palsied. May the whole “theory of Empire” be sent to jail.’ The context here was that all of these other ‘white’ colonies had by this time got considerable local autonomy (‘home rule’), while Ireland was denied any measure.

_Capitalism._ When a friend, Mitchell Innes, a British diplomat based in Washington, suggested the establishment of an organization to work for indigenous rights, Casement was interested, but, he wrote, the task facing an organization of the type suggested by Innes would be big: ‘for it has to tackle an enormous thing. “Commercial interests” are practically modern Civilization itself. They make and remake Governments – and destroy peoples, just as they make war. They build battleships and incidentally sink liners too. “Commercial interests” represent profits – and all men nearly are after profits. Show them profits – and they won’t trouble about making (or breaking) the welfare of peoples.’ And: ‘Slavery is spreading – the steamboat and steam engines and modern armaments and the whole scheme of modern government are aiding it – with the stock gambling and share market as pillars of the scheme’, Elsewhere he commented that: ‘… Christianity owns schools and missions as well as Dreadnoughts and dividends’.

_Civilization._ As his career progressed, Casement began to put the term civilization, one of the three Cs (Christianity, Commerce, Civilization) in inverted commas (another reversed trope), as for example in a letter from 1904 to Alice Stopford Green. The following quote also illustrates O’Callaghan’s point about a ‘dialectical’ process:

> I think it must have been my insight into human suffering and into the ways of the spoiler and the ruffian who takes “civilisation” for his watchword when his object is the appropriation of the land and labour of others for his personal profit which the tale of English occupation in Ireland so continually illustrates that gave me the deep interest I felt in the lot of the Congo natives. Every argument by which King Leopold and his aids seek to justify the merciless oppression of the central African today was stereotyped in the ‘Laws’ and measures of the past in this country. We had it all, even to “moral and material regeneration”.

In the Putumayo, his phrase ‘truly a civilising company’ (applied to the Peruvian Amazon Company) was used with irony. Elsewhere he talked of an invasion of ‘barbarism’ (312). And, in typical language, wrote: “The forest, with its wild creatures, is happier far than the “centres of civilisation” these Peruvian and Colombian miscreants have created and floated into a great London Company’.

_Land._ Another element was of crucial significance for him (not included by Porter) – the land. The following long extract from a letter he wrote in 1911 to Travers Buxton of the Anti-Slavery Society includes several of the above themes and shows the geographical span of Casement’s thinking. In responding to a query from Buxton, Casement launched into a set of reflections:

> The expropriation of the Indians and barefaced denial of all rights in land of the Indians is at the bottom of the whole system of slavery that undoubtedly exists in those regions. If the Indians were protected in their land ownership they would not be the easy prey they are today to the exploiter. It is the Leopold system in Africa – all over again – only it is the great original on which conception of ‘State’ ownership Leopold modelled his astute claims in Congo land …
If you root the natives in the soil – African or Indian, Polynesian or whatever band of native he may be – you free him.

When the [white] Natal farmers … some few years ago wanted cheap Zulu labour they got legislation against his ownership in the soil under way – they talked of ‘breaking up the reserves’ as well as taxing his huts. If a native owns land he can live by it and feed himself and wife and children and ultimately grow more than he and they need and so you get the root of all healthy commerce planted too – for he sells thereby his surplus. If you deny him ownership in the soil you render him a landless alien in his own country and drive him into the slave pen in the end – as you see Diaz has done in Mexico.

… the Irish Land War has been a reassertion of a people’s right to live on and by their own soil the effect of which will ultimately travel far beyond the shores of Ireland.

Body slavery and individual ownership and tilling of the soil cannot go together – and if the Peruvians and Mexicans and other Iberian States in South and Central America could be forced or induced to recognise and register native claims to land, resting not on title deeds emanating from a politician but from the obvious long association of the claimant and his forbears with the soil in question then a healthy agricultural life would take the place of this abominable exploitation and concessionaire regime which we find systematically dogged by human slavery wherever it goes …

It is of little permanent value fighting the slaver, if you don’t go to the root of things and fight these claims to land ownership by States who are, rightly, merely the eyes and ears of the people. We can smash slavery today on the Putumayo perhaps – but it will arise again tomorrow – in a new form if you leave the Indian tribesman without legal recognition of his tribal right to live by and on the soil of his country.

Casement and ‘Race’. Race is one those issues that Porter suggests is frequently found associated with discussions of ‘empire’. And Wylie talks of Casement’s ‘adherence to contemporary discourse of race’. I want to approach the topic of Casement and ‘race’ indirectly, by suggesting that his life-long commitment to what we would today call indigenous rights points to a fundamentally non-racist mentality. But, to put it in the context of his day, I wish to draw attention to the racist climate of the time, which underpinned the very exploitation which Casement opposed.

_The Age of Racism_. Writing of Africa, Peter Brantlinger suggests that the ‘Myth of the Dark Continent’ emerged between the abolition of the slave trade abolition and Scramble for Africa at the end of the nineteenth century (1986: 185). He quotes Nancy Stepan as saying that, when the war against slavery was being won, the war against racism was being lost (ibid.: 187). By the time of the Berlin Conference of 1884, which marked the carve-up of Africa (and also the commencement of Casement’s life in Africa), ‘the British tended to see Africa as a center of evil, a part of the world possessed by a demonic “darkness” or barbarism, represented above all by slavery and cannibalism, which it was their duty to exorcise’ (ibid.: 194). And Bernard Porter tells us that the period between 1895 and 1914 showed the most virulent … imperialism in both the ideological and popular spheres (Porter 2008: xxi). The anthropology of the time, too, was racist and evolutionary and, says Brantlinger, ‘evolutionary thought seems almost calculated to legitimize imperialism’ (Brantlinger 1986: 206, 203).

By the end of the nineteenth century, eugenacists and social darwinists were offering ‘scientific’ justification for genocide and imperialism (ibid.: 205).

Darwin, for example, had personal experience of the horrors of extermination when, in Argentina in 1832 during the voyage of the _Beagle_, he came face-to-face with General Rosas in the middle of a drive to exterminate the indigenous population. Yet, when _The Descent of Man_ was published in 1871, such destruction was described, in neutral language, as being inevitable: ‘At some future period not very distant as measured in centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.’ (Darwin, quoted in Lindqvist 1998: 107). The dominant perspective was that of the inevitability of the disappearance of ‘inferior races’. It is reflected in the 1898 comment made during a speech by Lord Salisbury, Casement’s employer at one point, when he said: ‘One can roughly divide the nations of the world into the living and the dying’ (quoted in Lindqvist: 140).

On the question of race, it is not difficult to find comments by Casement that can be characterized as racist; easiest, perhaps, from his period in Brazil. One example from Pará, Brazil, will suffice: ‘Only a fortnight after his arrival, he sent two broadsides to Lord Dufferin, stating his intention to resign shortly. The people and the cost of living were his main targets. The former were rude, uncouth and arrogant:

They are nearly all hideous cross-breeds – of Negro-Portuguese with, up here in the Amazon, a very large admixture of native Indian blood. Altogether the resulting human compost is the nastiest form of black-pudding you have ever sat down to. The native African is a decent, friendly,
courteous soul – the Indian, too, I dare say, is a hardy savage chez lui – but the ‘Brazilian’ is the most arrogant, insolent and pig-headed brute in the world I should think.’

But it is vital to assess such utterances in the context of the broad patterns of Casement’s ideas (above) and (below) of his life commitment to what we would today call ‘indigenous rights’.

**Casement’s Commitment to the Indigenous.**
Casement was not unique in not sharing the dominant ideology, but by personality, by values and by historical circumstances, his support for indigenous rights developed into a life commitment. What comes across very strongly is that throughout his career Casement was possessed of a deep feeling for other humans, colonial subjects. This is attested by friends and observers as well as from his own words and actions.

Casement’s attitude as well as the dominant ideology of the time can be sensed in a comment made by a Niger colleague (addressing a new arrival):

> We call old Roger the Black Man’s Friend; I don’t know that I personally agree entirely with his policy, it is what some people call pro-native, but he is a very good chap, and he can go anywhere amongst them.

We can, of course, document Casement’s commitment from his own words. His general attitude can be found in more measured tone in an observation he made in a letter he wrote from South Africa, during the Boer War, to Sir Martin Gosselin, a superior at the Foreign Office. He was writing about the ill-treatment of black British subjects from the West African colonies, who were working in the Congo:

I have written you a long letter, but I know that you are interested in the welfare of our native subjects residing there. The simplest way to secure their well being is, perhaps, to strive for that of all natives of the Congo. It is difficult to obtain a special recognition of and favourable treatment for one class of black men, when the whole practice of executive obligations towards natives is so willfully wrong as it is upon the Congo today.

His humanity is clearly evident when one looks at concrete examples of his intervention in cases of cruelty. I am struck by the similarity between the earliest case I have found of his protesting brutality, in the Congo, and a late example from the Putumayo. The first dates to April 1887, when he was in his early twenties, the perpetrator being Lieutenant Francqui, Commissaire of the Cataract Region, whom Casement twice saw engaging in acts of brutality. When he complained to the judicial authority at Boma, the Free State capital, he was informed that ‘I had no right of intervention on behalf of the people he had injured’.

One of them, who had been so cruelly flogged by this officer’s direction and under his eyes that he was literally cut to pieces, I had to have carried in my own hammock for over fifty miles when taking him to Boma to the State Doctor to have his wounds dressed and in order that I might lodge a complaint on his behalf … I was laughed at for my pains … Lieutenant Francqui was never punished.

The Putumayo example occurred during the return march through the forest, from Matanzas to Entre Rios. On the morning of 19 October (1910), Casement set off and his journey coincided with a fabrico, and a straggling line of Indians, taking loads of rubber down by Entre Rios to Puerto Peruano. On the road, he met an Andokes woman carrying a load of rubber, but in distress and unable to go any further. They stopped once more, took her load of rubber, gave her tea and helped her on:

> The woman could hardly walk, and that task of getting her on was a very slow one. She fell several times, and I gave her my walking stick to help her trembling legs. She gave way constantly at the knees and fell. I cried a good deal, I must confess. I was thinking of Mrs. Green and Mrs. Morel if they had been and could have seen this piteous being – this gentle-voiced woman – a wife and mother – in such a state.

So, what of Casement and ‘race’? The topic, I believe, must be interpreted, on the one hand, in light of the ‘world view’ elements that I have outlined: the structural or systematic nature of Congo and Putumayo exploitation; the increasingly worldwide vision he had of parallel abuses; and the attitudes he expressed on empire and its associated features (capitalism, civilization, land). And, on the other hand, it must take into account his full commitment to the cause of the indigenous. In light of all of this, I find it difficult to accept the validity of Wylie’s characterizations.

**Conclusion**
In a short book published in 1992 to mark the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the Americas, the Irish writer Peadar Kirby draws attention to ‘certain similarities of historical experience between Ireland and all the countries of Latin America’, and goes on to suggest that: ‘In some ways, our history is closer to that of Latin America than is that of any other European country’ (1992: 10). First in his list of shared features is ‘a common experience of sustained and violent colonisation which destroyed the native civilisations it encountered’ (ibid., emphasis added).
As well as causing psychic damage, conquest led to a similar sequence in economic life, from inherited economic dependence, through (in more recent times) experimentation with import substitution industrialization, and then an opening to multinational investment.

While Latin American countries may have been formally independent, Casement observed (if sketchily) the general impact on indigenous populations of empire, colonialism, and capitalism, as well as the specific horrors of places like the Putumayo. He saw the process of colonialism, of conquest, being played out still in his own day in the upper reaches of the Amazon. If the parallel histories of Latin America and Ireland involved, in Kirby’s terms, the destruction of the native civilizations encountered, Roger Casement’s major historical contribution was directed at one specific moment in the assault on indigenous peoples and cultures.

Ronald Niezen suggests that today indigenous identity is a near-global phenomenon (2003: 11). Its origins and its binding component lie, he suggests in ‘a common experience…of illegitimate, meaningless, and dishonourable suffering’ (ibid.: 13, and cf. 86–93). Or, more elaborately: ‘The indigenous peoples’ movement has arisen out of the shared experiences of marginalized groups facing the negative impacts of resource extraction and economic modernization and … the social convergence and homogenization that these ambitions tend to bring about’ (ibid.: 9). In two cases, the Congo and the Putumayo, Roger Casement brought about a heightened public awareness of the negative impact of resource extraction in the case of one commodity, rubber. He tried, more perhaps in the case of the Congo than of the Putumayo, to give a voice to the local population; but his voice and that of campaigning organizations (The Congo Reform Association, the Aborigine Protection Society) were still the dominant mediating ones. Today, indigeneity has its own voice, being both a vibrant social movement and a participant in formal political processes. But today, too, it needs the support of agencies from the wider community, both at international level and at local level (Niezen, 2003; Van Cott 2005) just as it did in Casement’s day.

One hundred years on, it is our duty to try to rigorously assess the whole Putumayo episode, including the general impact of Casement’s intervention. There is plenty to criticise, yet; there are limitations and distortions to his thinking on the local culture and on the various spatial dimensions of the story (e.g. local-regional-national). An assessment should include wider issues: the impact the rapid emergence of plantation-grown rubber had in undermining the economy of wild rubber; the impact of the outbreak of World War One; an account of the continuing sufferings of the indigenous population of the area since Casement’s day. Included also should be those issues mentioned by Wylie, such as the story of the two youths he brought to England to contribute to the Putumayo campaign, and his proposal for a Catholic mission to the area. And it should address the question of Casement’s ‘racism’ or otherwise.

In a regularly quoted passage, Joseph Conrad presents two images of Casement. One is the picture of the colonial-type figure striding into and out of the forest with his crook-handled stick, followed by his bull-dogs and servant; the other is the comparison he makes between Casement and Bartolomé de las Casas, an earlier defender of the indigenous inhabitants of Latin America. Given the ongoing linkage that today exists between indigenous and non-indigenous, and of Casement’s remarkable interventions a century ago, I believe the second of Conrad’s images is the more fitting today: ‘I have always thought some part of Las Casas’ soul had found refuge in his indomitable body’.

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Notes

1 This is a shortened version of papers presented at (a) a conference in Bogotá from 26–29 October 2010: ‘El Paraíso del Diablo – Roger Casement y el Informe del Putumayo un siglo después’ / ‘The Devil’s Paradise – Roger Casement and the Putumayo Report a century later’, and (b) a workshop held in the National University of Ireland Maynooth, Saturday 26 March 2011, entitled: ‘Genocide 101: The Atrocities of the Amazon Rubber Boom, Roger Casement’s Putumayo Journey, Contemporary Cultural Representations Thereof’.

2 The PAC had London capital and a mostly-London-based Board of Directors. The driving force, though, was a local cacique, Julio Arana, hence the local name, Casa Arana.

3 Unless otherwise indicated, quotations draw on my 2008 biography of Casement; precise sources can be found there.

4 The Manaus conference, ‘Rubber, the Amazon and the Atlantic World 1870–1913 – Roger Casement’, was held on 23–24 August 2010. The Irish Times (4/9/10) carried a report, which also included comment on Mario Vargas Llosa’s new novel on Casement. For the second conference see Note 1, above.

5 Lesley Wylie, ‘Rare models: Roger Casement, the Amazon, and the ethnographic picturesque’, Irish Studies Review, 18(3) 2010, 315–330.

6 This episode should throw light on the question of his acceptance of a knighthood, used against him during his trial. It seems reasonable to suggest that he disliked honours and that his acceptance of a knighthood only came after friends advised him that its rejection could damage his Putumayo work.
The Putumayo Indians and the Rubber Boom

Juan Alvaro Echeverri*

Abstract: This article approaches the Putumayo Indians’ memory of the Rubber Boom, in the voice of the Muinane group coming to grips with their painful memories of that violent past, and in the recent initiative of the Colombian government to declare the reconstructed headquarters of the Peruvian Amazon Company in La Chorrera as an ‘Estate of Cultural Interest’. This memory is represented by Indians in the double image of the Basket of Darkness, which holds the memories of violence, and the Basket of Life, which holds the seeds of the future looking forward to the growing of new generations and leaving behind the dangerous memories of violence and sorcery of the past.

Keywords: Rubber Boom, Muinane Indians, Putumayo, Roger Casement, Casa Arana, Memory

In the reports, narratives and testimonies of the Casa Arana period in the Putumayo region, Putumayo Indians speak with their bodies executed, mutilated, tortured, raped and exploited by rubber barons, as has been documented in horrifying detail by Casement, Valcárcel, Hardenburg, Saldána Roca and many others. In all those tales, they are not actual subjects but objects of compassion, fear or observation; noble savages for Casement, treacherous and savage for Robuchon, cannibals to be civilised for Casa Arana, and objects of ethnographic description for Robuchon and Whiffen. In all of these cases Indians do not have voice but are the objects of disputes among Whites. I want to bring Indians’ ways of dealing with memory to the foreground and move to the background the usual literature.

Indians nowadays refer to the memories of the rubber boom as belonging to what they call ‘Basket of Darkness’. In contrast to that obscure basket of bad memories, they speak of a ‘Basket of Life’, where the seeds of the future are placed, looking forward to the growing of new generations and leaving behind the dangerous memories of violence and sorcery of the past. I explore below this powerful double image of Indians’ memory and think it is fit to parallel Roger Casement’s legacy. What does it reveal to the workings of memory and the representation of history? What is the truth to be sought in the past?

I begin by approaching the Putumayo Indians, in the voice of the Muinane group coming to grips with a painful memory and in face of new changes and challenges at the end of the twentieth Century.

The Muinane Indians Healing the Memory of the Rubber Boom

In May 1993, a group of Muinane people were getting ready to set off to visit their ancient territories. They are the descendants of one of the peoples that were nearly exterminated by the Casa Arana and the Peruvian Amazon Company at the beginning of the twentieth century. The meagre remnants of their formerly numerous population had resettled further north, beyond the edge of what had been their ancestral lands, which remained nearly uninhabited for many decades.

The impact of the rubber industry and the Casa Arana regime on the Putumayo Indians was enormous. The total Indian population was reduced to perhaps less than a tenth between 1900 and 1930, and the surviving ones were forcefully resettled on the Putumayo River and further south. A few managed to escape north or to hide in the forest. Their social, political and ceremonial organization was severely shattered, and their territory was depopulated, as the forest regrew in what had been a densely populated region. In 1908, Thomas Whiffen (1915) calculated 46,000 as the total population of the Putumayo Indians and 2,000 as the population of the Muinane tribe. By 1993, the Muinane census did not reach 150; these were the descendants of the barely 20 Muinane men and women who managed to survive the Casa Arana regime (Echeverri 1997). These rough numbers just serve as an indication of the degree of the catastrophe these peoples endured.

In the 1980s, the Colombian government officially granted the indigenous groups of the region—Witoto, Bora, Muinane, Miraña, Ocaína, Nonuya and Andoque Indians, the descendants of the peoples who were Casa Arana’s labour force—the legal property of the territories they now occupy as well as their ancestral lands in the hinterland. This huge expanse of land—about six million hectares—coincides with Julio César Arana’s rubber territories. This new Indian reserve was named Resguardo Predio Putumayo. The Muinane Council of Elders—formed by the chiefs of the four main clans—decided in the early 1990s that the re-appropriation of the ancestral territories was necessary to reassert their political autonomy, now formally recognised, and to work towards their social reconstruction.

The Muinane elders in 1993 were the children of those who had directly suffered the slavery and slaughter under the Casa Arana regime. They were born after the rubber boom had ceased and only the oldest ones had first-hand knowledge of the places where the ancient people used to live. They grew up looking away from those stories and those places, finding a way of life on the banks of the Caquetá River, trading timber and game with White people and sending their children to the Catholic boarding school. They grew old far from their land and from the horrifying stories their own parents told—and remained disturbingly connected to them.

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The ancestral territory of the Muinane is located at the centre of the Resguardo Predio Putumayo. This territory was known to the elders in words and memories, but they had not returned to it since their childhood. In the 1990s times had changed. They had their territories legally titled and a new generation, for whom these stories were distant, had grown up after them. Their children were intelligent and able, had gone to school, and wanted to know. The banks of the Caquetá River, where they had lived for decades and where they had raised their children, was a foreign land where their ancestors used to go to get fish and stones, but not a place they used to live. The rocky outcrops which mark the Caquetá landscape are the lodges of mythological beings, carriers of evil powers.

Further south is the ‘Land of coolness’, the area where the places of the malocas (longhouses) of their forbears rested abandoned, the land that had been depreciated and ravaged, and from where they had been expelled and exiled. It was their territory, a word in English (or Spanish or Portuguese) that barely translates the meaning of the Muinane concept: it is not just a tract of land that can be mapped or legally titled; this territory is the inscription of life and memory on the land—and this life and this memory had remained amputated since the times of Casa Arana, and the events Roger Casement and others denounced and publicised, but that for the Indians had remained unhealed.

The children of Casa Arana were now elders and they needed to recover that life and that memory they had been unwilling to face for decades. The necessary step was to revisit the territory and to face its memories. At that time, I did not fully grasp the meaning of the decision they took to go and visit the old places. They stated that territory was the basis of their education, their government, and their social and ritual organization, and that they needed to go there with their children to show them and retrieve the thread of their life.

And then they started off their journey to the ancient land. The group was formed by three elders of three of the surviving clans (Pineapple, Worm and Drum), and nine boys, three of each clan. They headed first to the ancient territory of the Pineapple clan, and Chucho, its elder, led the group. On May 27th 1993, after five days of trekking into the uninhabited forest, they got to the Manioc creek, a small stream on the Cahuinari River basin, not far from where once stood the Casa Arana section of Matanzas, now covered by forest regrowth. It was in Matanzas where Roger Casement met the notorious Armando Normand: ‘. . . with a face truly the most repulsive I have ever seen, I think. It was perfectly devilish in its cruelty and evil. I felt as if I were being introduced to a serpent’, wrote Casement in his journal (Casement 1997: 256). The Muinane remember Normand as ‘Noroba’. Matanzas means literally ‘slaughters’ or ‘massacres’ and the atrocities that happened there were exhaustively documented in Judge Carlos Valcárcel’s (2004: 259-289) book and reported by Hardenburg (1912: 23), in Casement’s journal (1997: 253-266) and by many others.

For the Muinane, the place of Matanzas is known as ‘Hill of the Wild Cacao Tree’. There lived Chucho’s granduncle, who had the name of Jeevadeka (Flower of Parrot Pineapple), a chief of the Pineapple clan of the Muinane. The Muinane tell that Jeevadeka died under the hands of Noroba, who hung him from a pole by his ear piercings.

The group camped a few hours away from the old, haunted site. At night, Chucho spoke and the youngsters recorded his speech on a tape recorder. In his speech, Chucho did not address his fellow elders or his sons and nephews; he addressed Jeevadeka. He spoke like this:

We have truly arrived to the place of the ordeals; we arrived to Manioc Creek, to the Hill of the Wild Cacao Creek [Matanzas]. Your grandchildren have arrived for you to meet them; you do not have to mistake them, as if they were other people. Do not be upset, stay calm. Here are your grandchildren. We know nothing about those who killed you, about those who did all those things to you. You are the ones who know. Now we are a new generation, and here are those who were born after me, and I am guiding them. We came here to heal these children. Here is our chief Jeevadeka. We know nothing of what happened to you. So it is. If we knew, we could speak about that. You came to end your life here. I am showing it to your grandchildren. I am heading them together with my brother. So then, do not take us for strangers. We came here to heal ourselves. This is what we are telling you. That is it.

The next day, by noon, they arrived at the place where Matanzas once stood, now covered with forest. There, Chucho spoke again:

Here, grandfather Jeevadeka, you lived and you are. We are your grandchildren and we have arrived. Up to this place we have reached and we are stepping on this spot. Are you there? We have arrived well, in good heart. Here we are; we are the bones of yours. We are coming back, your grandchildren that were born after you. We mourn and remember you, who are here. Then, for that reason, I myself Kigaibo [Sour Pineapple], your grandson, have arrived, together with people of the Drum clan and the Worm clan. We are with these, our young people, for you to meet, and we come in good manner. We come to seek the good words that you have; the word of life, the word of coolness, the word of nurturing. You ought to give us those words. We are cleaning up on top of you.
We thought we were alone, but we are not alone, you are here. That is why we came, we have reached to you. This is what I am telling you.

I was very struck when I helped Chucho’s brother, Jorge, to transcribe and translate these recordings upon their return from their trip. Chucho's address to Jeevadeka begins by avoiding any reference to the violent events of the Casa Arana period: ‘We know nothing about those who killed you, about those who did all those things to you’, he says. Chucho seeks to heal, not to remember, as if invoking the violation of those days may attract danger. He rather focuses straight away to the young people in the party, and takes care that Jeevadeka’s wandering spirit will not mistake them for other people. Chucho is well aware that nowadays they all look very much like the Peruvians and Creoles who enslaved and murdered their ancestors. They now wear clothes and boots, carry machetes and shotguns, eat salt and ‘smell of onions’, as they say.

Chucho’s way of dealing with the past when addressing Jeevadeka in this point of the territory is profoundly historical precisely in the fact that he avoids remembering. Instead of looking back he looks forward; not to the dead but to the living—and he addresses Jeevadeka as if he were alive. He acknowledges the past of killings and slavery by avoiding its memory, and he acknowledges the changes that came about afterwards by stating that no matter what they may look like, they are Jeevadeka’s grandchildren who come to pay a visit. Chucho’s generation had been unable so far to deal with any of this. None of them felt able to go to the old places and cope with the rage, sorcery and powers that were left scattered, unbound and unsolved. They felt ashamed and powerless, unable to re-establish a connection they were painfully aware was necessary to rebuild their life—after so many years.

That power they lacked in shamanism and magical force to deal with the troubling past, they found again, in an unexpected way in the new generation. These young people, their own children, gave them meaning and strength to face it. Even though these boys have gone to school, have learnt to read and write in Spanish, and do not resemble much those ancient Indians, they are alive and they want to know. Instead of reminding them of the crimes committed against their forebears and claiming revenge for them, he rather chooses to forget. He leaves aside the memory of the ordeals and focuses his discourse on what gives life.

And, paradoxically, it is the artefacts of writing that the young people have learnt from the White people that allows for the close of the circle of this operation of the memory. In contrast to the elders, who rely on the oral speech in the Muinane language as their way of recording and giving meaning to their journey, the young ones carry notebooks, pens and colour pencils to keep a written record of it. Their notebooks are written in Spanish, and in contrast to the speeches of their parents which deal with spirits and masters of the places, the youngsters compose a quite pragmatic and down to earth journal, carefully annotating times, distances, location of places, animals hunted, meals eaten, and avoiding any reference to their parents’ concerns. They happily trek through the forest with innocent eyes, filling their notebooks with their observations and, most notably, with colourful drawings of the places they visit. In their notebooks they make most succinct and uneventful notes of their elders’ speech, as this one by Chucho’s nephew about the night when he uttered the speech transcribed above: ‘For dinner, we ate a woolly monkey we had hunted, and after the conversation of the elders we went to sleep’, he writes.

In Matanzas they found the remains of a longhouse or maloca and many objects, both Indian and non-Indian: pots, tools, weaponry, glass, etc., in a place which the young people titled ‘Matanzas’ garbage dump’. Further ahead, they found two large holes, where rubber patrons used to burn the people that they had killed. They made drawings of the holes in their notebooks. They knew those places existed, where dead people were dumped and burnt; vegetation has not regrown on those holes, and they were still clearly noticeable.

The two modes of representation—spoken in Muinane by the elders, and written in Spanish by the young ones—are remarkably complementary. When I would ask any of the elders about their journey, he would right away ask for his son’s notebook and would exhibit the colour drawings; with this in his hands, he would calmly and happily refer to the events of the trip. It is as if by being captured in writing and drawing, those dangerous facts would now be contained and manageable. On the other hand, the young ones could confidently devote these facts into writing and deftly design their drawings because they felt that any danger that could exist in their journey would be avoided and dodged by virtue of their elders’ speech.

One of the reasons for the extreme precaution of these Indians to leave aside the memory of violence is because it was not only the violence of rubber barons against Indians, but also the violence amongst Indians themselves, which exacerbated a pre-existing condition of intertribal warfare.

We tend to represent the Indians as victims of the violent rubber barons. The dispute among Whites is whether those Indians were ferocious cannibals running in the forest who had to be subjected by any means to become an industrious and civilised labour force, as Casa Arana alleged, or whether they were noble and pacific people enslaved and abused by ‘an association of vagabonds, the scum of Peru and Colombiza’, as Casement claimed in his journal (Goodman 2009: 111). In both cases, Indians are represented as a single, unified subject. But, how was it from an Indian perspective?

Certain Indian tribes, and clans and lineages within tribes, profited from the alliance with rubber
barons to wage warfare against other tribes and former enemies. Besides, young boys from several tribes were raised and trained to raid other groups and to act as executioners of the worst crimes. This exacerbation of internal warfare had more devastating and long-lasting effects than the violence of Whites against Indians. Whites or non-Indians would eventually leave the region, but the families and relatives of the murderers and the murdered would stay, and with those the memories of pending revenges.

This is one of the key reasons why a person like Chucho is quite circumspect about not bringing back the memory of those events, potentially very destructive for today’s life. What these elders aim to do is the reconstruction of the social tissue that was torn apart.

This way of thinking, speaking and relating to memory is in no way a peculiarity of this group or of this elder. It is shared by all the descendants of the Putumayo Indians. What is at stake here is not the reconstruction of the truth of the events, or the demands of justice against the White people, but the reconstruction of society and the multiplication in the amounts of people. This implies both particular modes of memory and historical consciousness and the construction of new forms of collective identity.

The Basket of Darkness and the Basket of Life
What the literature calls ‘The Putumayo Indians’ encompasses three linguistic stocks and seven ethnolinguistic groups: the Witoto linguistic family (Witoto, Ocaina and Nonuya), the Bora linguistic family (Bora, Miraña and Muinane), plus a language isolate (Andoque). Although these peoples are linguistically differentiated, they share a number of cultural traits and a common social and ceremonial organization. Today, they designate themselves under the general name of ‘People of the Centre’.

This ideology of one People linked by social and ritual exchanges constitutes the basis for a type of ceremonial and political discourse, which emphasises the common traits of the different groups, putting aside ethnic differences and past conflicts. This ceremonial discourse is called rafue in the Witoto language. Rafue belongs to what is called the Basket of Life. In this basket belongs the ethics of horticultural work, the raising of children, the production of food, the celebration of rituals. The most accomplished expression of this Basket is the Word of tobacco and coca, which the elders use to care for and to nurture human life. Mythological narratives and violent historical memories—including those of the rubber boom—do not have a place in this Basket.

In contrast with this ritual and public discourse of rafue, which is instrumental in the construction of the ideology of a unified moral community (People of the Centre), the conceptual guarding of ethnic differences is maintained in other modes of discourse. Ethnic difference brings about the memory of conflicts from the past—rivalry among clans and tribes, sorcery, cannibalism—and implies dealing with differences in mythological conceptions (territory, hierarchy among tribes and clans).

Secret, ethnic discourse is closely linked to mythology. Mythology, for these groups, keeps the record of the events of cannibal, malignant, murderous, revengeful and raging beings who tried to destroy and pervert the true humanity. These stories are kept in what is called the Basket of Darkness. These stories do not belong to the public, common discourse of rafue, but are kept and maintained by each ethnic group and clan as a defence and source of sorcery and evil power. The stories and events of the rubber boom are but one more layer in this plentiful basket. These baskets of darkness should be kept sealed, because they represent the danger of war—they are, as these people say, their ‘nuclear arsenals’.

These two Baskets thus represent a moral organization of collective memory, and configure a form of historical consciousness. The Basket of Life refers to their history precisely for the fact of refraining to remember anything from the past, but on the contrary asserting the maintenance and reproduction of life. The Basket of Darkness keeps secret the memories of dangerous past events. The terror of the rubber boom looms so dangerously that it fills to the rim that Basket. Those memories are not forgotten but kept sealed.

There is certainly an unresolved tension and an impending danger in this organization of memory, because there is always the risk that the contents of the Basket of Darkness may be deployed, undermining the collective project of a moral community. Separating what is secret (Basket of Darkness) from what is public (Basket of Life) has become a task in which the elders invest a remarkable amount of time and effort.

This allows us to better understand Chucho’s address to Jeevadeka in the haunted site of Matanzas. In such a dangerous place, he is avoiding the content of the Basket of Darkness and he is pointing to the Basket of Life, through the use of two rhetorical devices: the request of the ‘good words’ from Jeevadeka—that is, the Word of tobacco and coca—and his explicit references to the new generation.

It is as if these two modes of memory move in opposite directions. Mythology and historiographical narratives of violence point in the direction of the past; rafue, the Word of tobacco and coca, points in the direction of the future. The memories of the events of the rubber boom are thus left in an apparent oblivion: discarded in the public discourse, secret in the private discourse; and there seems to be no way to represent them or to think about them. This unresolved tension is solved by the new generation, which functions like a mirror—a reflective space that allows them to face the past in an indirect way. This reflective space is configured paradoxically by purely foreign devices: writing, schooling, use of the Spanish language, state recognition, and so forth.
At a micro-sociological scale, we saw how for the group of Muinane elders journeying with their sons and nephews, their young boys’ notebooks and drawings operated as a reflective space which allowed them to face the past. Now, we can perhaps also appreciate the same process in a larger sociological scale.

For these People of the Centre, the rubber boom has been a difficult issue to deal with—either in oblivion or in secret. But the scars left on the bodies and the territory need to be read and interpreted. These marks also can turn into mirrors that allow new modes of healing and representing the past. The actual site of the headquarters of Casa Arana in La Chorrera may play that role. This is a remarkable story, which like all things Arana, is made up of deceit and twisted turns.

The headquarters of Arana as a mirror of memory
In 1922, Colombia and Peru signed a border treaty, which ceded Colombia the territories north of the Putumayo River, where Casa Arana had been operating, Arana, and the people of Loreto, vehemently opposed the treaty, which was finally ratified by the two countries in 1927. But Arana was indeed a clever man; in fact, a year before the treaty was signed, Arana secured the legal title to his possessions in Putumayo and he ensured that under the terms of the treaty he would receive compensation in cash from Colombia.

Arana pretended to be paid £2,000,000, but the Colombian government found his amount extortionate. Finally, in 1939, the Banco Agricola Hipotecario, a Colombian official bank, bought the rights of Arana in the Putumayo for US$200,000, but only paid $40,000 at that current time. In 1954, the Colombian government ordered the termination of the Banco Agricola, and put the newly created Caja de Crédito Agrario Industrial y Minero (Caja Agraria) in charge of its liquidation. In 1984, Caja Agraria ratified the purchase made by Banco Agricola back in 1939, and paid the heirs of Arana the remaining US$160,000. In this manner Caja Agraria consolidated the full property of the old Arana possessions in Putumayo, which were called Predio Putumayo (The Putumayo Estate) (Colombia 1989).

Putumayo Indians were totally unaware of all these moves until, in 1985, Caja Agraria decided to make use of its property and designed a huge plan of development for the Predio Putumayo, with the investment of two million dollars in an 800-hectare farm in La Chorrera. Caja Agraria erected its headquarters and main rubber depot. The news came as a shock: Caja Agraria claimed property of the whole Indian Territory on the basis of having purchased it from the heirs of the company that had tortured and enslaved the Indians! Those titles are stained with blood, claimed the priest of La Chorrera in numerous letters he sent to Colombian authorities. These Indians began a vehement protest against the presence of the Caja Agraria and its claims of ownership of the region. The situation gained momentum and an agreement was reached in 1988, when the Colombian government proceeded to constitute the land as a Resguardo (Reserve) on April 23 of 1988, in favour of the indigenous groups of the region.

In 1993 the Presidency of Colombia acquired the old Casa Arana house from Caja Agraria to lodge a new Indian secondary school, and the Colombian First Lady travelled to Chorrera for its inauguration. El Tiempo, the largest Colombian newspaper, headlined the news: ‘Between 1900 and 1910 violence prevailed in Casa Arana. About 40,000 Indians were murdered. Today, after eight decades, the house and its bad memories will become an epicenter of education. Last December 21”, the Indians […] erased the ghost of that genocide’. (‘De casa histórica a salón de clases’ [From historic house to classroom], El Tiempo, Bogotá, 29 XII 1993)

That was the same year the Muinane set off to visit the old places of the rubber boom. And if the ‘ghost’ of that genocide has not actually been ‘erased’, it certainly provides a reflective space for the new generations to represent memory in new ways. It is remarkable that the notorious place, with its dungeons where Indians were kept chained, where dozens of Indians were burned in drunken feasts of horror, now becomes a place for the education of the new generation.

Furthermore, in May 2008, the Colombian Ministry of Culture declared the house as an ‘Estate of Cultural Interest Nationally’, and the Minister of Culture—Paula Moreno, a Black woman—travelled to La Chorrera to announce the news. On that visit, a 48-year-old Bora Indian commented: ‘Casa Arana is like bereavement. The school covers that image we have of the past, and I want that [the government] support it because it gives us solace’ (‘La Casa Arana, de lugar de muerte a sitio para la cultura indígena’ [The Casa Arana, from place of death to site for Indian culture], El Tiempo, Bogotá, 24 V 2008). Afterwards a respected female leader remarked: ‘We have our hopes placed here. Even though Chorrera does not receive many visitors, we want to refurbish the rooms to function as a hotel in Casa Arana. This may be the opportunity for Chorrera to become a tourist site’ (Ministerio de Cultura 2008).

The symbolic act had soothing and encouraging effects—mild ones in any case. For the Bora man, it is the education of children that brings solace, not the fact of the house being declared of ‘cultural interest’ for the nation. For the woman leader, it is the hope that the house will attract tourists, and with them income for the people; much needed income for raising and educating the children—the house is thought as a patrimony for the future, not a memory of the past.

Declaring the rebuilt premises of Casa Arana as an object of public cultural interest for the nation is still an opaque mirror. The well-intentioned or politically convenient reasons of the Ministry of Culture in that...
declaration fall short of accomplishing a reappraisal of the events that building evokes—both for the Indians who suffered its direct impact and for the country, Colombia, that gave them its nationality and that was also accomplice and witness to those events.

Indians are still unable to deal with that. The bereavement is long-lasting. For Indian elders, like Chucho, that memory is not to be recalled in order to be able to live on, or is a source of evil power that should be kept in secrecy. The survivors of the catastrophe managed to rebuild a new society over the fragments and pieces of a former social order that was irretrievably lost. It is the philosophy of multiplication, the ethics of horticultural work and the Word of tobacco and coca which guides the moral agenda of this social project. Memory is thus subordinated to the imperative of life. Writing, schooling and the State provide an anchor that perhaps will allow new modes of memory in the younger generations. Even though we still do not hear voices from that generation that make sense of all that in new ways, those devices and institutions—utterly alien to the Indian world—do indeed provide a possibility of reflecting and seeing beyond the muted pain and raging revenge.

The rebuilt headquarters of Arana in La Chorrera now lodge the young men and women descendants of the Indians that saw that same house as a place of exactions and fear. That house-turned-school also holds a library where the books, reports and documents written about that time begin to pile up: translations of Hardenburg’s book, of Casement’s report, new editions of Valcárcel, and what has been written by Colombian and Peruvian historians. Among the various sources, the name of Roger Casement stands as symbolizing a turning point, as a torch of truth and justice in the middle of the blackest night. Those young boys and girls do not fully understand what it means that he was Irish or why he was hung. No matter his background or circumstances, the sheer truth is that his voyage up to Putumayo one hundred and one years ago did make a difference.

This opaque mirror can perhaps be polished and perfected to be able to shine in full. Like Chucho, I myself do not see, do not understand when looking straight back—I just feel fear, pain and rage. I need to look forward into this new generation, and it is to them we owe true truth and true justice. They are our actual true mirrors of memory.

References


Notes
1 This article is an edited version of “To Heal or to Remember: Indian Memory of the Rubber Boom and Roger Casement’s “Basket of Life”, published in ABEI journal (São Paulo, Brazil), Number 12, November 2010, pp. 49-64.

2 I wrote a piece (Echeverri 2009) about a set of photographs taken on the ruins of the ruins of Casa Arana in Chorrera in 1977.
Abstract: This essay examines ‘post-conflict’ efforts to re-think Derry’s Diamond War Memorial as a shared and relevant civic space for both the Protestant unionist and Catholic nationalist communities. Drawing in part on Pierre Nora’s (1989) notion of lieux de mémoire, the memorial’s past, present and future is explored as a series of conceptual shifts which are reflective of broader social and political trends toward accommodation in the construction of civic, communal and post-national Northern Irish identities. Particular attention is paid to two separate efforts, which have aimed to recast the sculpture, first unveiled in 1927, in more inclusive terms.

Keywords: monuments, public space, memory, history, civic identity, World War I, Northern Ireland

Introduction: A Space of Reverence and Contestation
On the morning of Remembrance Sunday 2010, a thick white fog hung heavy over Londonderry. As my bus crossed the Craigavon Bridge en route to Derry’s Cityside, the faint sounds of an unseen marching band drifted across the River Foyle. A few minutes later, walking through the narrow shuttered streets, I passed well-dressed pedestrians carrying red poppy wreaths. Like me, they were headed to the ‘Diamond War Memorial’, the city’s official cenotaph honouring the dead from World Wars I and II [Picture: front cover].

The monument sits in the heart of Derry’s historic walled city – on the site of the former town hall – and just across the street from the grand and imposing Austin’s, the oldest independent department store in the world. When I arrived there shortly after 10 a.m. that day, a crowd had already begun to gather. Military veterans, dressed in their Sunday best, proudly displayed medals on dark overcoats. The Police Service of Northern Ireland Officers sported red poppies – a symbol of remembrance for the dead – in their caps. The nattily attired head of the Londonderry branch of the Royal British Legion, David Davis, carried a large black umbrella as he strode about, overseeing the preparations with a gimlet eye.

Roughly 30 minutes before 11 o’clock – the fateful hour when the Armistice between the Allies and Germany came into effect on November 11, 1918 – the William King Memorial Flute Band (which had marched from Londonderry’s Waterside to the Cityside for the occasion) led a procession of military officers and veterans in full regalia into the square. They were followed by civic leaders and local councillors in robes, which included Colum Eastwood, the young nationalist mayor at the time. Much of the ceremony proceeded as it had more than 80 years previously, when the monument by British sculptor Vernon March, was first unveiled on June 23, 1927. Those assembled mouthed the words of the famous World War I hymn, ‘The Supreme Sacrifice’. Bugles sounded ‘Last Post’. Silence was observed. The notes of ‘Reveille’ echoed hauntingly across the hushed and shivering crowd. Wreaths were laid. Finally, with a concluding rendition of ‘God Save the Queen’, the procession fell back into order before slowly exiting the square by way of Bishop Street.

To an outsider looking in, the moment might have appeared the high watermark of civic unity and shared remembrance. As a marker of Protestant identity, the Diamond War Memorial and the memorialisation which takes place there can be viewed as an expression of Britishness, a way of solidifying and reaffirming ties with the United Kingdom and honouring the war dead, specifically the sacrifices of Ulster Protestants at the 1916 Battle of the Somme which play an important...
role in loyalist historical memory (Cohen 2007: 960-961). But this Britishness is problematic for many Catholic nationalists. During the Troubles, the tableaux enacted here and nearly everything else associated with the war memorial from the poppy wreaths laid at the base of the cenotaph to the various marches that pass by it at key dates in the year, took on a distinctively sectarian tinge. For instance, the Diamond War Memorial figures prominently in the annual Apprentice Boy commemorations of both the August 1689 relief of the ‘Siege of Derry’ by Protestant forces loyal to King William III and the December 1688 closing of the city gates against attacking Catholic forces. These marches, viewed as incendiary by many Catholic nationalists and republicans, have been a point of contention and negotiation over the years (Cohen 2007), and the Diamond has suffered by association.

Nevertheless, prior to the onset of the Troubles, the memorial was not known to attract public vitriol. According to Davis, a former unionist Lord Mayor of Londonderry, who grew up participating in ceremonies at the cenotaph in the early 1950s as a member of the ‘No Surrender’ flute band, there was: ‘never animosity shown towards...the war memorial’ (Davis 2010). He said in an interview that for many years Salvation Army preachers gathered there at half six o’clock on Sunday evenings to sermonise and play gospel music (Davis 2010). Meanwhile, one long-time resident remembered the square fondly as a place to hang out at night and ‘mess about with the rest of the lads and a couple of girls’ (street interview with unionist man, April 14, 2011).

The contested nature of the population’s relationship to the British military during the Troubles, however, hardened attitudes toward this space in the Catholic nationalist and republican community. As tensions between Protestants and Catholics escalated in the late 1960s, and early 1970s, ex-servicemen from nationalist backgrounds burned their service records and medals at that site in protest against anti-Catholic discrimination and against Bloody Sunday atrocities, according to informants (Baker 2010; Barr 2011). Some passersby in the square also vividly recalled debris from city centre bombs landing in the vicinity of the memorial during the 1970s (street interviews with Derry residents, April 14, 2011). Given the turmoil, Davis said city authorities locked the iron gates surrounding the memorial soon after the Troubles began (Davis 2010). This move further isolated what would come to be seen as a Protestant space in a Catholic majority area, as thousands of Protestants fled the Cityside during the Troubles (BBC 2006).

Throughout the conflict and beyond, the monument – situated in a commercial square and roundabout which currently boasts a mixture of boutiques, banks, eateries, social services, as well as a pub (where they serve the ‘cheapest and strongest drink in town,’ in the estimation of one Derry resident) – was assaulted by paint bombs, graffiti and other acts of desecration, including public urination and the occasional hacking off of the soldier’s bayonet (Deane 2010; Davis 2010). Much like the nearby Fountain Estate, the last remaining Protestant housing enclave on the nationalist majority Cityside, the memorial space with its distinctly British associations, has been perceived as under assault from the nationalist community by some unionists (Deane 2010; Campbell 2010; Temple 2010, 2011). In an interview, one loyalist compared the experience of passing through Ferryquay Street en route to the cenotaph during annual processions as akin to marching through a ‘tunnel of hate ... people [republicans] spitting at you and shouting at you’ (Temple 2011). Moreover, an effigy of the former Governor Robert Lundy, reviled by loyalists as a traitor who advocated surrender to the forces of the Catholic King James II during the ‘Siege of Derry’, is annually burned by the ‘Apprentice Boys’ not far from the memorial (Cohen 2007). This, in turn, has further reinforced a perception among some Catholics of the monument’s sinister connotations (Catholic woman from Derry, July 1, 2011, e-mail message to author).

The Northern Ireland Peace Process and a Political-Symbolic Landscape in Transition

As scholars have noted (Bryan and Ward 2011; Jeffery 2000), the Northern Irish peace process facilitated an environment in which the search for shared symbols that each of the province’s primary communities –
Protestant unionist and Catholic nationalist – could rally around has contributed to a revival of interest in the Irish Catholic nationalist contribution to World War I (long ignored due to a reticence in that community to acknowledge its contributions to the wars of the British Empire). Accordingly, the shared sacrifices endured in that conflict – notably, between the Protestant 36th Ulster Division and the Catholic 16th Irish Division at the June 1917 ‘Battle of Messines’ in Belgium – have received renewed attention. Prominent Irish nationalist politician Margaret Ritchie, of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, recently made headlines for being the first leader of her party to sport the poppy on Remembrance Sunday, a controversial move in Northern Ireland due to the poppy’s association with the British Army (*Belfast Telegraph* 2010).

Concomitantly, the evolving civic identity of ‘post-conflict’ Londonderry has implications for the context in which the Diamond War Memorial exists. Derry was recently named the inaugural UK City of Culture 2013, and plans are afoot to recast the Maiden City as a contemporary, international cultural attraction. As part of the metamorphosis from divided city to cutting edge arts centre, a government-backed regeneration program has sought to promote the growth of shared space in Derry by, among other things, linking its two notoriously polarised sides of the River Foyle, which roughly divides the majority Catholic Cityside from the majority Protestant Waterside, through a recently constructed Peace Bridge (Ilex 2011). The memorial stands out against this backdrop as a somewhat anachronistic ‘icon of identity’ (Whelan 2003: 17), associated with a now bygone era of unionist hegemony in a majority Catholic nationalist city.

From a theoretical perspective, then, the Diamond is reflective of both ‘representational space’, as ‘lived’ by residents through...images and symbols (Lefebvre 1994: 38-40, italics in original), and ‘lieux de mémoire’ (Nora 1989: 18-19, italics in original), places ‘material, symbolic, and functional’ importance. But the Diamond is subject to change and alteration, as all memory sites are. These ‘boundary stones of another age’ (Nora 1989: 12) can accrue new memories through the reinterpretation and selective dissemination of history, which I suggest, may act as a catalyst, opening the site up to ‘the full range of its possible significations’ (Nora 1989: 24). Since memorials are one way authorities seek to impose national or civic identity in public spaces and teach citizens desired political lessons (Forest and Johnson 2002; Cosgrove 1998; Levinson 1998), I argue that post-conflict efforts to rethink the sculpture as a more inclusive site of remembrance raise questions about how memory, history and visual culture may be re-shaped in the service of broader political goals to promote a post-conflict narrative, thereby embracing the interculturalism and ‘shared space’ ethic that globalisation and an ongoing peace process demands. As a range of Derry city elites in the post-conflict era now seek to recast the Diamond as a shared space, the memorial can be assessed as a slightly modified form of a post-conflict ‘co-opted’ monument, a term used by Forest and Johnson (2002: 530) to describe sites that have been redefined after political transition. Importantly, both efforts I will examine are rooted in an ethic of integration, seeking to incorporate the space into a unifying civic narrative by promoting the memorial in ways that shine a light on the participation of the city’s Catholic population in the war, thereby broadening the monument’s appeal in line with the shared space agenda³ in Northern Ireland.

**Memorialising Messines on the Home Front**

The first of the initiatives which re-contextualises the Diamond War Memorial germinated on the battlefields of Belgium, where Glen Barr, an ex-loyalist politician and one-time leading member of the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association in Londonderry helped create the ‘island of Ireland Peace Park’ along with Paddy Harte, a former Fine Gael politician from Donegal in the Republic of Ireland (Bryan and Ward 2011). On his web site, Glen Barr has noted that he was inspired to help create the park after encountering a rather beleaguered memorial to the Nationalist 16th Irish Division a few miles from the more impressive Ulster Tower for the Unionist 36th Ulster Division and after learning about the shared sacrifice and bravery which occurred at Messines (Barr n.d.). Opened in 1998 by Irish President Mary McAleese, Queen Elizabeth II and King Albert of Belgium, the park features a round peace tower and serves as a symbolic reminder of the common endeavour of the two divisions in June 1917. The International School for Peace Studies at Messines grew out of this effort and today thousands of individuals from youth to community members to trade unionists annually attend Barr’s conflict transformation program, funded indirectly by European Union peace monies.¹

As part of this work, in 2005, Barr held a wreath-laying at the Diamond a week prior to Remembrance Sunday. For the first time the Irish Tricolour flew alongside the Union Jack at the cenotaph [Pic. 1] (*BBC* 2005). Though controversial in some loyalist circles, the move led to the launch of an annual, nationallyistic ecumenical ceremony held each June in which the flags of all nationalities who fought at Messines, including the German flag, are carried to the Diamond as a means to underscore the notion that ‘they all died as equals’, according to Barr. Barr proceeded to emphasise that it was important to bring the ritual his group had begun at Messines, where for years the Irish and British flags have shared equal billing at events, back home to Northern Ireland (Barr 2011). As such, the Messines memorial service embraces a distinctively anti-war theme. It includes music by the self-described, cross-community bag piping band ‘Tullintrain’, speeches by schoolchildren who have attended the peace school, readings of Bible verses emphasising love and elegiac war poetry, as well as a wreath laying (personal observation,
of terrorist-related charges (Temple 2010). The two than two years in the Crumlin Road jail on a variety and loyalist paramilitary members and spent more
in this effort has a loyalist paramilitary background.
(Baker 2010; Temple 2010; Deane 2010).
lobbied the city council to open the memorial's locked
gates on the premise that all Derry's citizens should
educational programs in Derry schools and successfully
in the war, the initiative also carried out a range of
research into the backgrounds of the soldiers who died
in the monument, though few went so far as to say that they
indicated a new willingness to see it as a shared
monument, though few went so far as to say that they
freedom of the Catholic population to identify with
Protestants also frequently blamed political pressure
dead hailed from the Catholic nationalist community.
dead hailed from Catholic working-class families but
interviewed for this research were more likely to assert
that the memorial has always been shared.6 They note
that any local who read the names on the bronze
plaques could intuit that nearly 50 percent of the
dead hailed from the Catholic nationalist community.
They note that any local who read the names on the bronze
percent of the names hailed from Catholic, nationalist
communities (Holywell Trust 2007). In addition to
research into the backgrounds of the soldiers who died
in the war, the initiative also carried out a range of
educational programs in Derry schools and successfully
lobbied the city council to open the memorial’s locked
gates on the premise that all Derry’s citizens should
have access to, and ownership of, the war memorial
(Baker 2010; Temple 2010; Deane 2010).
As in the case of the Messines work, a key figure in
this effort has a loyalist paramilitary background.
Trevor Temple, is a former UDA prisoner, who was arrested as part of the ‘Stevens
Enquiry’ into collusion between state security forces and loyalist paramilitary members and spent more
than two years in the Crumlin Road jail on a variety of terrorist-related charges (Temple 2010). The two
individuals who oversaw the project – Holywell Trust
Director Eamonn Deane and Trustee Eamonn Baker
– both hail from Catholic working-class families but
acknowledge in interviews that the space is a sacred
site for the city’s Protestant minority (Deane 2010; Baker 2010). Deane, the brother of the novelist and
poet Seamus Deane, credits Temple, a resident of the
Fountain and a member of both the loyalist Apprentice
Boys and the Orange Order, with awakening him to
the ‘hurt’ felt in the unionist community over attacks
on the monument by those with apparently republican
or nationalist affiliations (Deane 2010). For his part,
Baker (2010) framed the project as a means to explore the
significance of the city’s war memorial ‘for all its
citizens’. It wasn’t that the Protestant dead were more
important than the Catholic dead or the Catholic dead
were more important than the Protestant dead,’ he said.
‘...All of them needed to be respected and reverenced’
(Baker 2010).

One means of accomplishing this goal involved the
subsequent publication of Remembering: Our
Shared Legacy from the First World War (2009). The
book’s publication, supported in part by the Derry City
Council and Northern Ireland Community Relations
Council, was based on interviews with surviving family
members of Derry’s war dead. In this way, individual
histories were further employed to recast the Diamond
as a receptacle for the very human dramas (and the
attendant emotional power these wield) manifest by
the dead service personnel’s lives, rather than as an
icon of the British state. Newspaper editors also helped
publicise some of the soldiers’ experiences by running
columns by Temple which appeared earlier in the
Londonderry Sentinel and Derry Journal, the principal
papers of, the Protestant and Catholic populations
respectively (Temple 2010).
Politically, the Trust’s Diamond War Memorial
Project also received backing from such prominent
Londonderry politicians as MP and former Deputy
First Minister Mark Durkan of the Social Democratic
and Labour Party, and Democratic Unionist Party MP
as well as former Northern Ireland Assembly minister
Gregory Campbell (Temple 2010; Campbell 2010). A
project advisory committee was put together to reflect
a peace process-style commitment to the Good Friday
Agreement’s ‘cross-community’ and ‘parity of esteem’
tenets. The membership included Royal British Legion
officials as well as prominent Irishmen such as Barr’s
former colleague Paddy Harte, who started the peace
park with him, though there is no working relationship
between the two efforts (Deane 2010).

A War Memorial in Flux: Acceptance and
rejection in the civic body
Overall these initiatives to recast the monument as a
shared civic space appear to have been well-received by
the Derry population, though Protestants or unionists
interviewed for this research were more likely to assert
that the memorial has always been shared.6 They note
that any local who read the names on the bronze
plaques could intuit that nearly 50 percent of the
dead hailed from the Catholic nationalist community.
Protestants also frequently blamed political pressure
from nationalists and republicans for limiting the
freedom of the Catholic population to identify with
the memorial and the Remembrance Day ceremonies
held there. Meanwhile, some nationalists interviewed
indicated a new willingness to see it as a shared
monument, though few went so far as to say that they
would attend the Remembrance Day ceremonies. The
most vocal opposition to the memorial came from a
Catholic Republican woman who said it was anathema
to her identity, given that it had been ‘captured by
the Orange’, meaning members of the Orange Order,
which she deemed an anti-Catholic organisation
(interview with republican woman, June 5, 2011).

These interviews also underscored the memorial’s multivocal symbolism, with some
individuals interpreting its meaning outside of
dominant communal narratives. Among these was
another Catholic Republican woman, who said that
she had eaten lunch in the square and viewed the war
memorial’s central, crowning sculpture of a winged
Victory [Pic. 2] as evocative of the protective presence
of the Archangel Michael (interview with republican
woman, June 5, 2011). Significantly, a smattering of
locals from across the political spectrum, including at
least one self-described British citizen attending the Remembrance Sunday service in November 2010, said they viewed the monument as frightening – given the sculpture of a combative soldier with bayonet in hand [Pic. 3] which stands alongside those of Victory and a sailor. That the area near the Diamond was heavily militarised during the Troubles, with security blocks and road gates, may have also reinforced this perception of fear. One informant, who grew up in Derry's Catholic community, noting the former militarisation of the area, remembered the memorial as ‘a big depressing lump’ (Catholic woman from Derry, July 1, 2011, e-mail message to author).

Despite these efforts to ‘co-opt’ the memorial into the shared space agenda, spatial ‘tactics’ of resistance (De Certeau 1984) also raise questions about the initiatives’ effectiveness, particularly when it comes to counteracting the memorials’ meaning for more radicalised segments of the population. In an interview, Deane (2010) pointed out that the memorial had remained unmolested since the dissemination of research findings and the opening of the gates in late 2007 because elements in the city who may have ‘[felt] they had permission’ to carry out such attacks no longer did. ‘The permission suddenly stopped and so it’s become a shared space,’ he said. This narrative was contradicted somewhat in May 2011, however, when masked men claiming a republican affiliation bombed the Spanish bank, Santander, which faces the memorial at the corner of Butcher Street (CNN 2011). Around that same time, according to Temple, graffiti appeared on the memorial loudly proclaiming ‘Up the IRA’, a phrase which was swiftly removed by the Derry City Council (Temple 2011). This came on the heels of a year in which Londonderry had been the target of a number of attacks by dissident republicans, including bombings at the UK City of Culture offices at Waterloo Place and at a bank and shopping area along the city’s Culmore Road (UTV 2011; BBC 2010) [Pic. 4].

Conclusion: Globalisation, politico-economic change and the ‘shared’ post-national Northern Ireland

In many ways, the work at the Diamond is a microcosm of the political and economic forces shaping space throughout ‘post-conflict’ Northern Ireland. Indeed, the tactic of shining a spotlight on shared historical experiences to heal present-day divisions has proved a popular element of the broader peace-building strategy, and is advocated at the highest levels as evidenced in Queen Elizabeth’s historic May 2011 trip to Dublin, where she and Irish President Mary McAleese laid wreaths at the monument to the Irish dead from World War I (Bryan and Ward 2011).

This shift toward political accommodation aside, global economic pressures are also changing the milieu in which the memorial exists, in ways which have yet to be fully realised. With the opening of the pedestrian Peace Bridge in June 2011, the urban regeneration company Ilex has taken the initial step to enlarge the Derry city centre to include the old British Ebrington military barracks on the Eastern bank of the River Foyle, where an arts and cultural hub is planned (Ilex 2006, Tait 2010). The impact this development will have on the Diamond War Memorial square, and its importance to the city’s civic identity, is still unknown. The commercial area around the Diamond already suffers from business turnover and dwindling revenues – on several afternoons, Austin’s has been nearly devoid of customers (personal observations, November 10, 2010, April 14, 2011, June 5, 2011, June 16, 2011). And the city centre, where the Diamond is located, may undergo a further blow if a planned 40,000 square-foot Asda superstore (a subsidiary of global retail behemoth Walmart) with a 1,000-space car park is built on the edge of town (Derry Journal 2011). The Asda proposal raises important questions about the challenges of creating shared, civic spaces in the face of global, economic pressures and about what long-term effects these forces will have on both civic and personal identities, as the once-central civic spaces confront potential dislocations or even obliteration. This is in line with what Harvey has described as the post-modern trend toward homogenous spaces and commoditised culture, which jettisons ‘distinctive cultural forms’ (Harvey 2002: 74), as the natural outgrowth of a network of global capitalism that subsidizes spectacle and produces ‘uneven geographical developments’ (2002: 84).

And yet, irrespective of the waning importance of the Diamond area commercially – hiring fairs were held there in the 1930s – more than eight decades after its inauguration, the monument and the symbolism on display in the square is closely watched by both of the city’s main traditions. When Sinn Féin parliamentary election posters were placed on the lampposts surrounding the square in April 2010, a local unionist man complained that their presence was an affront to the dead. After some initial resistance, Sinn Féin removed the offending posters (Londonderry Sentinel 2010). In a similar manner, gestures of inclusiveness were noticed. ‘The most there’s ever been,’ one unionist man could be overheard commenting approvingly to his companion, when the nationalistic Derry city councillors strode into the Diamond War Memorial just prior to the start of the November 2010 Remembrance Day ceremony (personal observation, November 14, 2010). In a similar manner, one Catholic republican woman who had observed the Messines ceremony in June 2011 while eating lunch in a nearby café reacted to the presence of the Irish Tricolour at the Diamond with an approving, ‘that’s progress’ (interview with republican woman, June 5, 2011).

Thus, whilst places of memory such as the Diamond War Memorial may appear to ‘stop time’ (Nora 1989: 19), the memory associated with the monument is far from fixed. Indeed the activities around the cenotaph ensure that its identity and meaning...
is fluid and constantly in a state of flux. Though old associations remain, new rituals and re-examined histories may be invoked to add fresh layers of meaning and meaning to a site whose history and significance is a work in progress. For like other lieux de mémoire, the Diamond War Memorial possesses a tremendous ‘capacity for metamorphosis’ with a potential ‘endless recycling of … meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications’ (Nora 1989: 19). Moreover, as a work of art, the memorial functions as part of ‘a system of action’, capable of producing social processes as well as being shaped by social processes (Gell, 1998: 6). As ‘post-conflict’ Northern Ireland continues to grapple with social reconciliation, as well as the attendant reconstruction of a more unified civic identity this entails, the Diamond may be seen as one means through which this process unfolds.

Significantly, even the official Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the memorial, which remains a symbolically British event, has taken on a note of inclusiveness in the ‘post-conflict’ era. In his exhortation, the Dean of St. Columb’s Cathedral, the Very Rev. Dr. William Morton, prayed that ‘this city, community and province may be freed from all sectarianism, bigotry and strife’ and that ‘those who perpetrate acts of terrorism...may see the errors of their ways, returning to paths of peace, reconciliation and democracy’ (personal observation, November 14, 2010). Ultimately, as Nora (1989: 15) writes: ‘The total psychologization of contemporary memory entails a completely new economy of the identity of the self, the mechanics of memory, and the relevance of the past.’ It is this past, I posit, conveniently sleeping under the battlefields of Europe, which has proved increasingly useful in a Northern Irish present largely devoid of unifying symbols of identity.

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Notes:
1 The name ‘Derry’ is generally used by the Catholic and/or nationalist community to refer to the city; while, the unionist, Protestant population typically prefer to use ‘Londonderry’. For the purposes of this essay, the two terms will be used interchangeably.

2 Davis (2010) notes that the design of the memorial square was also altered slightly in the late 1950s/early 1960s to facilitate the addition of vehicular traffic around the square, which became a de facto roundabout.

3 Among the documents produced in recent years by city and provincial government to promote or endorse the shared space agenda are the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister’s A Shared Future (2005) and the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Consultation Document (2010), as well as a government commissioned study on creating shared space in Derry/Londonderry (Deloitte 2008).

4 The peace school is funded indirectly through the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, a fact which raises important questions about the impact of broader transnational policy goals in the re-conceptualisation of civic space. Though beyond the scope of this paper, the means by which different levels of policy discourses – regional, national and international -- come together to impact civic spaces remains an important element for investigation.

5 Interestingly, Trevor Temple’s biography on the Diamond War Memorial Project Web site makes no mention of his paramilitary background and describes him simply as a ‘renowned local historian’ (Diamond War Memorial Web site n.d.). But in an interview, Baker (2010) credited Temple’s loyalist Protestant background with helping establish the project’s credibility in the unionist community.

6 In addition to formal interviews with individuals affiliated with both projects, intercept or vox-pop interviews were conducted with individuals in the Diamond War Memorial Square area on November 11, 2010; November 14, 2010, April 14, 2011, and June 5, 2011. Approximately 25 people were interviewed in, or around, the square. Additional interviews were carried out with a group of five diners at an adjacent restaurant on June 5, 2011).

Interviews


Abstract: This essay focuses on the decontextualisation of historical events, and their re-articulation in the present in order to suit certain political ends. It takes as its example the discourse surrounding the construction of an Islamic Cultural Center at 45-51 Park Place, two-blocks away from ground zero. It follows the initial positive media dissemination of the proposed project, and its descent into mainstream controversy. The link between the Cordoba Initiative in New York (2009) and the Martyrs of Cordoba (850-859) is explored with respect to the manner in which the name of the proposed Islamic cultural centre initiated discourse surrounding an interpretation of medieval Spain. This essay focuses on the manner in which history is appropriated, privatized and decontextualized in the present in order to misrepresent and stigmatize Islam, but it is asking a simple question: if history is confined to the past, how is it happening in the present?

Keywords: 9/11, Cordoba House, Martyrs, Islam, Medieval Spain, Contested history

History is happening—within the pages of theory, within the systems and structures we construct to figure the passage of the historical. History is happening within the pages of theory, within the systems and structures we construct to figure the passage of the historical. History is happening—within the pages of theory, within the systems and structures we construct to figure the passage of the historical.

The Location of Culture (Bhabha 1994:25)

On December 8, 2009, The New York Times published an article entitled ‘Muslim Prayers and Renewal Near Ground Zero’. Blumethal and Mowjood (2009:1) give an account of the history of the Burlington Coat Factory ‘the five-story building at 45-51 Park Place, two blocks north of the World Trade Center.’ The building has been abandoned since the attacks on the World Trade Center, and while nobody died at 45-51 Park Place, part of a plane’s landing gear crashed through the roof of the Burlington Coat Factory on September 11. ‘Out of the public eye’ (2009:1), every Friday afternoon the iron shutters of the building open up and with construction noise from ground zero rumbling in the background, ‘hundreds of Muslims crowd inside’ (2009:1). Facing Mecca, they listen to their Imam ‘read in Arabic from the Koran’ (2009:1).

The article cites numerous government sources who acknowledge the work of local imam, Feisal Abdul Rauf: ‘we have had positive interactions with him in the past’. Communities leaders state that while plans are at a preliminary stage ‘it has drawn early encouragement from city officials and the surrounding neighborhood’ (2009:1), even though the proposal is situated ‘near the city’s most hallowed piece of land’ (2009:1). Joan Brown Campbell, former general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ, says:

[building so close is owning the tragedy. It’s a way of saying: ’This is something done by people who call themselves Muslims’. We want to be here to repair the breach, as the Bible says. (2009:1)

The article always highlights potential local and political backlash against the proposals, but maintains a positive and conciliatory tone. A spokesman for Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg says: ‘If it’s legal, the building owners have a right to do what they want.’ (2009:1).

Response is swift, but confined to right-wing extremists. Pamela Geller, founder, editor and publisher of Atlas Shrugs.com, responds with:

I don’t know what is more grotesque...jihad or the NY Times preening of it. The New York Times yet again misrepresents, obfuscates, and confuses infidels and kaffirs about Islam. (Geller 2009)

While there is no mention of the Cordoba Initiative within the press for the following five months, the project begins to draw criticism from mainstream commentators. In particular, the name of the initiative becomes a central focus of right-wing criticism, and this shift in discourse towards medieval history happening in the present that is the principle concern of this essay.

Do you know what Cordoba means? Cordoba House is a deliberately insulting term. It refers to Cordoba, Spain the capital of Muslim conquerors who symbolized their victory over the Christian Spaniards by transforming a church there into the world’s third-largest mosque complex. (Gingrich 2010)

In an interview in The New York Times, Geller (2010) says:

Cordoba, which is iconic of Islamic conquest on the West, and please don’t tell me it was a golden age; I’m just not there. I’m not there. Christians

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and Jews were living under dhimmitude, denied basic human rights; it was the site of the first Jewish pogrom, slaughtered 4,000 Jews, there were two pogroms against the Jews there.

An argument relating to interpretations of medieval Spain centres on the issue of harmony or intolerance between Muslims, Jews and Christians. It is encapsulated in two terms: ‘convivencia’ and ‘coexistencia’. Both may be translated as synonyms in English; however, a subtle distinction exists in Spanish when they refer to medieval Muslim Spain. ‘Convivencia’ (Castro 1971) suggests a near interfaith utopia between Muslims, Jews and Christians. At the end of the thirteenth-century ‘convivencia’ disintegrated. Where once favourable circumstances existed between three religious communities, society descended into confrontation based on religious affiliation ‘not on battlefields, but in silent anger and revenge, as an outcome of the past’ (1971:ix). Three separate ‘castes’ and the category ‘Spaniards’ emerged as distinct social groups because of this conflict. Castro’s (1971) timing of the emergence of castes undermines the idea of a primordial Spanish people, and undermines the notion of a primordial cohesive Christian resistance against Islam.

According to Sánchez Albornoz (1975), twelve centuries of Jewish culture and eight centuries of Muslim rule were just an ‘anomalous hiccup’ (Labayn 2010:11) and a latent ‘Spanish’ Christian identity predated the arrival of Islam. ‘Coexistencia’ (Glick 1992; 1995; Ruiz 2002) suggests that economic activity is a separate sphere of society and is not an index of social tolerance. Medieval Spain was a hierarchical society dominated by Muslims who subordinated Jews and Christians. It was a society based on antagonistic coexistencia in the economic sphere and does not suggest harmony within the social or private sphere. The implications and nuances of these opposing interpretations will be explored later in this essay, but this is a contemporary divisive topic in discourse surrounding notions of identity, culture and history in Spain.

Comments appear that oppose the building of the mosque, but with specific reference to its name:

Everyone should read about the Martyrs of Cordoba! It makes one wonder about their definition of ‘tolerance’. They even killed the children who professed Christianity in public.

(Anonymous Post 2010)

Lisa Grass (2010) argues that Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf is being economical with the truth by referring to ‘Cordoba’ as a as a medieval period of harmony and tolerance. Zakir Hussain (2010) cites Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf reason for calling the project The Cordoba Initiative ‘after Cordoba in southern Spain, a city where between the eighth and eleventh centuries, Muslims, Jews and Christians intermingled freely’, Grass (2010) accurately, but de-contextually, cites The Martyrs of Cordoba and a text, Memoriale Sanctorum (Eulogius 884), as historic proof of Muslim ‘murderous culture’ in the present. She warns Catholics that the Imam is not telling the truth, and that ‘Catholic history indicates a different picture’ (2010). Unintentionally aligning her interpretation of medieval history with Américo Castro (1971), Grass says: ‘things started out rather bad under Muslim rule…and went downhill over time’ (2010).

As we Catholics read the Memoriale Sanctorum, we are more apt to question the goals of the Cordoba Initiative. What we see from Cordoba is a people duped by a murderous culture which pretended to be something it is not and ultimately left all non-Muslims under the rule of Sharia Law. If that is what the Imam refers to as “living in peace,” we’ll have to pass on that. (Grass 2010).

There is a sense that medieval history will prove the ‘murderous’ intent and motivation behind present events, and that events from medieval Spain will strengthen resistance to the construction of an Islamic Cultural centre. A closer look at The Martyrs of Cordoba may help to clarify some of the errors presented by bloggers mentioned above. Indeed, it is fair to say that San Eulogio de Cordoba (800-859), the first known distributor of uninformed anti-Islamic rhetoric, would be proud that his legacy of demonizing Islam and distorting history continues.

The Martyrs of Cordoba

Extracted from the past, The Martyrs of Cordoba indicate a medieval society that subordinated non-Muslims by force. The only record of the event is the Memoriale Sanctorum (Eulogius 884) written by one of the martyrs and ‘there is every reason to believe that he was not representative of the group as a whole’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:23). All that is known about the martyrs ‘is what Eulogius chose to report about them’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:23).

In the Muslim city of Cordoba (850-859), forty-eight Christians were decapitated for public blasphemy, and ‘the majority of the victims deliberately invoked capital punishment by publicly blaspheming Muhammad and disparaging Islam’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:23). Eulogius, the Christian priest that initiated the martyrdom, wrote: ‘On the 10th of July A.D. 858, in the year of Absolution 32, this martyrdom occurred’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:23).

Comments appear that oppose the building of the mosque, but with specific reference to its name:
Christians in Cordoba were regularly taxed and ‘Eulogius complained of a “monthly tribute” that constituted a financial hardship for the Christians’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:24). Frustrated by punitive tax laws, he travelled outside Cordoba with the intention of visiting his brothers in Germany, but ‘political unrest and banditry closed the border passes’ (Lowney 2006:55) and he remained within the Iberian Peninsula. While travelling, he came upon an anonymously written Latin four-page pamphlet concerned with the history of the prophet Mahomet. *Istoria of Mahomet* (Anonymous Date Unknown) outlines an extreme and prejudiced view of the Prophet of Islam ‘as an avunculous usurer… and as a shrewd son of darkness… the wisest among the irrational Arabs in all things’. Describing *Mahomet* as ‘lustful’ and ‘a false prophet’, the pamphlet relates his death to the resurrection of Jesus. Armed with his anti-Islamic rhetoric, Eulogius returned to Muslim Cordoba— the one that allowed him to train as a Christian priest— and began his life’s mission to disparage Islam.

One English translation places Perfectus as the ‘first martyr of this age’ (Eulogius 884). Baxter Wolf (1988) argues that the circumstances surrounding Perfectus’ execution were significantly different from the remaining martyrs, and although he was punished for the crime of blasphemy, it was not a deliberate act on his behalf. Thus, the first martyr may be said to be a noble-born Christian, Isaac, who had risen to the rank of Secretary of the Covenant and mediator between his Christian community and the Islamic rulers of the city. Isaac resigned his post ‘for reasons unknown’ (Lowney 2006:57) and joined an austere Christian sect, led by Eulogius, in a monastery in Tabonos outside the city of Cordoba.

On June 3, 851, Isaac returned to Cordoba, approached a local Muslim *qâdî* (judge) and deliberately blasphemed. The *qâdî* offered Isaac ‘the chance to excuse his actions by admitting drunkenness or temporary insanity’ (Lowney 2006:57) but Isaac insisted on his sober status and left the *qâdî* with no option but to impose an obligatory sentence of capital punishment. Isaac was beheaded the next day. The response of the *qâdî* to Isaac’s outburst is significant (Baxter Wolf 1988:24). According to Eulogius, the *qâdî* was so troubled by Isaac’s public blasphemy that he consulted the Emir before taking an action. ‘Isaac’s case was apparently unusual’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:24) because the *qâdî* felt the need to consult with the Emir, but neither the law nor the punishment were new.

Two days later Sanctius, a ‘Christian’ veteran soldier within the Emir’s army, committed the same offence saying: ‘now hand down the sentence, multiply your cruelty, be kindled with complete fury in vengeance for your prophet’ (Eulogius 884). He was beheaded. On June 7, Peter, Walabonsus, Sabinian, Wistremund, Habentius and Jeremiah, presented themselves to a *qâdî*:

[w]e abide by the same confession, O judge, that our most holy brothers Isaac and Sanctius professed. … We profess Christ to be truly God and your prophet to be a precursor of antichrist and an author of profane doctrine. (Eulogius 884)

This list of martyrs continued to grow as more Christians tread a now ‘well-worn path to martyrdom’ (Baxter Wolf 1988:26). The executions abated during the following months until Flora and Maria appear in Eulogius’ martyrology. Maria was a child of a mixed Muslim mother and Christian father and had been raised a Christian. The recent martyrdom of her brother, Walabonus, had a profound impact on her. Together with Flora, the child of a Muslim father and Christian mother, they continued a now well-rehearsed blasphemy. Flora had secretly being practicing Christianity following her father’s death, however, her Muslim birthright entitled her to renounce Christianity and revert to Islam. She refused and they were both decapitated.

The Emir became concerned about ‘the gruesome spectacle of butchering two young women of Muslim heritage’ (Lowney 2006:58) and concerned with the more worrisome problem of how to dissuade public blasphemy. As pressure mounted ‘all Christian men [began to] disperse their women by selling them into slavery’ (Eulogius 884), but fear of a full-blown rebellion by the Christian majority population called for a different tact by the Muslim leaders of the city. All Christians were to be dismissed from civil and government service, all pensions were withdrawn from Christian soldiers and slated Christian churches were demolished. Eulogius was arrested in 859 and sentenced to flogging for harbouring a fugitive from Islam. He was the last of 48 Christians who had deliberately blasphemed. Eulogius ‘sensed that his moment of bravery had arrived’ (Lowney 2006:59) and duly denounced Islam. Following his death, the martyr movement lost its momentum, and while there were subsequent capital sentences, organised acts of anti-Islamic blasphemy became isolated.

**Decontextualisation of the Past**

While the punishment of decapitation for the crime of blasphemy, and the relegation of non-Muslims to a subordinate social status may fuel present interpretations of the Martyrs of Cordoba, these events appear to tip the balance of the scales from a utopian notion of tolerance *convivencia* towards a socially stratified notion of antagonistic tolerance *coexistencia*. Yet some interesting aspects of everyday life throughout the brief account point to a different interpretation of medieval Cordoba.

Most importantly with respect to the decontextualisation of the past by opponents of the Cordoba Initiative, the Visigoth regime that preceded the Islamic conquest in 711 did not tolerate religious
minority. As Lowney (2006:14) remarks: Cordoba came as a welcome relief to an oppressed Peninsula, the religious freedom enjoyed in Islamic Visigoths to forcibly eradicate Judaism from the Iberian When compared to the extreme attempts by the Visigoth rulers, the Berber force laid siege to the city of Cordoba. The Jewish guards of the city ‘rejoiced at being linked to their co-religionists in the East, of Cordoba. The Jewish guards of the city ‘rejoiced at being linked to their co-religionists in the East, and excluding the Jewish population, the Visigoths

Conversion to Christianity was reinforced by the threat of death as complex controls were imposed on the minority Jewish population. Rather than expelling and excluding the Jewish population, the Visigoths forcibly and publically converted Jews during the latter part of the seventh-century. The punishment for practicing Judaism was death, and Jews were forced to integrate and marry within the Christian population. Although some accounts (see Lowney 2006) say the opposite, Jews were not allowed to marry Jews and evidence from the seventh-century suggests that forced assimilation was the preferred model of Visigoth religious control. It appears fair to suggest that Visigoth society was hierarchical and violently subordinated minority religions. Moreover, Visigoths did not tolerate the public or private practice of Judaism under any circumstances.

In April 711 CE Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed the Mediterranean Sea and arrived in the Iberian Peninsula. Tariq defeated Visigoth king Roderic on July 19, and assisted by the local Jewish community, who had been suffering years of oppression at the hands of their Visigoth rulers, the Berber force laid siege to the city of Cordoba. The Jewish guards of the city ‘rejoiced at being linked to their co-religionists in the East, including Jerusalem itself’ (Goody 2005:20). Norman Roth (1976) notes that there is no evidence to support the charge of collusion or ‘treachery’ by the Jewish population during the Muslim invasion. However, Roth (1976) cites the reliable Muslim chronicler al-Maqqari’s The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain following the capture of Cordoba:

Mugit assembled all the Jews in the city and left them in charge of it, trusting them in preference to the Christians, on account of their hatred and animosity towards the latter.

When compared to the extreme attempts by the Visigoths to forcibly eradicate Judaism from the Iberian Peninsula, the religious freedom enjoyed in Islamic Cordoba came as a welcome relief to an oppressed minority. As Lowney (2006:14) remarks:

They [Islam] haltingly blazed humanity’s trail toward tolerance and mutual respect before finally veering into the overgrown thicket of

religious enmity and intolerance. Humanity has never completely found the way back. Medieval Spain might help to point the way.

It appears unnecessary to point out that the Catholic regime that followed Islamic Spain spawned and sponsored one of the most evil institutions ever created, the Spanish Inquisition. Their idea of religious toleration was the complete and total expulsion of all Jews as the Alhambra decree (Ferdinand and Isabella 1492) ordered the expulsion of Jews from the Kingdom of Spain by July 31. The decree applied to all Jews and not just those recently living within the now defeated Muslim kingdom of Granada. Thus ending 1,500 years of Sephardic culture on the Peninsula and silencing their history. All Muslims were violently forced to convert to Christianity. Even though Muslims pledged loyalty to the crown and renounced their Islamic religion, they were despairingly referred to as moriscos, and restrictions imposed by the Real Pragmática de Felipe II in 1567 prohibited moriscos from carrying arms, speaking or writing in Arabic or wearing their traditional clothing (Grieve 2009). The remaining converts, comprising of 4,000 men, women and children, were slaughtered by the army of Filipe II in La batalla del peñón de Frigiliana in 1569 (de Márml y Carvajal 2007). Islam allowed other religions to exist, no matter how subordinated this existence is interpreted, thus it is difficult to describe Islamic Spain without resorting to America Castro’s notion of a near interfaith utopia— as the concept ‘interfaith’ was nonexistent before and after Islamic Spain.

Returning to the Present

While this appropriation of history by opponents to Islamic Center in New York may be described as presentism, it is not presentism in the sense of a systematic mashing of the past (Scott 1990; Manuel 2010). ‘The almost forensic interpretation of Memorial de Sanchorum is not viewed through a lens that suggests ‘that we know how to forget at the right time just as we remember at the right time’ (Nietzsche 2007). Nor is it viewed through a lens that seeks to apply a contemporary moral value to the past suggesting healing by recovering repressed histories for the purpose of reconciliation (Comaroff and Comaroff In Press 2011). It is a lens that privatises history, and appropriates historic events as an index of individual characteristics in the present which omits all other histories and is never mindful of ‘the world outside the pictures in our heads’ (Lippman 2007:1). In the history of the USA, indigenous populations were annihilated and ‘in the past half century particularly, [the USA] extended its resort to force throughout much of the world. The number of victims is colossal’ (Chomsky 2001). Yet this history is silenced in this debate possibly because ‘for the first time, the guns have been directed the other way’ (2001). The forensic manner in which particular events in medieval history are
than imply the stratification and subordination of privileged children from mixed marriages. Rather Christian mother, indexes a codified Islamic law that were permitted, unlike the previous Visigoth regime's qâdî was not immediate and required consultation between Covenant, and even when he blasphemed, punishment for transgression was always meted out against the body. Michel Foucault's discussion of discipline notes the brutal and gruesome death in 1757 of Damiens the regicide, the last person to be drawn and quartered in France. It was not until decades later that '[the] body as a major target of penal repression disappeared' (Foucault 1991:8). Thus, viewing the case of the Martyrs of Cordoba as a general index of Islamic violence against the body de-contextualises history and produces an ahistorical account of the past framed within distorted contemporary sensibilities.

Eulogius was free to travel within Iberia, and trained as a Christian priest within the city limits of Cordoba where slated Christian churches were common. While later Islamic and Christian regimes codified the prohibition of particular religions in law, the public everyday practice of all religions continued throughout the Iberian Peninsula until 1567 when the last remnants of a cohesive Islamic community evicted from the Kingdom of Granada rebelled against their Christian oppressors. The fact that Eulogius trained as a Christian priest within a Muslim city indicates the presence of a structured Christian institution within an apparently intolerant kingdom. He was permitted to practice his religion and in comparison to the previous and subsequent regimes, Eulogius was permitted an unparalleled level of religious freedom that would not be seen in Spain until 1931. Isaac, the first martyr, worked for the Muslim administration as Secretary of the Covenant, and even when he blasphemed, punishment was not immediate and required consultation between the qâdî and Emir.

The case of Maria and Flora augments the sense of convivencia as a system infused with notions of tolerance. Marriages between Muslims and Christians were permitted, unlike the previous Visigoth regime's forced assimilation and miscegenation policies towards Jews. Flora, the offspring of a Muslim father and Christian mother, indexes a codified Islamic law that privileged children from mixed marriages. Rather than imply the stratification and subordination of people based on religion, this indexes the presence of a hierarchical patrilineal kinship system. As such, all children were stratified based on their father's religion, and while Christian patrilineal heritage subordinated offspring, the codification in law of the rights of patrilineal heritage indicates tolerance for mixed marriages, regardless of the subordination of a particular stratum.

Convivencia and/or coexistencia are not mutually exclusive categories, Glick (1992; 1995) sees Castro's (1971) interpretation of convivencia as a catalyst for the conscious formation of ethnic communities as being essentially flawed, because it fails to take account of the proponent unconscious aspect of community formation. Similar interpretations of al-Andalus (Ruiz 2002) prefer the concept of coexistencia as it infers a stratified and hierarchical nature of al-Andalus. Coexistencia highlights co-operation in the market-place, in the social sphere and in civil society, but emphasises no such corporation in the private religious sphere. While there is evidence of legal codes that suggest coexistencia as an accurate account of al-Andalus society, mixed marriages, freedom to travel and in particular freedom to practice non-Muslim religions, typifies the sense of convivencia within medieval Spain. Rather than separate out distinctions as an index of intolerance, distinctions are an essential element within social structures as they facilitate the necessary movement between consent (Gramsci 1971) that engenders convivencia, and conflict (Gramsci 1971) that engenders coexistencia.

While it is clear that history is always written in the present, right-wing misuse and the decontextualisation of medieval history appears to ignore the fact that history is given under already existing circumstances and transmitted from the past (Marx 1852). Particular events from the past are being appropriated and presented as 'evidence' of a historical link that apparently resides within the entire contemporary Islamic population. Events from the past are presented as 'proof' of an innate intolerance within particular groups of people, and moreover, they indicate the potential future 'threat' that is hidden within Islam.

This essay attempts to unpack the complexities of drawing on particular readings of specific events in the past in order to represent stereotypical 'cultures of personalities' in the present. These strategies of representation are made by competing communities formulated 'despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination' (Bhabha 1994:2), to such an extent that meanings and representations are not collaborative, indeed they 'may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable' (1994:2). The essay attempts to highlight the privatisation of specific histories that are decontextualised and reinvented in order to continue a process of collective demonization of a people based on their religious beliefs. It attempts to highlight the manner in which particular historic
events are happening in the present in order to stigmatize an entire section of a community. It is clear that disseminating anti-Islamic rhetoric is not a new thing. Eulogius, Rachael Williams and Pamela Geller have a lot more in common than their misanthropic ideas suggest.

References


Manuel, Antonio. 2010. La Huella Morisca, el Al Andalus que Llevamos Dentro. Almuzara.


Notes:
2 A full transcript of forced Jewish professions of Christianity is available at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/jewish-oaths.html (Medieval Sourcebook 2006)
Abstract: The following article is an abbreviated version of my undergraduate dissertation thesis, which was an investigation into the social meaning attached to biodiversity at the Irish Seed Savers Association, County Clare, Ireland. I first explain how biodiversity is meaningful because of its association with personal and social Irish memories, which continue to inform a sense of identity today. The discussion then moves on to examine how working with biodiversity is an act of empowering corporeal creative resistance to social trends that have disconnected the body from the environment, and therefore threatened food security.

Key words: Biodiversity, personal/social memory, identity, creativity, food security, the body/senses.

Introduction
During 2008, I spent five weeks conducting fieldwork with the Irish Seed Savers Association, County Clare, Ireland, for my undergraduate dissertation. I undertook research into the specific meaning attached to biodiversity – a widely used and somewhat generic term often held to refer to ‘the earth’s variety of life’ encompassing genetic, species and ecosystem diversity (Kegley and Wittkopf 2004: 388) – for staff and associates of Seed Savers, which exists to grow, preserve and distribute the seed of heritage food plants. I present here an abbreviated discussion of my findings, which are grouped into three parts and are illustrated through the metaphor of a plant. The first part deals with ‘roots’: just as a plant survives and takes a degree of its identity because it is rooted in a particular soil and microclimate. Similarly, at Seed Savers the preservation of biodiversity represented for some people the conservation and continual rediscovery of ‘rooted’, that is, distinctly Irish, personal and social memories, which informed a sense of the Irish self or identity. It is in this way that Seed Savers can be seen as integrated into the local society, providing a glimpse into part of an Irish heritage.

As Climo and Cattell (2002: 1) have said, ‘memory is the foundation of self and society’ because memories have the capacity to ‘create and sustain meanings’ for all (Ibid: 2). Memories can be ‘stored’ by various entities, such as places, foods and the body. These storage devices are referred to by Climo and Cattell as ‘mnemonic sites’ (Ibid: 17). Writing specifically about arboreal matters, Jones and Cloke describe how trees carry ‘cultural, emotional and even spiritual baggage’ (2002: 6). I believe that the same can be said for Seed Savers, where plants become repositories for memories and identities.

Part One: Local Memories – Roots
To explain my discoveries about biodiversity at Seed Savers I use the metaphor of a plant. Two of the myriad ways of visualising a plant are as an individual rooted organism, or as connected to a wider biosphere. This first discussion is concerned with the former. A plant may survive and thrive, and obtain a degree of its identity because it is rooted in a particular soil and microclimate. Similarly, at Seed Savers the preservation of biodiversity represented for some people the conservation and continual rediscovery of ‘rooted’, that is, distinctly Irish, personal and social memories, which informed a sense of the Irish self or identity. It is in this way that Seed Savers can be seen as integrated into the local society, providing a glimpse into part of an Irish heritage.

As Climo and Cattell (2002: 1) have said, ‘memory is the foundation of self and society’ because memories have the capacity to ‘create and sustain meanings’ for all (Ibid: 2). Memories can be ‘stored’ by various entities, such as places, foods and the body. These storage devices are referred to by Climo and Cattell as ‘mnemonic sites’ (Ibid: 17). Writing specifically about arboreal matters, Jones and Cloke describe how trees carry ‘cultural, emotional and even spiritual baggage’ (2002: 6). I believe that the same can be said for Seed Savers, where plants become repositories for memories and identities.

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Personal Memories

I begin by discussing the personal Irish memories attached to plants at Seed Savers. I discovered that many plants, by virtue of their presence throughout generations, and through the act of being named after deceased individuals, become mnemonic sites to these persons who effectively ‘live on’, once memories are ‘activated’ via relations between living plants and humans. Such relations build up a sense of Irish identity influenced by departed Irish persons. Here I limit the discussion to ‘apple stories’ – plants present in people’s lives for generations, which harbour individuals’ memories.

During the first week of my fieldwork, I was pointed towards a large black satchel in an office at Seed Savers, which held hundreds of letters that contained details of indigenous Irish apples, which had been sent into the organisation as examples of rare or heritage varieties, which they might be interested in researching or growing. Evidence of the value attached to various apple trees was abundant in these letters. I contacted a good number of these letter writers, and found that for many people, the trees represented memories of deceased family or friends whose land they had been planted on, or harboured stories from long-lost childhoods.

For example, Ciaran Fagan from County Longford originally wrote to Seed Savers in 2004, to share samples of four apple trees, which his maternal Great Grandfather Martin McCabe planted before 1900. The trees became a favourite place for Ciaran and his siblings to play ‘house’:

Springtime in the garden was magical when the scores of snowdrops dotted around the trees appeared, covering the ground like a white carpet. Each year we would follow the trees’ cycle from buds to beautiful white blossoms that turned pink and disappeared almost overnight. In the harvest, climbing the trees to the top was a must to reach the biggest and most sun-kissed apples.

Next to the apple garden my Grandfather Stephen Reilly kept the most beautiful vegetable and soft fruit garden. So well presented was his lot that I recall him winning the Senior Gardener of the County on at least two occasions. One could never imagine the amount of produce that could be obtained from such a small area. Boxes of surplus strawberries were sold annually at the local market. However, the pleasure of sharing the produce of his passion greatly outweighed the monetary worth. This passion for gardening carried him to his 98th year when in 1998 he passed away peacefully, having been active in the garden up until two years before his death.

For Ciaran, these trees bore witness to four generations of his family, and serve as a symbol for these people and their activities in a defined place – they are mnemonic sites, biotic memorials, which inform a sense of who he is and where he came from. He has now taken cuttings of the trees, which have been grafted onto new rootstocks with the help of Seed Savers. The intention is to plant the trees on a new site, so that they will ‘one day make as happy a playground for my children as I remember’.

These arboreal memorials could be viewed, as Jones and Cloke (2002: 127) suggest in relation to apple trees, as ‘taskscapes’. The concept of taskscape comes from Tim Ingold, who stresses that environments are created through the mutual activity-based engagement of human minds, bodies and non-human elements (Ingold 2000: 173), so that ‘the landscape...is the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities ‘collapsed’ into an array of features’ (Ibid: 198). Therefore, the actions of the past are manifested in parts of the physical environment and subject to continual rediscovery, as that environment is engaged with. At Seed Savers plants bear memories of the people they have related to in the past, who are continually re-evoked as they are engaged with in the present, as their stories are told, or their being is re-grafted and renewed.

Social Memories

Plants at Seed Savers also function as repositories of an Irish form of ‘social memory’. Social memory is the collective appeal by a number of individuals to remember events, entities or people that have in some way impacted on all their lives in the past, be it directly or not. The act of remembering carves out a niche for that group, giving them a distinct understanding of their experience in the world and a sense of who they are (Climo and Cattell 2002: 4-5).

At Seed Savers some plants continually emphasise the happenings of the past therefore allowing recognition of common and ‘rooted’ heritage between a group of people and facilitating the aggregative creation of a shared Irish identity. This happens as plant names – such as the Cocagee Apple – which refer to bygone events and groups of people known to the Irish nation, are spoken, and folklore tied to trees, is acted out. Only folklore will be elaborated on here.

The use of plant folklore by some of the staff is a regular occurrence, which draws upon a rich tradition of nature folklore present in Ireland for a great deal of the past. While walking in the Self-Rooting orchard with me, Dave, an orchard worker, stopped by a dense cluster of Hawthorn trees, and told me how his Mother used to tell him stories of how a farmer cleared out a group of these trees from his land and the next day fell over and broke his back. Clusters of Hawthorns are known as ‘fairie rings’ as they are reputed to house fairies, who will seek revenge if their home is felled. Dave continued that the fairie ring on Seed Savers land...
had never been touched out of respect for the fairies. Mac Coitir notes that in Irish folklore, Hawthorn is reputed to be the tree associated with the ‘Little People’, and many accounts contain tales of bad luck after interfering with and uprooting this species (Mac Coitir 2003: 52-4). The continued active attention to this folklore at Seed Savers evokes, as Lidia, a garden worker, put it, ‘a whole oral culture of fire-side stories’ surrounding plants in Ireland, which continues to influence identities today.

Part 2: Global Memories – Flows

While a plant may be rooted in one place, it’s existence is also dependent on connection to other entities such as pollinating insects, and sub-surface mycelia (fungal) networks linking trees and plants, allowing ‘communication’ along their lines (Buhner 2002). Consequently, a plant may be thought of as part of a ‘flowing’ biotic continuum, linked through time and space.

Like plants, human selves extend beyond local and national ‘roots’. As Hannerz suggests, perhaps humans are best viewed as components in the global ecumene – a continuous, web-like ‘social and cultural flow’ where ideas are constantly exchanged and internalised (Hannerz in Palsson 1993: 12). The notion of interconnection became increasingly clear to me during my time at Seed Savers. While many Seed Savers supporters and workers are Irish, staff members also represent England, Wales, Italy, Spain, Canada and America. Furthermore, alongside Irish crops, a wide range of heritage plants from elsewhere is grown. For example, there are tomatoes from Latvia, South American exploding cucumbers and Native American purple corn.

I began to wonder why this multinational group of people were collaborating to preserve such a cosmopolitan range of food plants. I started to question my informants about their reasons for being at Seed Savers and their conceptions of ‘heritage’, and found that many had similar ideas, which were not reliant on nationality alone. For example, Matteo, assistant to Seed Saver’s education programme, told me his perception of heritage was ‘knowledge about things like techniques from our ancestors’ and ‘the opposite from supermarket culture’. Heritage here is imagined as a shared history, combining humans from all over the world through the possession of common knowledge about the ability to grow food. The expression at Seed Savers is on the cultivation of wide-ranging biodiversity, which draws plants and humans into relationships that activate this common and knowledgeable heritage.

I believe the conception and activation of this notion of ‘heritage’ is a response to current social trends in Ireland, which were the topic of many discussions with my informants. As opposed to the strong sense of self-sufficiency which permeated Ireland before the ‘Celtic Tiger’, once the economy strengthened, the population quickly developed a preference for supermarket produce. Growing food became, as Anita told me, ‘the poor persons’ pastime’, since vegetable gardens would only be grown out of sheer economic necessity, because of the hardship associated in people’s minds with that bygone lifestyle. As Felice, a garden worker, said, ‘people are ashamed of the past, the poverty’.

I consider what my informants were referring to regarding the Irish attitude to food growing is what Natzmer has called ‘organised forgetting’. Natzmer suggests that social memory is a dialogue between dominant and subordinate groups in society who create their own pasts through selectively remembering and forgetting events (Natzmer 2002: 164-5), so that the past is ‘continually reinterpreted in light of present events and a vision of the future’ (Ibid: 164).

In addition to this ‘organised forgetting’, my informants told me that Irish society has further moved off the land due to more widespread social trends such as the increasing mechanisation of agriculture and a lifestyle focused on indoor entertainment and careers, where, as Kevin, the Orchard Manager, put it, ‘the body has become stagnated’. As Peter, the Garden Manager emphasised, with the majority of children nowadays playing indoors, a whole generation are ‘not aware of their food and where it comes from’. As she prepared mustard seed pods for shelling, Jo, the Seed Bank Manager, summed up much of what those at Seed Savers had told me. She felt humans have lost the ‘skills’ associated with survival through crop growing that people had in the past, due to the removal of the body from the environment. ‘We have become out of touch’ with nature she said, in a way that poses a massive threat to future food security.

Van der Ploeg refers to specialised knowledge of how to relate to crops and fields as ‘arte de la localite’ (Pottier 1999: 129, 135). Commenting on Van der Ploeg’s studies of Andean potato growers, Pottier suggests that food security may be threatened once this knowledge is lost, through disconnection to nature, or ‘despachamamitization’ (Ibid: 136). This seems to be similar to the phenomenon described by those at Seed Savers.

Existing alongside dominant forms of memory there are alternate ways of remembering: ‘counter-memories’ (Climo and Cattell 2002: 28). These anti-hegemonic counter-memories represent for Natzmer ‘creative cultural expression’ (Natzmer 2002: 164) as acted out in Chile by opponents of Pinochet, who used their creativity to manipulate spaces so that they served as a reminder of the brutality of the regime. I believe the organised forgetting of mainstream Irish society is answered at Seed Savers by a creative counter-memory of a global heritage of connection to, and communication with, nature, akin to the speaking of a language, in which knowledge of survival is encoded. Many of my informants alluded to a concept that being corporeally connected to the environment was something inherent in the past of all humans, a sentiment deep within
people, that contributed to practical and emotional fulfilment on a very fundamental level. As Lidia put it, humans are not necessarily aware of a connection to everything that we perceive and do not’ yet many observe ‘a yearning to experience the true wholeness and interconnection’ of the entire biotic world.

By emphasising the importance of bodily connections to the biotic world, Seed Savers is creatively using the past in the present. As Kevin noted, ‘Seed Savers is often accused of being a bunch of luddites, but we’re not aiming to go back to the bad old days’. Instead, he explained, it’s ‘like pass the parcel’ in that Seed Savers are ‘using old techniques in this moment’ in order to bolster food security. As Rapport observes, humans are essentially creative agents, with the imaginative capacity to construct meaning within the systems they are born into (Rapport 2002: 129-33), and shape the ‘essence’ of their being in the past, present and future (Rapport 1997: 33).

**Part 3: Skilful Re-engagement.**

This counter-memory is enacted at Seed Savers through ritualised actions, which I call ‘skilful re-engagement’, that seek to draw upon a physical connection between the human body and the environment in which it acts. This behaviour – which I found to focus primarily on the use of the senses, the energetic flow between elements in the environment via biodynamics, and the anthropomorphising of plants – seeks, through drawing plants into physical relationships with humans, to re-establish the ‘lost language’ of interconnections between people and nature, which carries within it the knowledge to ensure food security. I will concentrate the discussion here on the use of the senses.

Ingold’s theories fit well with my findings. Through his ‘dwelling perspective’, Ingold suggests that the body is the locus of the creation of meaning about the environment and world, via active engagement with it: ‘the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along its paths connecting them’ (Ingold 2000: 193). Rather than worlds being built through ‘making’ – which implies the presence of a prefigured design which is internalised and re-imposed onto a form by a human mind (Ibid: 316, 319) – form is ‘grown’ through ‘the mutual involvement of people and materials in an environment’ (Ibid: 347) to which they all belong, in a process Ingold calls ‘skill’. Skill involves ‘active and sensuous’ engagement between ‘practitioner and material’ (Ibid: 342), so that elements relate through movement, which is premised on ‘care, judgement and dexterity’ (Ibid: 353). In this way, ‘the world of our experience is, indeed, continually and endlessly coming into being as we weave’ (Ibid: 348). The body builds up form and meaning in the environment through movement, just as a basket is woven.

This idea is particularly pertinent for the situation at Seed Savers, where the body is continually used in the environment in order to create a specific meaning – that of bodily interconnection with nature (the counter-memory) premised on coming closer to ‘ancestral knowledge’ about the ability to grow food. Here the body, through the process of sensory ‘skilful re-engagement’, becomes a vehicle for rediscovering and renegotiating a common past.

For Connerton, the body is a repository for social memory. To use the body in ritualised ways during commemorative ceremonies is to activate social memories about a time or event in the past which have been ‘sedimented in the body’ (Connerton 1989: 72), so that by enacting these movements, the past is literally performed again in the present (Ibid: 103). The body’s movements may also allow counter-hegemonic social memories to surface, like at Seed Savers. Writing about the Hauka of Niger, a cult where medium’s bodies become possessed by Hauka spirits that mimic powerful European colonial figures, Stoller suggests that a subaltern and subversive discourse is acted out (Stoller 1995: 30) as such bodily mimesis allows Africans to ‘tap into’ this power (Ibid: 90, 195).

**The use of the senses**

During my fieldwork it became clear that the use of the senses at Seed Savers is one of the key ways in which the bodily counter-memory of interconnection is articulated. To use the senses is to construct an environment where a deeper bodily understanding of nature and its processes contributes towards knowledge about growing food: both Peter and Aine (Seed Savers Education Co-ordinator) talked to me about the importance of educating children about nature through engaging their senses with the environment, which would serve as a basis for ‘life skills’ in the future. In this way, the senses are being used to communicate a shared cultural sentiment (specifically, interconnection and growing knowledge) which is the fundamental assumption taken by sensory anthropology. Advocates such as David Howes emphasised that vision was not the only means by which knowledge of and communication about things could be obtained. Instead, other ‘bodily modes of knowing’ (Howes 1991: 3) such as touch, smell, taste and hearing were to become the focus of investigation, since, as Ong has emphasised, we use the whole sensory body to understand and signify (Ong 1993: 25).

**Touch**

Many staff at Seed Savers never wear gardening gloves and are not afraid to stick their hands directly in the soil. There is the general feeling that, as Peter said one day as he showed me how to tell if a pea pod was ready and ‘papered’ enough for harvesting for seed, ‘your eyes sense it, but your fingers tell you it’, implying that knowledge about nature is created and re-discovered through direct relational interaction between the whole feeling body and the environment. Touching relations allow one to ‘tap into’ that once-common knowledge of growing that is held within plants. This was certainly
the case when Lidia demonstrated to me the ‘art and craft’ of pruning apple trees. It was an extremely tactile process, involving using the fingers to feel along the branch, making a cut just above the fruit bud or leaf cluster on mature wood and near the fourth bud from the bottom on newer wood with no fruit.

Howes (2005: 27) suggests that touch can be thought of as ‘skin knowledge’, the ‘knowledge of the world one acquires through one’s skin, the feel of the sun, the wind, the rain and the forest’. Ingold concurs, remarking that humans have the capacity to construct knowledge of places and environments through the touching body, in particular through the act of walking, where the feet come directly into contact with, relate to and ‘weave’ a landscape into being (Ingold 2004: 332-3).

Taste
Another way that the senses are used at Seed Savers to articulate the counter-memory is through taste. Tasting foods was again a way of re-discovering growing knowledge, putting the body in contact with what was sensed as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. As we walked around the gardens, it was common to pick up several plants along the way for immediate communal consumption. One morning Dave handed the group some rocket from the top of Anita’s Garden to try. Murmurs of approval arose as we crunched on the sweet fleshy leaves. A moment later, Dave reached for his knife, ever present on his belt, and cut some thin slices from a wind-fallen apple. He handed the pieces around the company, but almost instantaneously rather sour looks passed across people’s faces. ‘It’s not quite ripe yet,’ Dave admitted, joining Peter and Geraldine, a garden worker, by spitting out the fruit.

The sharing of knowledge and sentiments through taste has been examined by various ethnographers. Sutton has suggested how food and taste presents for Seed Savers the possibility to enact – through relations of skilful re-engagement between humans and their environments, based on tactile and gustatory sensing – a counter-memory of a global past based on interconnection and communication of all living organisms in nature which encoded knowledge of how to survive. Through it’s phenomenological actions, the body is continually co-creating and co-weaving its surroundings into a force for empowerment and survival in the present.

In today’s world, where many people in many countries are malnourished in body, mind and spirit, Seed Savers has a lot to teach us.

I then went on to discuss how Seed Savers believe that due to an ‘organised forgetting’ of the nation’s agricultural history and wider social trends, which have corporeally severed humans from their environment, growing know-how and future food security has been disrupted. Biodiversity, then, also presents for Seed Savers the possibility to enact – through relations of skilful re-engagement between humans and their environments, based on tactile and gustatory sensing – a counter-memory of a global past based on interconnection and communication of all living organisms in nature which encoded knowledge of how to survive. Through it’s phenomenological actions, the body is continually co-creating and co-weaving its surroundings into a force for empowerment and survival in the present.

In today’s world, where many people in many countries are malnourished in body, mind and spirit, Seed Savers has a lot to teach us.

References
Notes:

1. A heritage food plant is a historic or traditional variety, developed over time, often with the most vigorous and disease-resistant seeds being selected and handed down through the generations. Heritage plants are well adapted to the local conditions they have been grown in, often pest and disease-resistant and uniquely flavoured (www.irishseedsavers.ie).

2. A clear plastic-covered tunnel structure designed to house sensitive plants, which do not thrive outside.

3. The organisation also has a large national and international member base who collaborate with Seed Savers to grow and exchange seeds from the seed bank.

4. Apple trees rarely reproduce the exact same fruit variety when grown from seed, therefore a sample of living scion wood must be taken from the desired tree type, and grafted onto a ‘rootstock’, a pre-existing generic apple tree. The two pieces of tree knit together over time, and provide a ‘carbon-copy’ of the original.

5. Jones and Cloke (2002: 187) add that trees are ‘messengers of the past’ due to their longevity: throughout their lives, they absorb the actions carried out by humans, themselves and others, serving as a reference point to all that has happened before.

6. Similarly, Malkki has attacked what she deems the ‘sedentarist metaphysics’ (2001: 61) of popular culture, which draws deep connections between the ‘rootedness’ of identity and a bounded national space (Ibid: 55, 57, 63). Instead, she asserts that identity is creolised and bricolaged (Ibid: 71) from disparate sources.

7. The lack of money made buying things in shops a rare treat. As Aine put it, ‘there was the occasional trip to Galway, maybe once or twice a year’ to go to the supermarket, but otherwise, people grew their own vegetables and caught their own fish.

8. During the 1980s Anita distributed produce from her smallholding to her neighbours. Often, though, her eggs were rejected for being ‘too strong’ and her vegetables were looked down upon since they did not come from shops or may have arrived with earth on them or slightly misshapen.

9. Likewise, Casey asserts a phenomenological approach to bodily memory, suggesting that habitual memory has the potential to activate the past (Casey 1987: 149-151), which is corporeally embodied, without the need to utilise the mind (Ibid: 178). Referring to habitual memory, Casey professes, ‘In such remembering I leave the heights of contemplative recollection and enter the profundity of my own bodily being’ (Ibid: 167).

10. Similarly, Classen has posited that touch is a medium of knowledge transmission (Classen 2005a: 260), whereby ‘interior truths’ of objects may be revealed in a way not accessible through vision (Classen 2005b: 277).
Desperate Church wives: Experiencing conflict, negotiating gender and managing emotion in Christian community

Hilary Foye*

Abstract: This paper presents a rich ethnographic picture of the emotional lives of ministers’ wives based on the author’s prolonged involvement in this subculture, and analysis of in-depth interviews. It examines the role of emotion narratives in the construction of female identity among evangelical ministers’ wives in Northern Ireland, an often neglected group of people within anthropological literature. The ethnographic material illustrates how these women interact as individuals with gendered discourses and ‘feeling rules’ of the evangelical subculture, and how the ideals of this imagined community in turn impact their lived worlds.

Key words: Ministers’ wives; Evangelical subculture; Northern Ireland; gendered discourses of emotion; sentimental narratives; emotion work.

‘I was the pastor’s wife, capital ‘P’, capital ‘W.’ I didn’t exist; I was just the embodiment of a role.’

It was a sunny summer morning, but the mood in the room did not reflect the weather. Debbie was telling me about the identity crisis she went through when she became a church wife. The tone of her voice darkened like thunder as she described feeling that no one cared who she was; that they simply accepted her for her role and what she represented. She felt misunderstood, as though she didn’t exist. An Englishwoman who had married a Northern Irish minister, Debbie had experienced isolation and lack of close relationship as something very oppressive. After living over thirty years in Northern Ireland, she had never found someone who really understood her, a close friend with whom she could share the world. Even after her husband’s retirement, the legacy remained. She would ‘never feel quite at home here.’

Every ethnographic work tells tales, some intended, some not (Abu-Lughod, 2008:1). I conducted intensive fieldwork amongst evangelical ministers’ wives in Northern Ireland and my own extended involvement in the evangelical subculture, presented the opportunity for many stories like Debbie’s to be valued, accessed, told, heard and understood. The research was underpinned by the conviction that ethnographic inquiry should neither entail ‘a hostile gaze’ (Scheper-Hughes, 1992:28), nor an insensitive rummaging through other people’s lives. Instead, by analysing their life narratives, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the various kinds of conflicts church workers’ wives experience in life and ministry, and thus provide a rich ethnographic picture of this small but often unobserved subsection of the Northern Irish evangelical community.

I begin with some brief contextual remarks concerning the subculture under current scrutiny, delineating several distinguishing features of the community which labels itself as ‘evangelical’ in Northern Ireland. What follows is an examination of evangelical gendered ideas of emotion as discourses which contribute to the subordination of women, with a particular focus on the experiences of ministers’ wives. In evangelical circles, men are often viewed as the privileged owners of rationality and objectivity. The more open expressions of emotion associated with femininity, however, are seen as a sign of weakness and irrationality, which is ‘inappropriate for church leadership and public concerns’ (Porter, 2002:108). Through the personal narratives of my informants, I then uncover various emotions in practice, which are otherwise hidden from the casual observer. Observing how these emotions are ‘managed’ or manipulated and contribute to the level of a minister’s wife’s social ‘respectability’, I conclude by assessing the potential costs and difficulties associated with prolonged ‘emotional’ work (Hochschild, 1983), within the church context.

Who are the evangelicals?

Whilst there is an extensive range of anthropological studies on churches in Northern Ireland, very few have focused on evangelicalism as a community across denominations, even fewer have focused on women in particular and church wives have barely made the grade for in-depth analysis. As such, analyses of evangelicalism in Northern Ireland have often been somewhat one-dimensional; solely concerned with the political aspects of the movement, for instance. Although defining evangelicalism is difficult, the basic grounds for recognising this global Christian community are an emphasis on ‘conversion’ (Robbins, 2004:119) and a distinct way of life from ‘secular’ culture, combined with an emphasis on the true ‘Gospel’ (Fischer, 2008). Churches which identify themselves as ‘evangelical’ exist across denominations and collectively form ‘One Body in Christ’ (Randall and Hilborn, 2001). Thus, the Northern Irish evangelical community could be conceptualised as an

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Woman: the ‘emotional’ sex?
This concept of a shared set of understandings, practices and expectations within evangelicalism is particularly poignant in relation to gendered ideas of emotion. During the 18th century in Britain, women had been elevated as the ‘keepers of morality’ and it was assumed that men had ‘no natural aptitude for religion’ (Bendroth, 1993:3). Victorian ministers declared ‘domesticity and religion to be women’s special sphere’ (Brozyna, 1999:30), as ‘queen of the home’ (DeBerg, 2000:20), while men managed the public world of business and politics, ‘free of moral entanglements’ (Bendroth, 1993:3). However, by the late 19th century, many evangelicals began to doubt the Victorian ‘sentimental faith in womanhood’ (Bendroth, 1993:3) and the belief that it was men, not women, who had the true capacity for religion had begun to attract support. As the century progressed, the influence of woman suffragettes and social reformers led to women having a sphere of influence outside the home. In the context of female-dominated membership throughout Protestant churches, fundamentalists and evangelical leaders began to fear that their home, public and church lives were becoming increasingly feminised (Porter, 2002:12). This shift was viewed as a liberalising trend that represented ‘watered-down doctrine’, ‘wrong practice’, and a ‘passive Christian manhood’ (ibid.)

When it comes to leading in the church, women are unfit because they are more gullible and easier to deceive than men. While many irate women have disagreed with his assessment... such women who fail to trust his instruction... are much like their mother Eve and are well-intended but ill-informed (Driscoll, 2008:43).

The legacy of this viewpoint was evident in many conversations with my informants, particularly those who were members of churches with traditional views about gender roles. Veronica, who spent her early years as a Christian in the Brethren Assemblies and then moved to the Elim denomination, observed:

I would not like to face the decisions that the pastors face, because for us women, being emotional, on the wrong day of the month, whoever you’d have to face down, might have no head left by the time you’ve finished, whereas the next day you might talk very nicely. I think we are such emotional people – I can’t separate it all, whereas men put it all into boxes.

Others condemned this opinion as incorrect and damaging to the Christian church as a whole. Graham called it a ‘falsehood that has been perpetrated throughout church life.’ For him, embracing and expressing emotions constitutes the first step towards becoming more Christ-like:

As far as I’m concerned, if the only perfect man who ever lived can weep – why can’t we? But we think, “oh big boys don’t cry” – that’s piffle!

Amelia, an experienced leader in the Presbyterian Church, termed these gendered discourses about emotion as, ‘badly expressed, hurtful, and harmful’ to the profile of the church and to the individuals within it. In her opinion, to limit the role of women on the grounds of their weakness ‘lets them off certain hooks’ and excuses them from not operating in their gifts and calling. She spoke about some of her Brethren friends, who used their lack of role in the church as a license for irresponsible behaviour:

...They know there is no prospect of them having a role in church. If they’re not into children, what do they do? So they run after guys, indulge themselves financially, regarding that as almost compensation for the fact that their little world has to be this size... That sense of being called by God to a ministry that reflects your gifts doesn’t seem to come into it. So I think it does them real harm.

Sentimental stories
This context of evangelical gendered ideas of emotion in the evangelical community provides an important background for analysis of the range of emotions
evoked by the role and work of being a minister’s wife. The manner in which one could analyse these emotions is a question which has ‘divided even the closest of colleagues’ in the anthropological world (Beatry, 2010:430). However, I find the narrative approach to emotions particularly useful because personal histories demand ‘a contextual richness that overspills the tight frames of standard realist ethnographies’ and locates emotions in practice, thereby creating an evocative and sincere account of the thoughts, feelings and actions of others (Stoller, 1989:154).

Inspired by Abu-Lughod’s sequence of narratives in ‘Writing women’s worlds’, I have arranged various accounts of contradictions, conflicts and struggles for meaning in such a way as to uncover that range of emotions evoked by the context of Christian ministry. Church life is a social arena in which a lot of areas of life overlap – work, leisure, family, friendships, and so is a good place to begin capturing emotion in practice.11

Lonely living, feeling ‘used’ and frustrations about unequal friendships
For many church wives, relationships are difficult to establish and maintain because of their position (Irvine, 1997:134). One of the most common areas of struggle was having few close friends, particularly in the church (Brunette-Hill, 1999:82). For example, when Harriet’s husband was training to be a pastor, they had to move far away from family and many of their close friends. As a result of living in an expensive area, on a meagre salary, Harriet and her husband’s financial situation became very difficult, and the alienation from support networks became particularly excruciating:

Not one person ever checked on us, and if they asked, they were like, “well we’ll pray about it.” And I’m like, “I don’t need you to pray about it, I need you to help me!”

At their lowest point, when the local bakery donated leftover bread to assist the church in feeding the homeless on a Sunday afternoon, Harriet used to lift what she needed out of the bread bag first:

If we didn’t take it out, we wouldn’t have had anything. They used to have doughnuts which would have been off by the Sunday, so we were allowed to take those, and I remember the boys saying, “ahh! Where did you get those buns from?”

Gemma, a young pastor’s wife with two children, spoke about her situation with great sadness. After being in a church for a six-month trial period, she and her husband had to move on to another congregation. Both churches had very few people her age, and she found it difficult connecting and relating to older people:

I miss not having friends at church, or having anyone my age with kids. It’s hard to find somebody who understands where I’m coming from, or who is at the same stage of life as me. I’ve found that very lonely.

Part of this loneliness can derive from the transient nature of ministry. Families often have to move long distances when they get called to another church (Bare, 1998), leaving their friends behind. Church conflicts can also result in relationships being prematurely broken, particularly when one is part of the church leadership. As a consequence, individuals often retreat into themselves, afraid to open their world to another in fear of betrayal, separation or simply growing apart. Graham assessed the current situation in Northern Ireland as he has experienced it:

The difficulty for all in ministry is that once you’ve revealed something about yourself ... you’ve made yourself vulnerable. Others may not be bound by the same confidentiality that you will hold, therefore they can use it as a weapon against you, and that has happened.

Emma described this as a problem that she too had faced:

Friendships in the church can be quite temporary, so I think we need to be very careful who we bring close. Because, if the friendship ends, and you’ve told this person so much that it’s kind of scary, well they know all these things, and they’re taking it with them.

Many also felt that their congregations only really got to know them as their minister’s spouse. This lack of meaningful relationships often resulted in deep hurt and isolation. Amelia shared a particularly significant moment in her experience, when she realised that her friendships within the church were not as she had imagined. Her parents both died within nine weeks of one another, and her world was turned upside down. Five elders came to the funerals, but none of the people whom she had thought were her friends came to show their support. Her words were full of emotion as she conveyed her memories of the event:

It’s a bit like going out in a boat that you think is really reliable, and when you’re in the middle of the ocean you discover that it’s full of holes. I realised I’d put weight on these friendships which couldn’t be sustained ... they are girls with whom I have shared a big part of my life – but it was at a point when I felt I was building relationships ... and this happened. I thought friendship meant that we were in some way recognising that we were all women together, and we all have big issues that we need help with, but the fact that I
was the minister’s wife meant that the five elders came, that’s it. There was this official response.

As Amelia’s story indicates, the position of clergy wife can create an unequal relationship between an individual and her congregation. Expectations about what the role entails can mean that a church wife might feel she is constantly giving and receiving nothing in return. Jenny spoke about feeling ‘used’ when she opened her home to church members:

We spent a lot of money in hosting and serving people, but it’s then kind of thrown in your face. Everybody is constantly in our house, everybody eats with us, everybody pretty much sleeps here ... everybody was always included, but it was never returned.

Similarly, Amelia shared some of the deep frustration and disappointment she felt, when she discovered that her congregation would never share her passion for hospitality:

I just thought, if they see how easy it is, maybe they’ll catch the vision for it. But they did not. They like you having them for lunch or supper, but that’s the end of it. And they’ll say, “we miss you so much because you’re not here to have us!” And I think, “but that wasn’t the point!”

Soon Amelia realised that there was a defining barrier between her and the other church members, one so deeply entrenched that she was powerless to change it. As she spoke, she bore an expression of resigned sadness, as if she had long tried to accept the order of things but there was a part of her which still wrestled with it:

People will say to me, “Oh it’s lovely to come to your house.” And you say, “Yeah, but you can have the pleasure in your house too.” And they’ll say, “but you have the space.” It’s this thing of living in a big church house, in a community where people have smaller houses. It’s such a defining barrier, because they don’t see you the way they see themselves. You’re the minister’s wife, so you have all these gifts and abilities, and that’s what you’re for!

Emotion managed

Cultura I discourses about emotion bring to light what Hochschild (1983) termed as ‘emotional labour’. Suggesting that emotions can be thought of as ‘conventions of feeling’ (1979:552), Hochschild points out the individual’s ability to work on an emotion, in order to bring it into line with cultural expectations about ‘suitable emotions’ (Elliot and Umberson, 2008:392) and so ‘present a socially desirable performance’ (Bolton, 2007). To assess the social situation and fit this with the expected feeling, a set of shared, albeit often concealed, social guidelines are used (Hochschild, 1983:268). According to Hochschild, ‘feeling rules’ are what guide the process of emotion work. They tell us ‘what to feel, when to feel, where to feel ... and how strong our emotions can be’ (ibid.).

During fieldwork, I found that many church wives actively endeavour to ‘manage’ or ‘change’ their emotions in negotiation with ‘feeling rules’ about how their role and everyday life in ministry should be experienced (Elliot and Umberson, 2008:404). As Wikan discovered various individuals engaged in a constant struggle to ‘match their emotional expression’ to strict community norms (Reddy, 2001:115), so I have identified ministry contexts which require one to ‘induce or suppress feeling’ (Hochschild, 1983:7), to reflect the appropriate disposition or ethos of minister, church or community.

Emotion and control: the path to respectability

We have seen that women are often viewed as the psychologically weaker sex, due in part to the fact that they are characterised as more ‘emotional.’ However, those same virtues which often exclude women from authoritative positions in society can also provide their path to respectability (as in Abu-Lughod, 2000:119). In the evangelical community, controlling the exhibitions of one’s emotions is an honourable virtue, and can be the very thing that affords church wives credibility. Emily told me how she dealt with emotions which she did not ‘welcome’:

I would filter my emotions really carefully. Generally speaking, I acknowledge emotions but I don’t accept them. Whenever I experience an emotion which I don’t welcome, I find that very often there’s a Bible verse which will help me handle it and dissolve it.

For Emily, biblical discourses acted as a powerful ‘emotional filter’, revealing the truth that regardless of whether or not people appreciate your efforts, you continue to do your duty before God. Age and experience also helped Emily to sift through unprofitable emotions, helping her to understand more about people’s opinions and expectations:
People's reactions and responses are like the weather; you're thankful for a nice sunny day, but you know the sun will not always shine. When you get a wet day, you don't take it personally. Equally, I know with my own emotions that there are times when I will feel something quite strongly and... six months down the road it's gone, and so I don't take my emotions too seriously.

The painted face: calmness in conflict
Hochschild’s example of the ‘smiling helpfulness of the flight attendant, who takes abuse and does not get riled’ describes the way in which people might be obligated to produce appropriate emotions ‘on behalf of their employer’ (Bennett Moore, 2002:129). It is not difficult to draw parallels with a ministerial career, where clergy wives are often expected to emanate calmness and collectedness throughout difficult periods in church life – for the sake of the Church and its members:

...you learn to paint a face on, it's not that you're a false person but that, for the sake of everybody, you have to put on a brave face sometimes.

Harriet was telling me about the opposition she and her husband faced when they came into a new church, ‘lively and different, wanting to bring the church forward.’ Harriet recounted instances when church members shouted abuse at her husband, publically accusing him of various offences. However, Sam decided that ‘the whole leadership would say nothing’ in response. So, when Harriet tried to serve tea to an individual and they said, ‘stuff you, you're not serving my tea’, Harriet was forced to smile and say, ‘no problem.’ She viewed this response as being obedient to the will of God, and that as a result, things in the church began to change:

It just shows you, if you do what God asks you to do, that He will change the situation around. Those people have been revealed for who they are, and it took some time, but church is changing, and it's been really good.

In situations of confrontation and dissonance, concealment of one's emotions is praised as a path of obedience to God, which dissipates conflict and minimises damage to the church. As Emma put it:

As women we are emotional, but it’s also good to try to control it. It's really hard, but it's something I will try to learn to do. It could stop situations from escalating; it can keep things the right size. Emotion can really magnify things, you know.

The cost of emotion management: emotional dissonance
Although emotion work does contribute to social stability in the evangelical community, the ‘giving and receiving of emotion work is not always a smooth transaction’ (Bolton, 2000:582). Harriet recalled an instance where a friend ‘manhandled’ her into the office, so that she would not hear the accusations directed towards her husband. She described this act as saving her from losing her self-control and acting out of turn. When Veronica’s husband was falsely accused of wrongdoing by a church member, she too described what Hochschild called ‘surface acting’ (1983:134) – faking the necessary emotional display in certain social situations – as excruciatingly difficult (Byrne, Morton and Dahling, 2011):

I'm the sort of person that, if somebody said something, my face would show it. Someone who was giving Dave a hard time came up to the house to see me, and went, “You can't meet my eyes.” I said, “No, I can't. I can't believe what you're doing.” And they said, “I'm sorry, but this happened, do you believe me now?” I looked at them and went, “Well, I have to believe you”, and they went, “but your eyes don't say it.” And I said, “I know”.

Veronica explained that she felt it would be like lying to herself and being untrue to her upbringing to pretend that nothing was wrong:

I couldn't hide it, because, though my parents weren't Christians, they would have brought you up to tell the truth ... Telling lies was bad, so that would be one of the things I find very difficult.

By engaging in this emotion work, Veronica was experiencing a sense of ‘emotive dissonance’ (Hochschild, 1983:90) – a ‘disconnect between what one feels and expresses’ (Byrne, Morton and Dahling, 2011). She began to feel false and estranged from her own real feelings and the constant effort to ‘maintain the façade of the appropriate emotional display’ was just too stressful and difficult (ibid.).

Conclusion
This article has focused upon the important role emotions play in the construction of female identity among evangelical ministers’ wives in Northern Ireland, an often neglected group of people within anthropological literature (Bailie, 2003:235). My approach, based on empathy, subjectivity and open dialogue between the anthropologist and informant, has attempted to raise consciousness about and to better understand the ‘inner world’ of evangelical women (Ferraro and Andreattta, 2009:83).

The study has also drawn attention to the somewhat ambivalent historical relationship between
evangelical tradition and emotionalism. As an 'imagined' community, evangelicalism encompasses a variety of groupings and denominations (Bartholomew, 2003:12), but I have pointed to key aspects of shared evangelical belief, life and practice, which have a significant impact upon the religious and social worlds of individuals. The evangelical tendency to associate women with emotionalism, as a means of keeping them subservient to men, implicates gendered discourses about emotions 'in the play of power' (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990:15). While some informants viewed themselves as weaker and unfit for leadership as a result of being more susceptible to their emotions, others viewed this idea as extremely harmful and damaging, seeing being in touch with one's emotion as a mark of strength, good leadership and a Christ-like nature.13

An examination of various personal narratives has uncovered a spectrum of powerful emotions experienced by church wives in day-to-day ministries, such as isolation, loneliness, frustration and disappointment. These, I have argued, are shocking on paper precisely because they are often hidden from view. The notion of emotion management has helped to convey the difficulties involved for ministers' wives in controlling, filtering and concealing their emotions – to bring them into line with evangelical 'feeling rules', obtain respectability, and maintain the social order. However, the positive effects of this process do not take away from the difficulties of emotional work; many informants found feigning a 'necessary emotional display' (Byrne, Morton and Dahling, 2011) a task which resulted in 'emotional dissonance' (Hochschild, 1983:90).

References


Most well-known studies of evangelicalism have been conducted in the United States (e.g. L. Sweet's (1997) 'Evangelical tradition in America' or S. Gallagher's (2003) 'Evangelical identity and gendered family life.' The three main contributions to the study of evangelicals in a Northern Irish context are 'Not of this world' by G. Jordan (2001), Fran Porter's book 'Changing women, changing worlds' (2002) and S. Bailie's 2002 study 'Evangelical women in Belfast.'

There are some exceptions. Those publications by Jordan (2001), Porter (2002), Bailie (2002) and Daniel and Mitchell (2011), all provide examples of studies of evangelicalism that are situated firmly within the lived worlds of Northern Irish evangelicals.

This book, which details the history and development of the Evangelical Alliance, is named after its the original motto in 1846, which states, 'we are one body in Christ.'

My choice of informants represents this broad spectrum of individual personalities, congregations and denominations within the evangelical tradition.

'Complementarianism' is the theological viewpoint that men and women are essentially equal, but they are created to fulfill different roles and responsibilities in marriage, family and church life, which complement one another.

1 Timothy 2: 14: 'And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result.' (New Living Translation). In this letter to Timothy, Paul states that he does not allow women to teach or have authority over men. The reason he gives for this is that Eve was deceived first by Satan in the garden of Eden by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This verse is often used as support by complementarians for their argument that women should not be involved in church leadership or be allowed to teach the Scriptures to men.

Graham is a middle-aged Christian counsellor with over twenty years' experience of supporting clergy families.

Another lady, Cheryl, shared this opinion. In her mind, women can sometimes take the 'easy opinion by not taking on leadership positions and just taking on catering duties etc.' Her opinion is that 'it's important for all to be aware of God's gifting to us as individuals.'

As Emma put it: Church is ... where your friends are, it's where your family can be, sometimes your workmates are there. It overlaps in a lot of areas of your life so ... it's really difficult to detach from it.

One verse she mentioned as acting as a filter for negative emotions, was Luke 17:7-10: 'So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have done only our duty.'

Informants who viewed this idea as damaging were mostly from the traditional denominations, as opposed to the smaller, independent groupings.

Notes:

1 This paper is derived from the author's MA dissertation, 'Desperate Church wives: experiencing conflict, negotiating gender and managing emotion in Christian community' which was awarded the highest mark for MA theses in Social Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast in 2011.

2 This term to describe my informants will be used interchangeably with others, such as 'church wife', 'pastor/youth pastor's wife' 'associate/assistant minister's wife', 'minister's wife' and 'clergy wife'. They are all different terms used to describe the female spouses of part-time and full time employees of the church.

3 Most well-known studies of evangelicalism have been conducted in the United States (e.g. L. Sweet's (1997) 'Evangelical tradition in America' or S. Gallagher's (2003) 'Evangelical identity and gendered family life.' The
Creating Reciprocal Relationships within the Mumming Community

Threase Finnegan*

Abstract: This article is taken from the undergraduate thesis entitled ‘Reciprocity within mumming and the reciprocal relationships in the tradition of Irish traditional music in the Aughakillymaude mumming group’. This thesis won the William Wilde prize for the best undergraduate thesis in the Department of Anthropology at NUI Maynooth this year. The following article examines how important reciprocity is for creating and maintaining social relationships. It uses the example of the mumming community in Aughakillymaude, County Fermanagh to show how reciprocity is fundamental for mummers to maintain their relationships with their musicians, the public and nature.

Keywords: Reciprocity, tradition, mumming, Irish traditional music

‘They had a kind of exchange system, or rather one of giving presents that must ultimately either be reciprocated or given back’

Transactions of the New Zealand Institute
Mauss

The idea of reciprocity among different groups is focused on in Marcel Mauss’ ‘The Gift’ (1990). Mauss uses the quote above from Colenso (no year) to describe how the Maori people exchanged gifts, in other words examining the reciprocal relationship between people and gifts, and how these gifts build and strengthen people’s relationships with one another. This article is going to look at reciprocal relationships within the tradition of mumming. Mumming involves the performance of Irish folk drama along with traditional Irish music. The tradition of mumming was brought to Ireland from England during the plantations in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but has since been adapted by Irish mummers into the tradition of mumming we recognise in Ireland today. It involves groups of mummers masking themselves in straw costumes and performing the ‘mumming play’, primarily on Saint Stephen’s Day (26th of December).

Along with the performance of the mumming play, mumming incorporates other traditions from Irish history, such as the celebrating of the harvest and giving thanks at the end of each year. There are three reciprocal relationships at work within the mumming community: between mummers and nature, the public and the musicians. Firstly, I examine the mummers relationship with nature as this yields an insight into how mumming has developed. I will examine Carrier’s (1995) definition of alienable and inalienable goods, where we will look at mumming as an inalienable good in relation to the mummer’s relationship with the public. I will then turn my attentions to the reciprocal relationship between the mummers and the musicians. By examining it in this manner, we observe that without the mummers’ reciprocal relationship with the musicians, none of the other relationships could occur, therefore showing that musicians are central to the tradition of mumming. Before we examine the relationships at work in the mumming community, we will briefly look at the site where fieldwork for this article was conducted.

Fieldwork for this article was completed at the Aughakillymaude (locally pronounced ACK-LA-MADD) mumming centre, Derrylin, County Fermanagh. I took part in several activities organised by the Aughakillymaude mummers, such as a number of straw costume making workshops, where I met people who had stories about mumming, which they were more than willing to share with me. I was invited to take part in these activities by the Aughakillymaude mumming centre coordinator, Jim Ledwith. Conversations I had with Jim are the source of a large amount of my mumming knowledge. It was through Jim that I met people such as John Frearson, the head of the Bedford Morris dancers from England, who told me a great deal about music within mumming and the importance of the musician in the mumming community. With this field site in mind, I now turn to the relationship between mummers and nature, as this is the most basic relationship displayed within the mumming community.

We begin with the reciprocal relationship between mummers and nature, as it shows the origins of mumming traditions in Ireland and how they developed. Mummers use natural produce, such as straw and oats, to enhance the performance of the mumming play. Before the mummers go out mumming, they make straw costumes from either oat or barley straw. Patrick Murphy, from Fermanagh, showed me the traditional way of making straw hats and costumes, which he told me he had learned from an older generation of his family, who also made straw costumes for mummers. On Saint Patrick’s Day of each year, the mummers burn their straw hats to bring ‘a memory of the past year’s harvest into winter’ (Glassie, 1975: 100). The hats are also burned as a symbol of reciprocity. The mummers harvested the oats to make the hats, which grew due to the good growing conditions during the summer. Once the hats are used, they are burned to give the ashes back to the earth in the hopes of having another good growing season and harvest. We can also see the idea of giving back to the
earth in the festival known by the Aughakillymaude mummers as 'The Burning of John Barleycorn'.

One festival I attended at the Aughakillymaude mumming centre was 'The Burning of John Barleycorn' in the middle of September. This is widely known as a Celtic tradition, but has been adapted by the Aughakillymaude mummers. This shows that the Aughakillymaude mummers are grateful to nature and reciprocate with it by burning 'John Barleycorn'. The Aughakillymaude mummers build the figure of 'John Barleycorn' using grasses, reeds, sally rods and straw to make the figure of a man. The burning of wicker men dates back to Celtic times when a large wicker man was built and filled with slaves, women and children, and then sacrificed to the gods by burning it. In 'Caesar’s Commentaries on the Gallic War', translated by Rice-Holmes in 1908, the burning of a wicker man is documented:

They also hold... state sacrifices... they have colossal images, the limbs of which, made of wicker-work, they fill with living men and set on fire. They regard it as more acceptable to the gods to punish those who are caught in the commission of theft, robbery, or any other crime; but in default of criminals, they actually resort to the sacrifice of the innocent. (Caesar 1908: 183-184).

During the festival I attended, the figure of 'John Barleycorn' was not allowed to be burned in a nearby field due to health and safety regulations, so it was burned on the grounds of the mumming centre. This illustrates the impact of modern society on the tradition as the ashes are not given back to the ground, such as occurs with the burning of the straw hats. It is more of a symbolic practice rather than actually giving the ashes back to the earth. It is important that this be noted as it shows us that even though the tradition cannot be carried out in full, due to modern laws, it is still practiced to ensure that the mummers show their gratitude to nature. By looking at the relationship between mummers and nature, we can see that reciprocity comprises its basis. The mummers hope that this reciprocation ensures prosperous harvests, good weather the following year and a good growing season. Having examined the most basic reciprocal relationship within the mumming community, between mummers and nature, we will now look at how the mummers reciprocate with their audience and the public in general.

After the performance of the mumming play the character of 'Miss Funny' or as she is more commonly known around Cavan and Fermanagh, 'Biddy Funny', collects the money from the audience. During my fieldwork, Jim told me the rhyme 'Biddy Funny' says while collecting money for the Aughakillymaude mummers: 'Here comes I 'Biddy Funny', With me long leather bag and me feet all funny, If I don't get money I'll send you all to your grave'. When mummers collect money from their audience, they hold what is known around Cavan and Fermanagh as a 'Join' or a 'Spraoi'. This is where the mummers use some of the money collected to hold a dance for the people who donated money to them. Typically, a 'Join' would consist of traditional music performed by the mummer’s musicians, and as Henry Glassie states in his work 'All Silver and No Brass; An Irish Christmas Mumming', that 'cigarettes, tea and cakes, and a half barrel of stout' were served (Glassie, 1975: 99). All the people in the community that the mummers visited and collected money from are invited to the 'Join'. The mummers do this to give something back to the community who gave generously to them. Whilst doing my fieldwork in Aughakillymaude, an elderly woman who was taking a tour of the mumming centre explained one incident to me where a mummer did not give back to the community:

There was a mummer, and he was married. When he was out mumming one night he saw a curly haired little boy and wished he had his own son. When the mumming was over, he didn’t hold a join for the people and because of that, he never had his little curly haired boy. That’s the power of the mummers for you.

What has been expressed here by the informant is that people believe that if the money given to the mummers is not reciprocated, the ‘power’ of the mummers will be inflicted upon the person responsible. Having looked at the way in which mummers reciprocate directly with the public, I now examine how the public may use the idea of the mummers in their everyday lives, once they themselves have reciprocated with the mummers. I begin by examining some examples of how informants used the idea of the mummers.

During one of the tours of the mumming centre, Jim mentioned that the mummers sometimes scared the children, but only with the permission of their parents. Once the parents reciprocated with the mummers, the parents were then allowed to use the mummers as a threat if their children misbehaved. As soon as this was said, three elderly women, around sixty to eighty years of age, agreed by nodding their heads.

One was particularly vocal about the subject, saying:

I remember the wran boys¹ coming round to the house one evening at Christmas and they terrified all of us, even the littlest ones. The parents would use them then after that if we ever did anything bold, they’d say, “I’ll get the wran boys”.

This demonstrates the effect the mummers had, even after the play had been reciprocated. This can be related to James G. Carrier’s (1995) concept of alienable and inalienable goods. According to Carrier, an inalienable object is one that is ‘associated with a person, a possession [is] part of the self, somehow attached, assimilated to, or set apart from the self’ (Carrier 1995: 24). In relation to exchange transactions, mumming in particular, we can say that the mumming play is inalienable from the mummers who performed it. It is
not attached in a physical sense, but bears remembrance of the mummers, because they have performed it. Alienable goods, however, are more formal than inalienable goods. Carrier (1995: 27) refers to them as objects, which are not viewed in a personal manner by the owner, but are seen rather as commodities.

The mumming play is not seen as a commodity, but is seen rather as entertainment and the passing on and upholding of a tradition. There is a relationship created between the mummers and the observers of the play the moment the mummers enter a person's house. However, this relationship only becomes a reciprocal relationship when the audience gives the mummers money for their performance and the mummers in turn hold a mummers ball for the people who have donated to them. If the money given by the public is reciprocated it means that there is a positive connection with the giver and the receiver in relation to the item received. We can relate this to the mumming play and the parents involved in scaring their children. By the parents reciprocating with the mummers in the form of money, tea, sandwiches and a variety of other commodities, they then receive the right to use them to scare their children from the mummers. Oftentimes people may use them to scare the children whether they have reciprocated with the mummers or not, but it creates a relationship where the gift has been reciprocated and both the play and the mummers still remain, in a very real sense, with the observers and the children. With the relationship between the mummers and the public examined, I wish now to turn to an examination of the reciprocal relationship mummers have with their musicians, which enables them to establish relationships with both nature and the public.

The relationship between mummers and musicians is quite complex and shows the extent that mummers will go to in order to keep the tradition alive. On one of my first visits to the Aughakillymaude mumming centre, while doing fieldwork, I went on a tour, led by Jim and the ‘Beleek women’s group’ from County Fermanagh. While Jim was giving the tour, one woman recalled when the mummers used to visit her house when she was a child:

> The music was the best part; they were amazing musicians so they were. I remember an accordion player and he used to come round to us with the mummers and he’d play a polka or two, something for the dancers to dance to.

This led me to believe that within mumming groups, the musician plays for the dancer and does not play for musical purposes solely, but is needed for the ‘dancers to dance to’, and nothing more. However, Jim then interjected, saying ‘Yes, but if there’s no musician, there’s no mummers’. This led me to think that although the musician is needed solely for ‘the dancer to dance to’, without them there would be no dancing, which is central to the mumming play. The idea of a mumming group without a musician was brought up during another tour of the mumming centre.

One elderly woman from the Cavan Active Age Group recalled a night where the musician’s musician was sick and the mumming group could not go mumming without music:

> My father was in with the wran boys. One night they were going out and the musician was sick, so me father was left carrying a gramophone around all night. You wouldn’t be without the music.

This illustrates the necessity of the musician in the mumming group. The mumming group in question was so desperate for music; one member of the group endured the weight of a gramophone for the night, so the dancers had music to dance along to. This seems like an extreme length for a group to go to in order to have music and it poses the question, why did the mumming group not get a ‘replacement’ musician for the night? As I continued my fieldwork, I had a conversation with John Frearson, head of the Bedford Morris Men from Bedfordshire in England, and he helped me understand exactly how important the musician is within the mumming group.

I attended a performance by ‘John’s Morris Men’ at the Aughakillymaude mumming centre in late September. After the performance, I had a conversation with him about musicians and the mumming play. One question I asked was: ‘What do you do if a musician can’t make it to do a play?’ After a pause, John replied, ‘You can always find someone who is willing to put on a costume and say a few lines in a play, but you need to be able to play an instrument to play music’. Obviously, the musician who was left carrying the gramophone earlier could not play an instrument, so he was left to be the bearer of music, but not as a musician. During a conversation I had with Jim, he told me ‘traditional music is very important in mumming as it keeps people listening’. Therefore, it is not simply any music that can be played with Irish mumming, as the type of Irish dancing performed by the mummers requires traditional Irish music. We can refer back to a quote, taken earlier from Jim, that: ‘if there’s no musician, there’s no mummers’. This shows the importance, of not only the musician in the mumming group, but also the type of music played: traditional music.

A few months into my fieldwork, Jim asked me to accompany the Aughakillymaude mummers to an Arts Festival weekend, as one of their musicians could not make it. I agreed to attend, but the festival organisers subsequently canceled the trip. However, on being asked to attend this festival as a musician, I asked Jim if there were any particular ‘tunes’ I needed to learn to accompany the mummers. He shook his head and said ‘No, not at all’. I was surprised by this as I have often been asked to play music to accompany dancers at public performances and am often asked to play specific tunes. This reinforced something I had heard during my conversation with John Frearson. He jokingly said, ‘musicians don’t actually know the tunes,
they hear them once or twice then give them a go and are usually able to play them'. He then turned to the concertina player in his mumming group who laughed and nodded his head in agreement.

These statements can be taken in two ways, the first being that it is presumed that musicians have a wide array of tunes and can ‘play anything’. Alternatively, we can also take this to mean that musicians can be given a tune, with no prior knowledge of it, and be expected to learn and play it instantly. This shows the reverence mummers have for musicians, as they know the musical ability of the musician, and believe that the musician is of such a high quality that all they have to do is hand them a tune and they will instantly be able to play it. Mumming would not work as a social interaction without music. The fact that one mummer endured the weight of a gramophone for an entire night shows exactly how important music is within the tradition of mumming. It is in this reciprocal relationship between mummers and musicians that the other reciprocal relationships between nature and the public are built in the mumming community. The reciprocity between mummers and musicians must be examined in order to show how the relationship, which is fundamental to the survival of mumming, is maintained.

One way the mummers show appreciation to the musicians is through the splitting of the mumming ‘pot’. I spoke with John Frearson about how the mumming ‘pot’ was split, in other words, how the mummers divided up the money earned amongst themselves.

John: When the mumming was over, the mummers would split the pot. But the musician always got half the pot, and the other six or seven mummers split the rest of the money between themselves.

Interviewer: Why did they give the musician half the pot?

John: Because without music the mummers are lost. Especially the aniter dancers and the Morris dancers because their dances rely on the timing of the music… Even after buying a new shirt and boots for the next mumming outing, the musician still made twice the agricultural wage, at that time.

The idea that the musician made a ‘wage’ from mumming is something that will be examined further. In ‘Music Grooves’ by Charles Keil and Steven Feld (1994), the authors discuss the recording of the album ‘Graceland’ by Paul Simon and a group of South African musicians. They explain that Paul Simon paid the musicians: ‘top price plus standard royalty cuts, gave music credits to his co writers, and then toured the world with the participating groups plus black South African musicians’ (Keil and Feld 1994: 242). They continue by stating that the musicians used to record the South African influenced music on the album were not simply ‘wage laborers… [as] one could not find musicians in New York or London to do what they do because they are… the bearers and developers of specific musical traditions and idioms’ (Keil and Feld 1994: 242). This example can be related to the relationship between mummers and musicians. The musician cannot simply be replaced by anyone, while a wage labourer can be replaced easily. To replace a musician in a mumming group, the person must be able to play an instrument and play it to the standard required by the mummers. It should be noted here that Traditional Irish music is not a written tradition, but very much an aural one. As a result, the tunes exist in a very real sense in the musician. The money given to the musician by the mummers is not simply a wage; it is also a way of reciprocating and showing appreciation to the musician for providing their musical services. The way in which the reciprocal relationship between mummers and musicians is carried out shows exactly how important the musician is within the mumming group, and how central they are in keeping the tradition of mumming alive.

In conclusion, I can be said that the reciprocal relationship between the mummers and the musician is the most important relationship within the mumming community. It is only through the maintenance of this relationship that the mumming group can actually exist and partake in other reciprocal relationships, as has been outlined, with nature and the public. Through the use of fieldwork and conversations with different mummers, I have arrived at this conclusion. The mummers have shown us the central role of the musician within the mumming group and the importance of reciprocity within mumming communities. Reciprocity is fundamental, not only for functional relationships within society, but it is vital for the survival of traditional activities such as traditional Irish music and mumming.

References:

Notes:
1 ‘Wran boys’ is the local pronunciation for ‘wren boys’. Mummers are known as wren boys on St Stephen’s Day. This is because on St Stephen’s day, the mummers bring with them a small child dressed as a wren to symbolise the wren that gave away St Stephen’s location to the guards who were searching for him.
Abstract: It is in opposition to an ‘other’ that one’s own identity is created. For the people of Runkethgama, returning to the small Sinhalese village in northern Sri Lanka means re-identifying with their community and their roles within it, after thirty years absence, having fled the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). I argue that in making a place for themselves, the cultivation of reclaimed land celebrates ‘Sinhaleseness’ through food harvested, cooked and eaten together. However, as the integration of foreign aid and Tamil-produced food compromises the definition of ‘Runkethgama’, food takes on the ability to transform its prescribed ethnic identity through the process of cooking. At temples, food transcends locality, moving from a conflicted secular social space to spiritual neutrality. From these processes the market becomes a new trading arena between Tamil and Sinhalese farmers, where kinship created through producing, cooking and eating food extends between strangers.

Keywords: Kinship and food; market trading; constructing identity; Sri Lanka

Introduction
The air is so humid I can almost taste the smell of sweet tea wafting in from the shop. The corrugated iron walls of the single-roomed home I’m sitting in radiate heat at me and I think how grateful I am for the juicy kos fruit Akka, my adoptive elder sister, has cut up for us to share. As I take my first bite I smile appreciatively at Akka, who absent-mindedly rubs her raised belly with one hand, holding the fruit to her mouth with the other. She is not even four months gone and although she wears a loose fitting dress I can see her belly is already starting to swell. Since coming to Runkethgama I have seen people bring Akka food every day, as is customary in Sri Lanka when a woman is expecting. I’ve been feeling unsure whether to offer food, but in this moment of tropical lethargy I realise how comfortable in the daily life of this village I am becoming. I tell Akka I’m going to the shop tomorrow before I come to Runkethgama and ask what she’d like to eat. She grins coyly, still amused by how I speak Sinhalese with an English accent, but quickly looks down, shaking her head. ‘Oh no’ she says, ‘you don’t have to bring me anything’. ‘I want to’, I say, ‘but I don’t want to bring you something you don’t like’. Again, she avoids eye contact, shaking her head, but there is a lingering smile on her face. I change tact; ‘Fine’, I say, ‘I won’t bring you anything; just tell me what your favourite food is’. She looks up, now grinning broadly. ‘Thosai’ she says. And I’m shocked.

Understanding food’s ethnic role in Sri Lanka as singular or static would be insufficient in explaining how Akka’s favourite food is Thosai, a ‘Tamil’ savoury pancake. Akka is Sinhalese, like the 120 families living in Runkethgama. I look around the corrugated iron room I’m in, thinking of the hardship she has endured, becoming ever more bewildered by her choice. Akka is sitting on an elevated sheet of corrugated iron, held up by sticks and covered in cardboard and clothes; a make-shift bed for her family. Pots, cooking utensils and bags labelled ‘A gift from the American people’ are stored neatly on the floor beneath, and sitting by the door there is a bucket of water which was collected from the well earlier this morning. I am studying the people of Runkethgama eight months after they returned to their village in the Vavuniya district of northern Sri Lanka. In war-time terms, they are a small Sinhalese village in the middle of ‘Tamil Sri Lanka’. After months of threats, robberies and assaults, the entire village was forcibly evicted from their homes by the LTTE. They walked to the town of Vavuniya, twenty miles away, where they and hundreds like them were sheltered in a Buddhist temple for three months before being relocated to Medawachchiya, a further twenty miles down the country. Thirty years later they return, greeted by a jungle that has grown over the rubble, which used to be their homes.

‘Thosai?’ I repeat. ‘Thosai’ Akka replies, visibly worried she’ll have to explain something simple to me again. In this article I will demonstrate it is not only the identity of the food which is forged through its preparation, but that of the person cooking and those they are cooking for. In Runkethgama this process is surrounded by notions of re-establishing community and recruiting membership. I will continue to argue that if the ‘ethnicity’ of a dish is fluid and can be transformed from ‘Tamil’ to ‘Sinhalese’, what becomes significant is the relatedness that comes from the act of cooking itself. These transformations will be exemplified with the act of dunsul, donating food at temple. As Carsten describes, ‘The process between cooking and eating in the house is at the heart of creating connectedness between kin. The hearth, and who one eats with, are as important in the formation of the blood through life as the blood that one is born

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with’ (1995:108). Essentially, sharing food prepared in the home cultivates kinship, and as Akka places another piece of kos fruit in my hand, she is extending the shared identity of Runkethgama to me.

**Lunch: From cultivation to the community**

Each morning, after work around the village is done, the women of Runkethgama prepare food for themselves and their families. They congregate around each other’s houses to eat and today was the turn of Archie Amma, my adoptive grandmother, to host proceedings. After everyone has plated up their food, a simultaneous outcry of how much they have bought and how little they feel like eating erupts. Archie Amma sidles up to inspect the leftover food. ‘Whose kekiri is this?’ she asks. ‘It’s mine’ a woman replies. ‘Eat it! I’ve cooked too much; it’ll only be wasted.’ ‘I bought mellum; finish that as well’ another woman chirps. And together, the women get up and help themselves to more food, enthusiastically pointing and urging each other to eat. As the well-practised commotion settles, Archie Amma comes and sits next to me. ‘What have you brought me today?’ she asks. ‘Parata again’ I reply. ‘Isn’t she good?’ she turns to the group to exclaim. ‘Everyday she brings her Archie Amma parata to eat’. Agreeing nods and murmurs of approval fill the room as I unpack the lunch I bought from town that morning and hand Archie Amma a parata. I start to tear my single parata, thinking jubilantly that I’ve managed to avoid my usual harassment today, when someone calls out ‘Is that all you’re eating?’ Instantaneously, everyone is on their feet, pouring every bit of remaining curry onto my plate.

These daily patterns of exchange enlighten the behaviours surrounding food in Runkethgama. The unspoken courtesy of allowing everyone to serve themselves their own food first enables equal distribution within the group, meaning no one is left until last. This absence of ranking not only pertains to the distribution within the group, meaning no one is left last. This absence of ranking not only pertains to the notion of kinship, but also equalises everyone generationally. Archie Amma is seventy-one years old, and is the eldest sister of my gatekeeper, Soloman mama (uncle). One of Soloman mama’s daughters, Thusa, is amongst the congregation of women. As her eldest aunt on her father’s side, Thusa should call Archie Amma, nanda, however she addresses her as akka, sister. Commensality at lunch demonstrates extending kinship, as Carsten (1995) explains; ‘If the kinship of those who live in one house is to a large extent predicted on the fact that they eat from one hearth, the giving of cooked food within the compound can be seen as the construction of a limited form of commensality in this unit’ (1995:166).

Jenkins (1996) suggests one should ‘look at how the membership of ethnic groups is recruited, rather than simply assuming an obvious process of birth-and-death reproduction’ (1996:92). The routine of sharing food amongst the women of Runkethgama is a representation of a community re-building itself. By allowing this ‘free-for-all’ to take place, they are re-establishing a social order abandoned thirty years ago. Solidarity through stable history is lost, so every woman, regardless of age, must be reintroduced and re-accepted into the community through eating ‘Sinhalese’ food.

One morning whilst collecting sesame, a group of elderly women commented that, ‘This food is prepared by our own labour’, instilling it with the values of the farmer as they have invested time, labour and money into its production. The trade of food produced on a small scale betrays a lot about the feelings an individual holds, as selling something signifies the worthiness of the buyer to possess such a personal and intimately sentimentalisated item. As Marx’s (1959-1961) labour theory of value states the value of an object is solely dependent on the labour expended to produce it and cannot be exchanged in the same way monetary value can. An item of this sort, therefore, can never be completely abstracted from its source. As Mauss (1966) explains with the case of Maori gift exchange, ‘one gives away what is in reality a part of one’s nature a substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone’s spiritual essence’ (1966:10). One woman told me ‘The foods we grow ourselves in our garden and consume are considered to be traditional Sinhalese dishes’. These foods are embedded with the producer’s values and ideals and have been infused with ethnic identity. This is because these foods have been sacrificed for, not only in the arduous and stressful process of harvesting crops, but also through the lasting trauma resultant of thirty years of fighting to reclaim their land.

Svašek (2005) claims ‘medical/psychiatric models of trauma … have ignored the social and political dimensions of trauma and have disregarded the fact that trauma itself is a culturally and historically specific interpretation of human suffering’ (2005:195). She uses the concept of ‘chosen trauma’ to present intergenerational transmission of pain and how these ‘extremely shocking experiences … have been made politically relevant’ (2005:196). In Runkethgama, high value is placed on land older generations were persecuted for, but for which all generations feel they have suffered. This feeling of communal loss was explained to me by one young man who said, ‘There were a lot of people from the older generation who … had lived in the village for a long time; so now we have become part of the village, because we have lived here for a long time as well’. Loss has been transformed to a political discourse and tool. According to Svašek, pride and esteem in produce occurs because the land has become an emotionally charged memorial space’ (2005:198) and ‘trauma victims – both survivors of terror and people who claim to have been indirectly affected – have used discourses and practices of collective victimhood in an attempt to gain political influence and claim compensation for their suffering’ (2005:196).
The ‘interplay of history, memory, emotions and politics’ (Svásék 1995:198) is particularly vibrant when older villagers recount about first leaving Runkethgama and Sheltering in a temple for three months with hundreds of other families, as my Soloman mama’s wife told me; ‘We all stayed together, us from Runkethgama. Even in the temple, we were together’. Experiences of fleeing have confused what being ‘Sinhalese’ is, as villagers equate being back in Runkethgama as producing ‘pure’ ‘Sinhalese’ ideals. We can see how ‘past feelings … are remembered and re-experienced in the present’ as they ‘empower(s) victims to … protect themselves (and) to identify themselves with other victims’ (Svásék 2005:200). Cooking food grown from land they associate as ‘Sinhalese’ and were denied right to for so many years evokes emotional memories of the past, so the food is not only ‘pure’, but infinitely healthier as I was told by one elderly man; ‘The foods that we eat, after cultivating ourselves, through our own labour is most tasty. And nutritious. It is much better than buying food from the shops. It’s good for you. It’s good for your health’. This not only demonstrates the pride people of Runkethgama feel in producing their own food, but also celebrates the ‘health’ of the ‘recovered’ nation.

We can see how ‘past feelings … are remembered and re-experienced in the present’ as it ‘empower(s) victims to … protect themselves, (and) to identify themselves with other victims’ (ibid). However, if being ‘Sinhalese’ means eating communally cooked food made from ingredients sourced from the immediate community, how could the addition of foreign aid be legitimate? I will now explore how rules of ‘pure Sinhaleseness’ are continually negotiated to incorporate ‘foreign’ food.

**Dinner: From ‘foreign’ to family**

The last bus out of Runkethgama leaves at five o’clock. As such, my last activity of the day is always helping Archie Amma start cooking dinner. She kindles a fire alongside one of the walls of her house so the flames are protected against the wind and herself from the intense sun by the overhanging roof. She stokes the fire and goes inside to cut up the **kekiri** she will be eating tonight. She squats on the floor and holds a machete upright using her toes and scores the **kekiri** into segments along the blade. Before taking the vegetable outside, she splashes oil into the clay pot from a tin labelled ‘A gift from the American people’. Intrigued, I follow Archie Amma outside, where she places the pot on the now thriving fire and stirs its contents with a coconut-shell spoon. ‘Do you know where America is? I ask Archie Amma. ‘No’ she replies without hesitation. ‘Do you know anything about it? What size it is, which language they speak, what ethnicity people are?’ I queried. She continues to shake her head, concentrating on the **kekiri**. After a moment she says, ‘I suppose it must be bigger than Sri Lanka, if they can give us all this food’. I ask what else she gets from America. ‘Well I don’t think it’s all from America, but we get given vegetable oil, flour, sugar, salt and rice from the World Food Programme. Some of it comes from India; I know where that is’.

Aid is inscribed with new meaning when moved from one context to another and cooked in the home. Donations from the World Food Programme transcend their original locality when integrated into the homes of Runkethgama and transform from ‘foreign’ to ‘local’ as they are cooked. This food is appropriate to consume as it has been localised, however if food sourced from outside the village can become local, then Runkethgama’s definition of ‘Sinhalese’ has shifted.

The dichotomy of ‘Sinhalese’ and ‘Tamil’ which had been so prevalent thus far has been replaced with a more open approach to food, allowing for a more neutral notion of commensality; as a group of middle-aged commented, ‘There is no difference. Sinhala and Tamil people both eat similar kinds of food’, ‘Anyone can eat the food’, ‘Everyone’s entitled to eat it without any racial difference’. Images of a cohesive and stable environment are created, extending the possibility of kinship across the boundary in a very Carsten-esque way. The progressive assertion ‘it does not matter what colour or race of the person or group we belong to, we all eat the same food without any difference’ which one old man made is being practised already in the capital town of the district. In food shops in Vavuniya, the first major town past the divide, it is evident that assumptions about affiliations of dishes with communities are secondary to the actual practice of food distribution. As a family business, all the staff of Vavuniya food shop *Thia Cool Spot* are Tamil, although they speak to me in perfect Sinhalese. The food sold in the shop is considered Tamil because it is the Tamil Amma (mother) who cooks, however, the ingredients are bought from the Muslim-run market, the single largest food supplier in the bustling town. The fish is sourced from Chettikulum by Muslim fishermen, defying notions of land rights and ownership of crops. The market can be seen to remove, transcend and displace identity previously attached to food. This enables the ethnicisation of food by the farmer to be overturned, and as such, demonstrates what I deem to be the second form of transformation which occurs in cooking in this district; food shifting from one ethnicity to another. Bourdieu (1986) comments that food tastes are not individual but are founded in relationships between social groups, forming an omnipresent solidarity. In Runkethgama, however, these ‘tastes’ are merely aesthetic instigating a superficial cohesion that offers no real substance. Invaluable as it is to have a point of social harmony, I would argue that ethnicised dishes have prevailed due to a lack of closure over three decades of instability and unease. Food ‘tastes’ represent the community as a whole, and are something to be grasped in times of crisis. One shop owner explained ‘Food is brought in from villages, cooked in homes, sold in shops’ demonstrating the fluid nature of rules
regarding ownership and entitlement. It is a clear illustration of how the commensality of hearth can be extended from family to community, and with the example of *dunsul*, it can be extended further; from community to deity.

**Dunsul: From daily diet to the divine**

I’m standing inside a make-shift marquee, desperately trying to dodge the constant stream of people rushing past me carrying vast barrels of juice, profusely apologising to those I’m too slow to avoid. I’m dazed by the buzzing activity issuing from the stall, with vibrantly coloured cups, clothes and Buddhist flags contrasting with the lofty white *pansala* (temple) in the distance. I’m at Anuradhapura for *Esala poya*, the Buddhist festival of the July full moon. Today there are 550,000 pilgrims packed under the penetrating sun, dressed in crisp white clothes, shuffling in herds, barefoot on the boiling concrete paths. In such intense heat this cool drink ‘stand’ is working furiously to keep up with the unrelenting demand. Groups of women sit near a towering pile of fruit, streaming gossip whilst peeling oranges and pulping pineapples with mechanical speed. Centre stall, the juice is added to water and sugar in containers that come up to my chest in height, stirred by men with whittled branches of trees. Up front, drinks are being poured with haste and empty cups cleaned quickly to hydrate the hordes of thirsty worshippers. But no money is exchanged, as this is an act of *dunsul*.

Through an examination of *dunsul*, the act of giving food charitably, I agree with Bourdieu that ‘ways of treating food, of serving, presenting and offering it ... are infinitely more relevatory than even the nature of the products involved’ (1986:193). Food can transcend its original locality in a holy context to the extent that it can be imbued with unique neutrality, which allows it to be shared freely with strangers without notions of kinship becoming strained. This is the second year *Runkethgama* has taken a dunsul to Anuradhapura since their thirty-year absence. ‘It fills me with a great feeling of pride’ Soloman *mama* tells me, ‘seeing everyone together, working. It makes me proud of how far we’ve come’. Every village has a *dunsul* committee who are responsible for collecting money from villagers to buy food. ‘There is no specific amount’ Soloman *mama* tells me; ‘The more wealthy give maybe five hundred or so rupees, but if the poor can only afford one rupee, that will also be accepted gratefully’. They pay a farmer for his crop ‘but the whole village comes down to pick the fruit themselves. That way it costs less’. The people of *Runkethgama* have invested their time, labour and money into gathering the fruit, again transforming food from being inanimate and passive to being imbued with the values of the Sinhalese village by whose residents it is harvested.

The food each village presents to worshippers is a representation of their dedication to Buddhism and as such becomes appropriate for ritual use. The transformation from profane to sacred occurs at the point of production, when for example, the oranges and pineapples are pressed by the women of *Runkethgama*. Through preparing and cooking the food on a holy site, the intention to change profanity is clear, and it is this willingness and desire to create a ritual identity, which allows for the transformation from ‘Sinhalese’ to sacred to occur.

The religious intention behind *dunsul* was made explicit when I asked Soloman *mama* told me people donated ‘Because of (their) religion’. He explained that in Buddhism there is said to be a great kindness to come from feeding someone else and so the people of *Runkethgama* ‘hold this want to perform *dunsul* in their very being’. I asked if Tamil people held events like *dunsul*, intrigued by religion’s apparent physical embeddedness. He replied ‘No, they don’t. But Tamil people come and eat and drink and go home happily’. ‘To *pansala*?’ I asked, bemused. ‘They are made more welcome than Sinhalese people’, Soloman *mama* replied. He explained that, ‘Because of the war, there is a greater appreciation that there is no difference between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim ... The hope is to be more peaceful with a Tamil man than even with a Sinhalese man. As we have seen, eating food grown and harvested by oneself uses labour and pride to create notions of self and community; cooking foreign foods in the home transcends global and national politics to emphasise kinship and togetherness at the point of consumption; and transforming the secular into the spiritual by willingness to overcome religious boundaries culminates in the embracing of Tamil culture in the deeply ‘Sinhalese’ site of Anuradhapura temple.

**Conclusion**

‘When we finally returned to Runkethgama’ Soloman *mama* somberly tells me, ‘it was to find thirty years of jungle covering our house. The (LTTE) had left only rumble, no doors, no windows, no roof; it was completely uninhabitable. I didn’t know what to do. My family had no place to sleep. All we could do was shelter under some banana leaves until the morning’. Later that evening, Soloman *mama* tells me, two Tamil families who lived nearby came to see him and his family. ‘We had brought nothing with us’ she tells me, ‘no pots to cook with, nor any food, so when they asked what we had eaten, we told them nothing’. Instantly the families rushed home and returned with flour, coconuts, rice, pots and other foodstuffs. ‘And that’s how we ate’ recounts Soloman *mama* about their first night back in *Runkethgama*, from the donated food of old neighbours.

Through discussing the examples of communally producing food and distributing it amongst neighbours to create kinship and solidarity, cooking foreign food in the home to rise above ethnic politics, and transforming
the secular to the spiritual by willingness to overcome religious boundaries, I hope to have demonstrated that the depersonalising and de-ethicising of food positively impacts on personal relationships in northern Sri Lanka. Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) states that ‘a people’s cuisine, or a particular food, often marks the boundary between the collective self and the other, for example, as a basis of discrimination against other people’ (1993:3), however, in the case of the village of Runkethgama, food allows for the transcendence of these ethnic conflicts. Appadurai (1988) explains national cuisines are constructs just like nations, so are free to be manipulated and adjusted. As the attitudes of the people of Runkethgama slowly change to incorporate ‘Tamil’ food into their daily diet, a shift in the values attached to food also occurs. If food can create ties of kinship between individuals, then, to echo Mauss (1966), how people relate to things (food) is a reflection of how people relate to each other. Therefore, if the ethicising of food can decrease, distinctions of race that fuelled the civil conflict can deplete through common habits of eating.

The growth of trade between small scale producers of Runkethgama and Muslim market-stall holders in Vavuniya may have a significant impact on both the economy and the changing opinion of the country as a whole. Taking a Marxian (1959-1961) perspective, production is the key aspect of the economy, and if one controls production, one can influence politics, people and land. Economy is embedded in and connected to other social relationships, exemplified in Runkethgama when one person’s crop is reaped by everyone from the village; this way the work is shared, no crop is wasted, and everyone is eligible for a free workforce when it their time to harvest. Sahlin (1974) explains that logically this co-operation should not happen as the inward-looking and selfish nature of households should push families away from each other. However, what obliges people to gather another’s harvest with no pay or immediate gain is the forces of kinship created through cooking and eating together. As Sahlin explains, a ‘transaction (the exchange of labour) is usually a momentary episode in a continuous social relation. The social relation exerts governance’ (1974:185-6).

Using Gudeman’s (2001) notion of ‘ethno-economics’, domestic economics is not governed by the market but affiliation and reciprocity. If trade growth continues, eventually there will be opportunity for equal distribution of depersonalised food throughout the country, allowing the small-scale traders of Runkethgama to use the domestic market in a way it has not been used before. People will be able to eat food sourced from different regions of the country due to the malleability of its identity, which could lead to ties of kinship being unknowingly created between strangers of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, equalising them, and helping reduce hostile feelings towards ‘the other’.

References
Believing in Belfast is Liam Murphy’s doctoral dissertation and is a fine scholarly book. Commentators of the Northern Ireland Troubles have tended to see religion as a cipher for dimensions of difference. Religious affiliation in Northern Ireland is a master status, which indicates political allegiance, occupation and cultural activity and much local research has concentrated on the investigation of such relationships. Indeed, my own research, examining links between religious affiliation and psychiatric diagnosis and hospitalisation, has revealed that depression is a more common diagnosis amongst protestants and psychoses amongst Catholics (Manktelow 2002). However this approach has relegated religion to the position of superstructure and resulted in a dearth of research examining religious beliefs of themselves. Murphy has rectified this imbalance by his commanding analysis of the nature of religious belief amongst charismatic communities in Northern Ireland. He draws on an extensive period of fieldwork in Belfast where he concentrated his research on two fellowships, one Catholic in North Belfast, the other Protestant in East Belfast. Members of both are middle class and professional with fellowship supplementing primary allegiance to their church of birth. Both institutions are also providers of social action programmes supported by Peace III European Union monies.

Murphy directs his considerable skills into neglected corners of evangelical ideological belief. He defines the term charismatic, drawn from Weberian social theory, as describing themes of renewal and purification with the power of the Holy Spirit moving to create unity. Murphy’s analysis of pre- and post-millennial dogma illuminates the foundations of charismatic belief.

Murphy’s fieldwork takes him beyond his two prime research sites into two megachurches at the heart of Belfast evangelism: Rev Ian Paisley’s Martyrs Memorial Church in East Belfast and Pastor James McConnell’s Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle in North Belfast. Murphy provides riveting and detailed accounts of his covert research excursions to both hugely popular Sunday church services. At Paisley’s church, such was his success at ‘passing’ that he achieves entry into the inner sanctum where Paisley invites him to kneel in prayer.

For the last two years, Northern Ireland has been enthralled by the trials of a successful dentist, Colin Howell, and his former lover, Hazel Stewart, now married to a police inspector, found guilty of the murders of their respective partners some twenty years ago. The crimes emerged only after Howell confessed to his second wife who called church elders to their home to hear his confession. Both Howell and Stewart were members of the tight fundamentalist world of North Antrim. In his newly published book on the double murders, Deric Henderson describes Stewart as ‘shallow and materialistic’ and Howell as ‘vain, sociopathic and narcissistic’. How such cold-blooded crimes could be perpetrated by ‘committed’ Christians and covered up for some eighteen years is worthy of anthropological investigation by such an informed scholar as Murphy.

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References


In recent years, for many Westerners, Africa has virtually become synonymous with crisis: political, economic, environmental and humanitarian. Given the potential for ‘crisis fatigue’, anyone noticing this title by Dr El-Tom could be forgiven for at first believing it to be just another exposé of institutionalised injustice from this bewilderingly complex continent. But one does not have to delve too far into it to discover a work which delivers something of more significance on several levels.

Based on a series of befittingly nomadic interviews, in which over an 8-month period the author pursued his subject through Darfur, Libya and Qatar, the book aims to expose the reader to the cultural background and political trajectory of Dr Khalil Ibrahim, founder and President of JEM (Justice and Equality Movement), the main anti-government rebel movement in Darfur, Sudan. Using a literary style which allows the main character to tell his own story, El-Tom incorporates a skilful crafting of
ethnographic enquiry into what is effectively the semi-autobiographical account of a contemporary liberation movement leader: a rare opportunity in itself.

As the book unfolds, we begin to see a man of multiple, often paradoxical, identities; a poor camel herder from the Zaghawan ethnic group, but connected to over 52 others, including Sultanates; as a child initially overlooked for education, yet endowed with incredible drive to overcome adversity. Gaining the academic success he so desired separated him from his herding roots, yet he often called on just that nomadic logic to find solutions in later life. Pursuing a medical profession in order to relieve the suffering he witnessed everywhere, he eventually turned to politics to achieve his goals, yet ironically found himself defending many different groups of Sudanese people against the very system of which he was a part. Despite years of attempts to change the balance of power in government from within, peaceful efforts proved unsuccessful and an armed and open rebellion ensued.

On another, more personal, level, the author charts a journey of his own life experience, ultimately leading to executive membership of JEM. A Northern Darfurian, El-Tom, in pursuit of his ethnographic data on Ibrahim, almost unexpectedly finds himself re-acquainted with the culture of the nation of his birth. Developed through the interplay of both insider and 'halfe' perspectives, the reader is presented with a multi-sensory insight into the diversity of ethnic tradition that is modern-day Sudan. Well-crafted descriptions of the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the author's own childhood warrant the obvious and unashamed longing he displays for this country: in so many ways a very distant land to the Ireland of his current domicile. Peppered with nomadic proverbs, sensitive portrayals of Sub-Saharan life and the tangible excitement of desert campfire encounters, El-Tom's writing successfully transports his reader to the exotic — a pull for many anthropologists, still.

Yet, interestingly, it also reads like a justification of the author's own political awakening, which parallels and ultimately intersects that of his subject, Dr Ibrahim.

What starts, then, as two separate ‘voices’ in the text, i.e. ethnographer and informant, somehow harmonizes in the final section of the book. Delivered as an appendix, El-Tom's translation into English of The Black Book: Imbalance of Power and Wealth in the Sudan' offers yet another significant dimension to this work: a gauntlet to a western readership. Originally written in Arabic and released illegally onto the streets of Khartoum in 2000, the Black Book was a disturbing, statistic-backed whistle-blowing claim that Sudan's Northern region, with only 5% of the population, disproportionally maintained control over the whole country. As El-Tom reports (p.230), in 2003, spurred on by further revelations of Northern hegemony, some of its authors took up arms against the government, culminating in the establishment of JEM as the main rebel protagonist in the Darfur Conflict.

Today's reader, when faced with such an array of unsettling statistics, is prompted to further engage with the topics — if only to desire more information. A sudden urge to re-read Evans-Pritchard's work on the Nuer and Azande of what is now the newly constituted country of Southern Sudan, BBC web searches for historical event timelines, photo journalist exhibitions, reports of Hollywood's championing of the victims of the on-going conflict and the International Criminal Court's war crime indictments all suddenly become necessary. Such was the effect on this reader!

If postmodern anthropology blurs the concept of boundaries, then this book, with its political boundary-defiant Zaghawans, its unconventional literary style and its reflexive insider/halfe fence-hopping, sits very well in that genre. Beyond that though, it defies being pigeon-holed into a typical category. It combines political, historical, conflict and biographical themes and for that alone will be of significance to many different scholars. As ethnography, it is interspersed with rich images and descriptions of nomadic life, philosophy and language. Perhaps, more subtly, it is the undercurrent of ethnographer angst and deeply felt tension at being both a displaced yet nostalgic insider and an objective yet politically active outsider that is sure to guarantee its postmodern appeal. But, ultimately, this book demands a human response, making it of interest to a wider-than-normal readership. As national boundaries are redrawn, and international and even celebrity focus shifts world attention repeatedly back to this region, one might echo the words of a photo-journalist who has spent years documenting the region's crisis: ‘the cost of doing nothing is one humanity can never afford’ (Reed, 2011).

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References


The genre of Flute bands in Northern Ireland is one which has been neglected somewhat in the fields of Ethnomusicology and Anthropology. While scholars such as Bryan (1995, 2000), Hastings (2003) and others have published to varying degrees on aspects of the subject, Bryan notes that there has been ‘remarkably little research on such a vibrant, cultural development’ (2000: p127). Flutes, Drums and
Loyal Sons fills a definite void in the scholarly work of the area. Ramsey's in depth study on the genre of Loyalist bands in Northern Ireland weaves through the complexities of relationships within the marching band genre in Northern Ireland, not only between the two main religious and political divides but also within various performing loyalist bands today. The success of the study lies in the rich ethnographic findings of Ramsey who joined the ranks of three differing County Antrim flute bands through the course of his research.

The reader follows the development of Ramsey's role as a researcher but also as a flute player in the different bands and the author gives us an inside glimpse of the tradition, rather than the relative framework which is presented each July in the media. The importance of the practice of communal music-making within the studied communities is very apparent throughout this work and the significance of belonging in these bands to their members is conveyed especially through the ethnographic explorations which span three chapters.


The subject of music and embodied identities is discussed in chapter two with Ramsey exploring the concepts of 'shared flow' (Turner, 1987; 134) and 'bodily resonance' (Blacking, 1977: 7) amongst others. The chapter draws on a wide span of ethnomusicalological writings which adds to the theoretical weight of the book. The author discusses the different paths through which his informants found their sense of embodied identity depending on social and class factors, thus re-framing the complexity of the musical field within which his research was based in Northern Ireland.

The history of parading in Ireland is documented in chapter three showing the vast array of influences on the tradition as well as the development of different types of flute bands in Northern Ireland – 'melody', 'part-music' and 'blood and thunder'. Ramsey states that 'Parading is a way of life' (p93) for these various performing groups. This statement is certainly validated in the following three chapters where Ramsey provides the reader with insights into three parading communities which each have their own views on parading, music, loyalty and identity.

The part-music band, Ballyclare Victoria Flute Band, is the focus of the first ethnographic case, and Ramsey documents the official competition route of such a part-music band in Northern Ireland today. The Ballyclare band are orchestral influenced and Ramsey writes of his initial induction into the band, being 'close to despair' (p104) while endeavouring to learn the music and being excluded from much of the band discourse. Emphasis on competition for this and like bands presents a different picture of 'loyalist bands'. While Ramsey notes the effectiveness of competition for older members of the group, declining interest amongst younger members is significant. Parading for this band is not a priority as becomes evident by the author's descriptions of his 12th of July experiences within the band. Their efforts prove less successful than other types of flute bands in achieving 'flow' contributing to Ramsey's own lack of enthusiasm for the band and ultimately leading to him leaving their ranks.

The author's experience of playing in the Sir George White Memorial flute band is quite a different one. A melody band whose main performance stage is the street, the importance of parading for them and their community is apparent. The tradition of parading heightens a sense of communitas amongst these performers and their respective community. As Ramsey notes, 'The greatest emotional reward of parading is the experience of 'flow' in which action merges with awareness, ego with environment' (p153).

Ramsey follows the route of the Sir George White Memorial flute band on an annual trip to New Cumnock in Scotland for the Boyne celebrations of the Ayrshire Orange Institution. The chapter entitled 'Party Tunes: Flow, Boundary Creation and Boundary Transcendence at a Scottish Orange Parade' explores how communal bonds have been built between the two communities and their sense of communal identity has been heightened by the practice of what he terms 'this short, but emotionally intense period of musicking' (p155). Interestingly, Ramsey notes on one hand a sense of anti-Catholic 'bigotry' amongst participants but also witnesses a welcoming for individual Catholics amongst the group. Above all else, the members of SCWM flute band are loyal to the band and their activities and 'bring forth emotional commitment to a bounded community' (p184) through their loyalty to parading through the calendar.

In chapter seven, 'Crackin' Tunes', we are introduced to the blood-and-thunder formation of the Ballykeel Loyal Sons of Ulster – a band which pushes the boundaries of this particular performance style to mixed views. The blood-and-thunder genre is a participatory style with an emphasis on the audience's involvement usually through singing, stamping and clapping along with the tunes. Ballykeel's choice to use more modern idiosyncratic arrangements and rhythms encourages audiences to dance as opposed to sing along to tunes such as 'The Sash', 'Billy's March' and 'Shanghai'. Ramsey remarks that this stretching of boundaries by the Ballykeel band results in some
conflicts regarding authenticity within the genre. The chapter also examines the issues of identity, boundary and taste and discusses the discourse of the Ulster-Scots tradition as well as this particular band's adaptation to a more respectable habitus during the 1990s, due to pressure from within the blood-and-thunder community.

While Ramsey includes listed documentation of band repertoire and there are many online sources available, I found myself referring to Hastings' (2003) *With Fife and Drum*, to find some of the tunes mentioned. Perhaps the work would have been enhanced by the addition of transcriptions and/or some audio samples.

Ramsey's key questions concern identity formation, its relation to musical practices and how these processes are mediated by emotion and aesthetics. He addresses these questions successfully throughout the work, reiterating the richness of this communal music tradition in Ulster. These bands form the basis for their respective communities' performance of shared identity and Ramsey justly places the genre in a significant position within the discourse of ethnomusicology.

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References


Reading Marta Kempny's new book on Polish migrants in Belfast took me back to 2005 when I participated in a series of RTE radio discussions with the well known commentator John Waters and Trevor Philips, then chair of the UK's Commission for Racial Equality. The debate began by Waters arguing that the 1998 Belfast Agreement briefly opened a space for multiculturalism to be debated in Ireland, north and south, a space, he felt, which had shrunk away over the years. Instead of looking to pluralism anew in 1998, cultural identities in Northern Ireland were allowed to harden into their own particularities; and, south of the border, the 2004 citizenship referendum signposted a future of immigrant securitization rather than multiculturalism or pluralism. For Waters, then, the Belfast Agreement represented a moment during which he might have asked a big question: what does it mean to be Irish?

On the surface, Waters seemed to have little in common with Trevor Philips, who argued that Britain, insensible because of 'failed multicultural policies,' was sleepwalking towards segregation. Britain should wake up before her values were lost forever, Trevor Philips said. But, curiously, values and identities – what it means to be Irish – was also what was keeping John Waters up at night. For a brief moment, as if experiencing déjà vu, they both seemed to realize that the debate existed in an edge-less intellectual space of values without people and institutions without life. And, when we turned towards what was known about the lives of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the UK and Ireland, there was a noticeable shift in tone and style. Hitherto ignored complexities entered into the discussion. Identity categories such as 'immigrants,' 'British,' and 'Irish,' which proved so handy just moments before, now seemed shop-worn and ill-suited for the tasks of describing actual people and their everyday lives.

Pundits and policy makers are usually happy to make use of generalizations in order to skate across the smooth surface of debates. And, perhaps this is the obvious challenge to anthropology: how to go beyond mere words and images and instead attend to voices and actually lived lives? ‘We have got onto slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal,’ said Ludwig Wittgenstein. But the smooth surface is not where lives are lived – 'Back to the rough ground!’ Indeed, one might say that the rough ground is the context for many leading anthropologists these days. Take for example Michael Jackson's *The Politics of Storytelling* (2002) wherein he tells us that there is enormous power in the stories that come from everyday and meaningful lifeworlds, 'For in telling stories we testify to the very diversity, ambiguity, and interconnectedness of experiences that abstract thought seeks to reduce, erase apart, regulate, and contain in the name of administrative order and control' (Jackson, 2002: 253). Marta Kempny's *Polish Migrants in Belfast* is an effort to tell people's stories, to investigate identities and everyday lives. Her book represents an important and welcome contribution to the still small scholarly literature on immigration in Ireland. But does this book provide new insights?

Between May 2004 and December 2008, approximately six hundred thousand Polish persons applied for the UK Worker Registration Scheme. During that period, Polish people became the largest immigrant ethnic group in Northern Ireland. Each chapter of Kempny's book contributes to building a detailed portrait of Polish identities in Belfast. Beginning with a literature review chapter and sections devoted to the Polish emigration context and Belfast as an immigration context, *Polish Migrants in Belfast* offers detailed discussions of the everyday
lived experiences, such as religious holidays, Saturday schools, Catholicism, and ethnic festivals.

The book clearly began life as a doctoral thesis and it does not drift especially far from its academic home. Indeed, sections that aim to situate her study within anthropology will be the least satisfying to readers, especially because ‘the literature’ is strangely old. For example, the long section on identities in chapter 1 (pp. 3–11) draws almost exclusively from work published during or prior to the 1990s. This may seem like a minor criticism, but by the end of the text one is still waiting for a new way of framing the wealth of ethnographic data.

Kempny is a good ethnographer: she writes well and rarely is a question left unanswered or hanging. Indeed, midway through the book one is sure of one’s ground, and she begins to elicit the complex identities of Polish migrants in Belfast via interview data, identities that are often scaled from references to local landscapes and home towns to national, European and cosmopolitan senses of belonging. Indeed, by the beginning of chapter 5 one is convinced by Kempny’s thesis that Polish migrants in Belfast show multilayered and contextual identities. But what of their voices as opposed to their words; and what of migrants’ everyday lives? Her research participants speak Polish each day (though they speak English at work, and sometimes ‘Pol-English’); they use new media to keep relationships with distant friends and relatives alive and strong. But while a transnational ecumene is available so too are practices that root and bespeak ‘tradition,’ such as everyday practices that involve Polish cuisine. Again, Kempny draws our gaze towards multilayered and contextual identities, and polyphonic voices emanating from individuals. She hammers home her argument about fluid and malleable identities in chapter 6, which focuses on ‘culture,’ from ‘ethnic’ holidays to the everyday, this is the rough ground of research. There are no simple categorizations or superficial ideas in this book: this is the rough ground of people’s lived lives described with great clarity by a promising scholar.

With *Polish Migrants in Belfast*, Kempny has made an important anthropological contribution to migration studies in Ireland. This book will appeal to anyone interested in Polish migration, one of the largest migration flows in post-WWII Europe. This book will also appeal to those interested in the changing ethnic geographies of Belfast and Northern Ireland in general. Instead of a Northern Ireland composed of two communities, Kempny leaves us in no doubt that Belfast is home to great diversity – fluid, malleable and always-emergent identities. But where the ethnography is richest, on embodiment, structures of feeling, the imponderabilia of the everyday, this book could have offered a little more. Today, many leading anthropologists are turning to the same issues that Kempny is evidently fascinated by, from the everyday to embodiment and affect. *Polish Migrants in Belfast* would have benefited from a greater level of dialogue with contemporary anthropology. However, as it stands, it is a wonderful contribution to this area of research. There are no simple categorizations or superficial ideas in this book: this is the rough ground of people’s everyday lives with great clarity by a promising scholar.

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References

Notes:
1 Another research centre on migration which focuses its interest on Polish migrants is CRONEM. The projects launched by this centre are mostly survey-based and large scale, aiming at the identification of social policy issues, such as the survey for Institute of Public Policy Research 2008 (CRONEM 2008), the survey commissioned by borough council of Hammersmith and Fulham 2008 (CRONEM 2008a), the survey commissioned by BBC Newsnight 2006 (CRONEM 2006). Among the studies done by CRONEM, the project entitled &<&8216;&<#8216;Class and Ethnicity &<#8211; Polish Migrants in London&<#8217;&<#8217; carried out by John Eade, Stephen Drinkwater and Micha&<#322; Garapich is of particular interest.
This year's AAI conference – held in the University of Ulster in Belfast on the 2nd and 3rd of September – focused on the ‘art of anthropology’. This theme had two main manifestations: presentations that looked at how art and social change interact and influence one another, and presentations on alternate techniques aiming to add to the sensory experience of ethnography. Participants came from NUI Maynooth, the University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast and others, as well as independent scholars; aside from anthropology, disciplines such as sociology and architecture were represented too.

The conference opened with Professor Sarah Pink's keynote lecture: ‘The visual, the sensory and interdisciplinary anthropology’. Her focus was twofold: first the wider applications of ‘ethnography’, encompassing media such as audio-visual and an emphasis on sensory experience, allowing new perspectives and adds depth to text-based ethnography. The interdisciplinary potential of ethnography in general was her second theme, most notably how techniques such as audio-visual ethnography make anthropology more accessible to other disciplines.

Both these perspectives were evident in many of the presentations offered the following day, especially those that centred on perceptions of space. Dr Jenny Russell (UU Belfast) described a project showing how children perceive various iconic buildings in Belfast. With visual and spatial awareness being different for children, this new-found perspective offered insight to architecture and urban planning where children's perspectives are rarely considered. In a similar vein, Cahal McLaughlin & Jolene Mairs' (UU Coleraine) research on political imprisonment during the Troubles – which played a key part in this history – was collected ethnographically, with an emphasis on the experiences and sensory perception of returning ex-staff and prisoners. In the same panel, Rebekah McCabe's (NUIM) visual ethnography of neglected space in East Belfast and the sense of unease captured on camera allowed an unconventional perspective on something difficult but worthwhile to record ethnographically.

Presentations on art varied from Indian temple art and its applications, to traditional Japanese aesthetic experiences in video games. Various forms of art were illustrative of social changes being researched: My own presentation on visual representation of female figures and Islamophobia dealt with competing discourses on secularism; Gordon Ramsey (QUl) discussed how ‘blood and thunder’ flute bands relate to changing political environments, negative external perceptions and wider artistic aesthetics. Sean Shanagher (DCU) looked at how social shifts in rural Ireland in the 40s and 50s were charted through various dancing customs. Other more eclectic work included Anthony Kelly's (NUIM) description of rhetoric styles in American Right-Wing commentary, emphasising the parrhesiastic virtue performed by Glenn Beck. Pauline Garvey (NUIM) discussed the similar aesthetics of Swedish folk-museums and Ikea showrooms, with both offering form of ‘housing theatre’ that blurs the boundaries between market and ‘culture’.

In the afternoon the AGM was held, summarising the year's activities. The AAI essay prize was awarded to Bryanna Hocking (QUl) for her work on war memorial space in Derry.

Members of the Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement (CIM) research project met on 4th-7th March 2011 at a conference at Queen's University, Belfast. Funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA), CIM is a two year project exploring forms of artistic production, the circulation of images, objects, and people, and the relationship of these to the senses and religious experience. The group, comprising nine anthropologists and one art historian based in various institutions in three European countries (Norway, UK, the Netherlands), presented papers on subjects such as suburban Australian Aboriginal artists' exploration of movement and emotion through art, materiality and pilgrimage at the shrine of Aparacida in Brazil, art collections in elite Indian homes, and the status of contemporary art exhibitions at anthropology museums.

Though the papers were varied in style and focus, what united them all was a concern to explore forms of movement through time and space of people (pilgrims, artists, tourists), objects (religious images, contemporary art), and concepts (creativity, religion, the museum) and the transformations that these undergo through such movement.

Birgit Meyer kicked off the conference with a presentation that traced the contours of recent debates about material religion. She emphasised that the turn to material religion is not simply a question of examining the material culture of religion but that by dissolving analytical distinctions between matter and spirit, thinking about materiality helps us reconceptualise what we might mean by religion. More specifically, she suggested that important questions have to be asked as to how religion became dematerialised in the first place,
and the role of materiality in Protestant Christianity. Elaborating the notion of ‘sensational forms’ as a way to understand how the invisible is made tangible, Meyer offered a meditation on the transformation of the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in its movement from Europe to Ghana.

Drawing on the theoretical concerns outlined by Meyer, Rhoda Woets outlined her plans to conduct fieldwork on the circulation of Jesus imagery in Ghana, looking in particular at roadside artists. She will examine notions of creativity and copying, and challenge assumptions about the indigenisation of Jesus images in the African context. Joao Rickli also explored aspects of Christian materiality at the national shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in Brazil. Offering a keen analysis of the political economy of pilgrimage, Rickli discussed the different forms of materiality at the shrine. These include the representations of Aparecida that are sold at the site and which range from cheap Chinese made statues to those costing several thousand dollars imported from Europe, and the images of limbs and other body parts that pilgrims leave as offerings to the saint in gratitude for being healed of affliction.

Examining the movement of people from a different angle, Fiona Magowan argued for an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal art tied to the experiences of the artists themselves. Magowan demonstrated the ways in which suburban based artists use art in emotional ways to contemplate experiences and dilemmas of belonging (e.g. being mixed race, or a member of the ‘Stolen Generation’) that gain little attention in Australian public life and are too painful to otherwise explore.

There were also papers that examined questions of innovation and creativity from an institutional perspective. Examining the Museum of Anthropology (MoA) in Vancouver, Oivind Fuglerud argued that the inclusion of contemporary art exhibitions in the space of an ostensibly ethnographic museum both produced and highlighted the contradictions and tensions inherent in such curatorial projects. In a broad-ranging presentation, Leon Wainwright traced the transformation of a fine arts college in Barbados as it struggles with the demands both of a powerful tourist market that encourages certain forms of artistic production as well as the need to cultivate links with global art networks and alternative funding streams.

Three papers looked at aspects of South Asian materiality and cultural production. Drawing on Meyer’s articulation of ‘sensational forms’, Stine Sorensen compared the power of aesthetics among diasporic Catholic and Hindu Sri Lankan Tamils. She argued that the boundaries between the two groups became increasingly fuzzy as one focused on their respective conceptions of material religion. Amit Desai explored the relationship between creativity and personhood among contemporary artists in the Indian city of Chennai. He suggested that the concepts of flow and growth were central to its articulation, and this led to a meditation on how artists imagine themselves in time and history. Maruska Svasek, the project leader of CIM, followed the transformation of art objects (a modern and antique painting respectively) into images used by their Indian owners in Hindu devotion, thus demonstrating the shifting powers of such objects through processes of emotional and religious engagement.

Yudhishtir Raj Isar drew the papers together in his role as discussant to the conference as a whole. While lauding the aims of the project, he suggested that only a few of the papers had successfully presented an analysis of the meanings and effects of movement with proper attention to its political economy. While some members of the project seemed in sympathy with this sentiment, it could be argued that this criticism replicated the terms of a debate that the turn to material religion, a key concern of the CIM project, is powerfully challenging.

For more information about the CIM project, please contact Dr Maruska Svasek (m.svasek@qub.ac.uk).
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submission of Material
Authors are encouraged to submit items for the IJA. Articles, which may be in English or Irish, should be original and should not be under consideration elsewhere. IJA is a peer-reviewed journal and articles submitted will be assessed for their suitability.

Articles for consideration should be sent to the Editor or Associate Editor as follows:
Fiona Larkan, Editor, Centre for Global Health, Trinity College Dublin, 7-9 Leinster Street South, Dublin 2 larkanf@tcd.ie
Fiona Magowan, Associate Editor, School of History and Anthropology, The Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, N. Ireland. f.magowan@qub.ac.uk

Books for review and completed reviews should be sent to the Reviews Editors:
Fiona Murphy, Department of Anthropology, Rowan House, NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland
Ioannis Tsioulakis, c/o Carmel Daly, Department of Music, University College Cork, Ireland.

Other material (conference and research reports, news, advertisements, letters etc.) should be sent to:
News Editor, c/o Department of Anthropology, Rowan House, NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Presentation
Articles should be in the region of 4000 words and should include a title, a short abstract of no more than 100 words, and a list of key words. Included also should be the author’s name, contact details for publication, academic affiliation, and a short biographical note. Contributions should be submitted in electronic form, in PC format readable in Word. Receipt of a submission will be acknowledged.

The following points should be observed:

Notes should be endnotes and should be kept to a minimum.
Bibliographical references in the body of the text should be given in parentheses in standard author-date form: (Lee and Devore 1968: 236). A complete list of references cited, arranged alphabetically by author’s surname, should be typed at the end of the article and adhere to the following style:


Subheadings should be typed flush left.
Quotations. Single inverted commas should be used except for quotations within quotations, which should have double inverted commas. Quotations of more than about 60 words should be indented and typed without inverted commas.
Spellings. British English (not American English) spelling should be used in English articles except in quoted material, which should follow the original. Use -ize not -ise word endings.

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