

IRISH JOURNAL OF  
ANTHROPOLOGY

I J A

VOL 2 1997

# IRISH JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

**Editor:**

Abdullahi Osman El-Tom

**Editorial Board:**

Elizabeth Tonkin, Hastings Donnan, Simon Harrison, Séamas Ó Siocháin and Gearóid Ó Cruaíoch.

The Irish Journal of Anthropology (IJA) is the main publication of the Anthropological Association of Ireland and is appearing as a successor to its previous publication, "Anthropology Ireland."

The Journal accepts articles in English or Irish.

**Subscription Rates:**

Individuals        £10

Corporate         £15

All communication including papers for publication should be sent to:

A. Jamie Saris  
Steve Coleman  
Irish Journal of Anthropology  
Department of Anthropology  
St. Patrick's College, Maynooth  
Co. Kildare Ireland  
Tel: 01-708 3984  
E-mail:  
ajsaris@may.ie  
scoleman@may.ie

**THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY  
OF DR. VINCENT TUCKER, DIED 17TH FEBRUARY 1997**



## CONTENTS:

### ARTICLES:

- Dinimic na Litearthachta agus an Chultúir Bhéil.  
CONCHÚR Ó GIOLLAGÁIN 6
- From Homo Hierarchicus to Homo Faber: Breaking Convention Through Semeiosis.  
DIANE P. MINES 33
- Evolution and degeneration in the thought of Roger Casement.  
SÉAMAS Ó SÍOCHÁIN 45
- Misunderstanding ethnicity: Ancient hatreds, false consciousness and rational choice.  
ANDY STOREY 63
- Participatory rural appraisal for educational research: Helping to see the “invisible.”  
EILEEN KANE 69

### BOOK REVIEWS:

- Occasions of faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics.* Lawrence Taylor  
SUZEL REILY 86
- Anthropology of Tourism.* Dennison Nash.  
DAVID SLATTERY 88
- Political Ritual.* Asa Boholm (ed.).  
ABDULLAHI OSMAN EL-TOM 89
- Sport, Identity and Ethnicity.* Jeremy MacClancy (ed.).  
LIAM RYAN 90

### OBITUARIES:

- Vincent Tucker 92
- Ladislav Holy 93

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** AAI Winter Conference: Call for Papers 95

## Dinimic na Litearthachta agus an Chultúir Bhéil

Conchúr Ó Giollagáin  
Comhalta de Dhámh na nEalaíon  
Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge  
Coláiste na hOllscoile, BÁC.

Is as taighde a rinne mé ar stairsheanchas Mhicil Chonraí ó Ráth Chairn i gCo. na Mí a eascraíonn an t-ábhar a phléitear anseo.<sup>1</sup> Chuir mé eagar ar théacs a réitigh mé ón mbunábhar taifeadta a d'aithris Micil Chonraí (MC) agus ón tráchttaireacht bhreise staire a d'inis a dheartháir, John Chonraí (JC), mar chomhlánú ar chuntas pearsanta Mhicil Chonraí ar scéal a bheatha. Déanaim anailís anseo thíos ar bhunús an chuntais, ar tháirgeadh an téacs agus ar an gcaidreamh atá ag Micil, an scéalaí, liom féin, an t-eagarthóir, ar mhaithe le teacht ar mhíniú ar an dá ról éagsúla a bhí againn sa tionscnamh. Músclaíonn saothar Mhicil Chonraí ceisteanna i dtaobh dhinimic na litearthachta agus an chultúir bhéil agus ceistíonn sé cuid de na réamhthuiscintí a bhaineann le cleachtas agus gnásanna dhisceiplín na hantraipeolaíochta. Anuas ar na sleachta ón téacs seanchais a úsáidtear sa bplé thíos, cuirfear rogha níos leithne ar fáil ag deireadh an ailt le go bhfaighfí blaiseadh do thráchttaireacht na beirte, mar aon le léiriú ar na pointí atá á ndéanamh anseo. Is éard atá á mhaíomh anseo ná go bhfágann an cur chuige agus an modh oibre a chleacht muid i dtaobh an tionscnaimh seilbh an téacs i lámha an scéalaí seachas an bunábhar tráchttaireachta a chur as a riocht ag riachtanas an disceiplín taighde.

Rinneadh an t-ábhar a thaifeadadh i Ráth Chairn ar shé cinn fhichead de chluaistéipeanna idir deireadh na n-ochtóidí agus 1995. Bhí páirt agam san obair seo ó 1993 tar éis do Mhicil Chonraí cúnamh a iarraidh orm téacs a chur i dtoll a chéile bunaithe ar an tráchttaireacht taifeadta. Bheartaigh mé an téacs a réiteach i gcaoi a bheadh dílis don bhuninsint agus a léireodh canúint na dtráchtairí, chomh fada agus ab fhéidir. I sliocht tosaigh a d'aithris Micil Chonraí dá théacs léiríonn sé go údarásach go raibh faoi a scéal féin a insint le go dtabharfaí aird air ar bhonn ní ba leithne ná a cheantar áitiúil féin:

*Is mise Micheál Ó Conaire, Micil Chonraí a bhídís a thabhairt sa Máimín orm. Is corrdhuine atá glaoite i ndiaidh a shloinne sa Máimín ná in aon áit eile mórán siar, mar tá sé glaoite i ndiaidh a mháthair nó a athair. Níl a fhios agat cén sloinne mórán atá ar dhuine ar bith siar mara bhfuil eolas an-mhaith agat air. Sin é an chaoi a bhfuil sé, agus sin é an chaoi a raibh sé le mo linnsa, is dóigh go bhfuil sé fós ar an gcaoi chéanna sa Máimín.*

*Ach rugadh mé sa Máimín agus rugadh m'athair ann, agus déarfainn gur rugadh mo sheanathair ann. Déarfainn gur as Tír an Fhia a tháinig muintir m'athar don Mháimín, ach níl mé in ann mórán a ghoil siar ar mhuintir Thír an Fhia. Tá a fhios agam go raibh go leor col ceathrachaí i dTír an Fhia aige. I dtaobh mo mháthar – as Béal an Daingin a*

---

1. Cf. Ó Giollagáin 1996.

*tháinig mo mháthair, de Mhuintir Lupáin, agus déarfainn gur as Camas a tháinig a muintir sin mar bhíodh sí ag caint ar a seanmháthair go minic linn i gCamas...*

*Ar an bhfichiú lá de Lúnasa naoi déag naoi déag a rugadh mise, agus rugadh m'athair ocht déag ochtó haon, rugadh mo mháthair ocht déag seachtó hocht. Bhí m'athair seasca trí bliain nuair a fuair sé bás, an ceathrú lá de Mhárta ceathracha ceathair, agus bhí mo mháthair seachtó, cupla lá roimh an Nollaig ceathracha hocht.*

*An méid a bhí sa gclann – bhí seisiúr sa gclann, bhí beirt deirfiúr agus bhí ceathrar dearthár againn ann. Baba an ceann is sine, rugadh Baba naoi déag deich; rugadh Pádraic naoi déag dó dhéag; rugadh Máirtín naoi déag ceathair déag; rugadh Máire naoi déag sé déag; agus rugadh mise naoi déag naoi déag agus rugadh John naoi déag fiche trí. Ní comhluadar mór a bhí ann ar bhealach mar bhí go leor comhluadair sa Máimín a bhí i bhfad níos mó ná muide (2.1.1 MC).*

Ba sa Máimín, mar a léigh muid thuas, i gCeantar na nOileán, Conamara, a rugadh Micil Chonraí. D'aistrigh sé aniar go Ráth Chairn in éindí leis an gcuid eile den chomhluadar i 1935 agus é in aois sé bliana déag. Saothar comhoibritheach atá i stairsheanchas Mhicil Chonraí ar dhá bhealach. Thug John cúnamh do Mhicil a chuimhní cinn ar shaol Chonamara agus ar na chéad bhlianta i Ráth Chairn a mheabhrú dó. Tá an tráchtairacht sa gcuid sin den chuntas bunaithe ar dhá insint chomhlántacha. Cuntas aonair pearsanta Mhicil Chonraí atá sa gcuid eile den chuntas. Bhí dhá ról agamsa sa tionscnamh. Chuidigh mé mar fhear agallaimh i gcás thaifeadadh cuid den tráchtairacht agus chuir mé téacs ar fáil bunaithe ar shleachta gaolmhara a tras-scríobhadh ó na téipeanna éagsúla.

Ábhar inspéise atá i saothar Mhicil Chonraí ar go leor bealaí, na gnéithe staire, eitneolaíochta agus canúneolaíochta, mar shampla, ach is é buntábhacht an ábhair seo ná gur cuntas dírbheathaisnéiseach atá sa tráchtairacht ó dhuine nach bhfuil cáil na scéalaíochta air agus gur gnáthghnásanna urlabhra MC is bunús leis. As a stuaim féin a bheartaigh sé tabhairt faoin obair mar bhí a fhios aige go raibh scéal pearsanta agus stair áitiúil ar leith le hinsint aige. Níor mhar a chéile é agus cás mhuintir an Bhlascaoid mar a raibh comhluadar léinn á spreagadh leis an tráchtairacht a sholáthar.

Is cinnte gur spreag triall na n-eachtrannach agus na scoláirí ar an mBlascaod ó 1907 ar aghaidh (Greene 1972: 33) muintir an oileáin le breathnú ar na gnéithe dá gcultúr ba chionsiocair le tarraingt na n-eachtrannach ar an áit. Scríobh Nic Eoin (1982: 39):

Tá a fhios againn ar fad go raibh an-chuid eachtrannach ag tarraingt ar an mBlascaod Mór – daoine mar Marstrander ón Ioruidh, Von Sydow ón tSualainn, Robin Flower, Kenneth Jackson, E. M. Forster agus George Thomson ó Shasana. Thuig muintir an Bhlascaoid ó na strainséirí sin go raibh sibhialtacht ársa acu san oileán, ós rud é gurbh fhiú do na scoláirí sin dul i bhfad ó bhaile chun staidéar a dhéanamh uirthi. Is cinnte go ndeachaigh cuairteanna na ndaoine sin i gcion go mór ar na hoileánaigh agus thug sé misneach dóibh dul i mbun pinn nuair a iarradh orthu ina dhiaidh sin.

Chothaigh teagmháil seo na strainséirí comhthéacs ní ba leithne do scéalaithe agus scríbhneoirí an Bhlascaoid Mhóir ná réimse cultúrtha an traidisiúin bhéil a bhí teoranta dá gceantar agus dá bpobal dúchais féin.

Ba i gcomhthéacs seo na scoláireachta a thathain béaloideasóirí ar scríbhneoirí an Bhlascaoid Mhóir a ghabháil i mbun scéalta a mbeatha a scríobh (Nic Eoin 1982: 35, Ó Dúshláine 1974: 56). Ba í Máire Ní Chinnéide a ghríosaigh Peig Sayers chun oibre (Sayers 1936, Nic Eoin 1982: 36).<sup>2</sup> An scoláire clasaicí ó Shasana, George Thomson, a thathain ar Mhuiris Ó Súilleabháin (Ó Súilleabháin 1933) *Fiche Blian ag Fás* a scríobh. Ach anuas ar thacaíocht na mbéaloideasóirí bhí sampla Thomáis Uí Chríomhthain le leanacht acu a threabh páirc na dírbheathaisnéise rompu i 1929 nuair a foilsíodh *An tOileánach* (Ó Criomhthain 1929).<sup>3</sup> Ba é Brian Ó Ceallaigh a chéadspreag Ó Criomhthain le gabháil i mbun pinn (Greene 1972: 33-4). Ní fhéadfaí a mhaíomh faoi MC go raibh buntacaíocht den chineál seo aige. Moladh dó,<sup>4</sup> ceart go leor, go mba cheart dó tabhairt faoi shaothar a bhunú ar a scéal féin ó thaobh an aistrithe aniar go Ráth Cairn de, ach comhrá aonair a bhí i gceist sa gcás seo agus ní spreagadh nó gríosadh leanúnach a dhéantaí i gcomhthéacs léinn agus taighde mar a chothaigh na scoláirí móra ar an mBlascaod. Thosaigh MC ar a chuid tráchtairachta a thaifeadadh blianta sular éirigh leis eagarthóir tuisceanach a aimsiú.

Is cosúla saothar MC le saothar Pheig Sayers ná saothar Thomáis Uí Chríomhthain nó Mhuiris Uí Shúilleabháin ar an údar gur bunaíodh a cuid leabhar ar chuntas béil a chóirigh a cuid eagarthóirí ina dhiaidh sin di. Saothair phróis atá in *An tOileánach* agus in *Fiche Blian ag Fás* a bhfuil cumadóireacht chomhfhiosach liteartha mar bhunús leo. Is cinnte gur tugadh cúnamh eagarthóireachta do Thomás Ó Criomhthain agus do Mhuiris Ó Súilleabháin, ach ba iad féin a réitigh na buntéacsanna. Ach is éagsúil an chaoi ar tháinig saothar MC agus *Peig* ar an saol; bhí cáil an tseanchais agus na reacaireachta ar Pheig Sayers agus spreagadh an tallann seo i gcomhthéacs an spéis léinn a bhí á cur i sibhialtacht áirithe an Bhlascaoid Mhóir. Ní raibh spreagadh mar seo ag MC; ní raibh fráma tagartha cultúrtha nó sibhialtacht chomh soiléir (nó éagsúil) sin lena insint phearsanta a fhorbairt ann. Dar ndóigh, thug cúinsí speisialta stairiúla Ráth Chairn fráma inaitheanta lena insint a lonnú ann, ach ba ar a scéal pearsanta féin a bhí MC ag díriú den chuid is mó. Nuair a d'fhiafraigh mé de faoin údar a bhí aige an tionscnamh a bheartú dúirt sé gur shíl sé go raibh taithí neamhghnách aige ar an saol agus go raibh fonn air an taithí sin a chur in iúl do dhaoine go bhfaighidís léargas ar an saol a chaith sé.

---

2. Ba in éindí le Kenneth Jackson a réitigh sí *Scéalta ón mBlascaod* (Sayers 1938). Chuidigh Máire Ní Chinnéide le saothar eile beathaisnéiseach *Machtanamh seana-mhná* (Sayers 1939) agus ba é a mhac, Mícheál Ó Gaoithín a thras-scríobh *Beatha Pheig Sayers* (Sayers 1970).

3. D'fhoilsigh sé dialann *Allagar na hinise* (Ó Criomhthain 1928) agus dhá shaothar béaloidis *Dinnsheanchas na mBlascaodaí* (Ó Criomhthain 1928a) agus *Seanchas ón Oileán Tiar* (Ó Criomhthain 1956) freisin.

4. Ba é Mattie Joe Shéamuis Ó Fatharta ó Raidió na Gaeltachta a mheabhraigh an smaoineamh seo dó i 1985, an t-am a raibh foireann craolta i Ráth Chairn do chomóradh 50 bliain bhunú na Gaeltachta ann.



*Sé an fáth a bhfuil mé ag inseacht<sup>5</sup> mo scéal fhéin mar chuaigh mé thríd an oiread seo. Nuair a bhí mé san ospidéal i mBaile Átha Cliath bhí mé ag ceapadh nach bhfágfainn é, gob é an chaoi go n-íomprófaí amach as mé. Sin é an fáth: go raibh rud faoi leith i mo shaolsa. B'fhéidir go bhfuil sé i saol daoine go leor eile, ach go raibh rud faoi leith i mo shaol agus sin é an fáth a rinne mé é. Níl aon oideachas ormsa. Tá sé insithe i mo scéal agam an t-oideachas a fuair mé agus an chaoi ar múineadh mé agus an pionós agus an sciúirseáil a bhí mé a fháil nuair a bhí muide ag goil ag an scoil. Tá sé sin insithe cheana agam. Ba mhaith liom go mbeadh a fhios ag daoine ar fud na tíre an rud a tharla ag tíocht as Conamara go Contae na Mí agus na rudaí a tharla nuair a tháinig muid anseo. Ba mhaith liom é sin a thabhairt do na daoine, an scéal sin a bheith acu le léamh. (MC 8.4)<sup>6</sup>*

Ba é cuntas a shaoil phearsanta seachas cúrsaí cultúrtha, nó comhthéacs sibhialtacha, nó cúinsí stairiúla a mhúnlaigh a uailmhian lena scéal a insint. Tá cosúlachtaí sa méid seo le *Peig*; tagraíonn Peig Sayers go minic dá chomhthéacs pearsanta féin i dtaobh mhuintir an oileáin toisc gur phós sí isteach san oileán ón míntír.<sup>7</sup>

## **An Scéalaí agus an tEagarthóir**

Nuair a moladh do MC go mba chóir dó nó duine eile den seandream ann stair na háite a insint ina chuid focal féin agus an saothar a réiteach ina dhiaidh sin mar fhoilseachán, cheap sé nach mbeadh sé sách oilte chuige i ngeall ar na heasnaimh a bhraith sé a bhí ar a chuid oideachais agus ar a chumas léitheoireachta agus litearthachta. Mhínigh sé dom gur chuir Mattie Joe Shéamuis Ó Fathartha ina luí air ag an am, agus é ag moladh an tionscnaimh do MC, nárbh iad na scileanna sin bun agus barr an scéil toisc go bhféadfadh sé a scéal a insint agus a thaifeadadh ar chluaistéipeanna, agus duine éigin eile a aimsiú ina dhiaidh sin a dhéanfadh an eagarthóireacht agus a chuirfeadh foirm théacsúil ar an insint ar fáil.

Níor thug MC mórán aird ar an gcomhairle seo ag an am mar mheas sé nach raibh sé féin feiliúnach don obair ar aon chaoi. Ní raibh sé aitheanta sa gceantar, nó i gcomhthéacs ní ba leithne, mar scéalaí, nó fear seanchais nó duine a raibh deisbhéalaíocht thar an gcoitiantacht ag baint leis, le hais a dhearthár, John Chonraí, go háirithe. Bhí cáil mar seo ag a bheirt deartháir eile, Máirtín agus Pádraic, nach maireann, chomh maith. Duine géimiúil a d'insíodh scéalta grinn agus a chasadh amhráin a bhí i Máirtín; chuirte agallamh go minic air do Raidió na Gaeltachta. I gcodarsnacht le Máirtín, bhí Pádraic domhain, diagánta agus staidéarach. Bhí seanchas agus scéalta fiannaíochta aige mar aon le léamh agus scríobh na Gaeilge.

---

5. /g'i:n'fæxt/.

6. Tagraíonn na huimhreacha seo do chóras uimhríochta na gcaibidlí agus na bhfochaibidlí sa tráchtas taighde, cf. Ó Giollagáin 1996. Scríobhfar tráchttaireacht MC agus JC sa gcló iodáileach.

7. Dar ndóigh, is iomaí cosúlacht idir saothar MC agus *Seanchas Thomáis Laighléis*, ach ní bhaineann siad le hábhar i gcás an phlé a dhéantar anseo mar níor bunaíodh an téacs ar bhuntráchttaireacht ach ar lámhscríbhinn a chuir sé ar fáil do Thomás de Bhaldraithe (Laighléis 1981: x).

Deirtear faoi go mbíodh sé in ann cuid mhór eile de véarsaíocht Raifeartaí a aithris, a d'fhoghlaim sé ó "Leabhar Raiftearaí" mar a thugadh sé air;<sup>8</sup> agus mar aon le Máirtín dhéanadh sé caint ar an raidió. Tá aithne sách leathan air John mar scéalaí agus mar rannpháirtí do chláracha Raidió na Gaeltachta i dtaobh Ráth Chairn i measc ábhair eile. Théadh sé ag an Oireachtas ag insint scéalta; bhí baint aige le bunú Chomharchumann Ráth Chairn; bhí sé ina bhall de Chéadchomhairle Raidió na Gaeltachta (Ó Glaisne 1982: 76). Aithníonn an lucht acadúil mar fhaisnéiseoir cumasach é (cf. Stenson/Ó Ciardha 1986-7 LASID RC; Williams 1988: 197, 203, 205, 207, 211); cuireadh scoláirí ó Roinn na hAntraipeolaíochta, Coláiste Phádraig, Maigh Nuad, chuige; chuir scoláirí ó Roinn Bhéaloideas Éireann suim ina chuid scéalta agus seanchais; agus is iomaí mír a taifeadadh uaidh do Theanglann Roinn na Nua-Ghaeilge sa gColáiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath.

Deirtear i dtaobh Mhicil gur duine uasal tuisceanach é ach ní luaití a ainm le reacaireacht nó le seanchas nó gur thosaigh sé leis an tionscnamh seo. Ní iartraí air píosa seanchais a aithris nó píosa tráchtareachta a dhéanamh mar a dhéantaí lena chuid deartháireacha agus mar a dhéantar le John i gcónaí; ba le fíordheireanas a labhair sé den chéad uair ar chlár raidió. Cheap sé gurbh é ba lú a d'fheilfeadh don tionscnamh, i measc dheartháireachaí Chonraí ar aon chaoi, díreach ó thaobh cumas reacaireachta de.

Tá teannas den chineál céanna le sonrú idir ceird na scéalaíochta agus cead inste i ndírbeathaisnéis a tógadh síos ó bhean den dúchas Diegueno, Delfina Cuero (1970),<sup>9</sup> i gCalifornia. D'aithris sí a scéal féin ina teanga dhúchais (Kumeyaay) agus aistríodh go Béarla ina dhiaidh sin é. Thug sí cuntas ar stair a muintire agus ar an modh maireachtála a bhí acu, chomh maith le cur síos ar an gcaidreamh a bhí acu leis an bpobal ceannais. Fearacht MC níor cheap sí go raibh féith na scéalaíochta inti, ach go raibh a fhios aici go raibh scéal tábhachtach le hinsint aici. Nuair a theip ar a cuimhne agus í i mbun aithrise ar eachtra éigin ghiorraigh sí an aithris ag rá:

There is more to it but I am not a storyteller and that is all I can remember (Cuero 1970: 29).

Feidhm pholaitiúil a bhí le beathaisnéis Cuero, shíl sí go láidreodh sé cás a muintire cead fillte as Meicsiceo a ghnóthú ar a gceantar dúchais ar chósta San Diego i gCalifornia.

Cuireann an easpa cáilíochta a bhraitheann MC i leith an tseanchais le tábhacht a shaothair, dar liom; thug sé an tsaoirse dó a pháirc féin a threabhadh agus rud as an ngnáth a dhéanamh. Is dóigh gurb in an t-údar ar chinn sé sa deireadh go mb'fhéidir go mbeadh sé chomh maith le duine ar bith eile i mbun tionscnaimh den chineál seo. Ní raibh sé sách eolach ar ghnásanna agus ar mhúnlaí an tseanchais agus na scéalaíochta nó go mb'éigean dó straitéis éigin eile a aimsiú ar mhaithe len é féin a chur in iúl. Is cinnte go bhfuil scéal le hinsint ag MC, ach ní dóigh liom gur leor é sin ann féin le go ngabhaí chomh fada le téacs a chur i dtoll a chéile mar

---

8. Cf. de hÍde 1933.

9. Tá mé buíoch den Dr. Aingeal de Búrca a dhírigh m'aird ar an bhfoilseachán seo.

iarracht tosaigh i bpróiseas an fhoilsithe. Chaithfí an fonn agus an toil a bheith ann an scéal sin a chur in iúl ag leibhéal níos leithne ná comhthéacs an bhaile nó an cheantair áitiúil. Chothaigh na hacmhainní pearsanta cuí, foighid agus fuinneamh seasmhach, mar aon leis an gcumas, atá aige, a thoil le saothar ní ba bhuaine a tháirgeadh as amháibhar a scéil phearsanta. Scríobh antraipeolaí Meiriceánach ina thaobh seo:

Sometimes it is impossible to obtain a life story, either because of poor rapport, or because the informant is unwilling, taciturn by nature, or incapable of a sustained narrative (Titon 1980: 284).

Nuair a d'éist mé leis na téipeanna thug mé faoi deara go raibh i bhfad níos mó i gceist ná léamh pearsanta ar stair áitiúil. Stair shaoil a bhí ann a raibh cur síos ar an stair áitiúil inti. Níl a fhios agam go baileach cén uair ar tháinig an t-athrú béime i gceist idir an léamh logánta agus an léamh pearsanta, is é sin go mb'fhearr dó pórtráid saoil seachas stair áitiúil a scríobh. Ach faoin am a ndeachaigh sé i dteagmháil liomsa i samhradh na bliana 1993 faoi na pleananna a bhí aige ba ar a scéal féin a insint a bhí sé ag trácht.

Is pointe tábhachtach é go raibh cuid mhór oibre agus machnaimh déanta ag MC ar an tionscnamh sular éirigh leis duine a aimsiú a thabharfadh cúnamh dó an obair eagarthóireachta a dhéanamh. Léiríonn sé gur thuig sé céard a bhí uaidh agus cén chaoi le gabháil ina bhun cuid mhaith. Dúirt sé gur iarr sé ar roinnt oidí scoile, le linn thréimhse cúpla bliain, comhoibriú leis, ach níor tháinig aon toradh ar na hiarratais seo.

An próiseas a shíl MC a bheadh i gceist ná go n-éistfeadh an t-eagarthóir lena chuid téipeanna seisean agus ansin go n-athscríobhfadh sé iad i gcaoi a bheadh ag teacht le réim an phróis liteartha. Is minic a dúirt sé liom go gcaithfinnse a chuid cainte a "chíoradh" ó thaobh ghnásanna gramadaí de agus "culaith ghaisce" a chur ar a chuid ráitis seisean. Mhínigh mé nár tháinig mé leis an modheolaíocht seo agus dúirt mé leis gur mhór an feall an téacs a réiteach ar an gcaoi sin mar is cuid lárnach de scéal a shaoil nádúr a urlabhra féin a gcuireann sé a scéal in iúl leis agus go mbainfí d'fhírinne agus d'fhiúntas an tsaothair dá mbrúfaí stíl duine éigin eile anuas ar an ábhar. Más leis an scéal is leis insint an scéil agus dá bharr cheap mé nár cheart dom ach cúram eagarthóireachta a thógáil orm féin. Chuir mé ina luí air nár theastaigh uaim ach an t-athrú ba lú ba ghá a chur i bhfeidhm ar an tráchttaireacht le go mbeadh téacs inléite againn. Is ceist spéisiúil ann féin an drogall a bhí air glacadh leis go bhféadfaí téacs a bhunú ar a chuid cainte.

Is íoróineach an bhearna a shamhlaíonn sé a bheith ann idir an chaint agus an focal clóbhuailte amhail is dá mbeadh col ag téacs inghlactha lena urlabhra siúd. B'in údar inspéise eile a bhain le saothar MC; ní raibh a chur chuige agus an dearcadh a bhí aige ar a chuid inniúlachta i dtaobh na hoibre ag réiteach le chéile. Chreid sé nach raibh sé inniúil chuige agus theastaigh uaidh go nglacfadh an t-eagarthóir cúram i bhfad ní ba mhó agus ní ba threallúsaí ná ba ghá. I bhfianaise na n-easnamh atá ar a chumas litearthachta is cinnte go raibh cúnamh ag teastáil uaidh i dtaobh na hoibre téacsúla, ach ní raibh aon ghá bainistiú chomh hiomlán a dhéanamh ar a

chuntas mar a shamhlaigh sé. Ghéill sé don phointe seo i ngeall gurbh in an modh oibre a socraíodh eadrainn, ach tá mé den bharúil gur beag creidiúint a thugann sé dá chuntas féin mar théacs i gcónaí agus, i ndeireadh an tsaoil, go mb'fhearr leis go gcuirfí struchtúr agus réim an phróis fhoirmeálta ar a chuntas. Ach in ainneoin mo chuid míniúchán is cosúil nárbh in é an modh oibre a shíl sé a bhí faoin obair nuair a bhí an téacs iomlán curtha i dtoll a chéile agam. D'fhiafraigh sé díom cuid den chuntas a léamh os ard dó agus dúirt sé liom, tar éis gur léigh mé cúpla sliocht dó, go raibh 'scil ar an bpeann' agam in ainneoin gurbh í a chuid tráchtairachta féin a bhí á léamh agam. D'inis mé dó le teann iontais gurb é féin fear cumtha an chuntais agus nach ndearna mise ach obair eagarthóireachta. Níor chreid sé i ndeireadh thiar go bhféadfaí téacs a bhunú ar a chuid cainte seisean.

Tá baint nach beag ag lagmhisneach MC i dtaobh ghradamúlacht a chuid tráchtairachta le dioscúrsa an chaighdeáin chomh maith. Tagraíonn Bliss (1981: 80) don dochar a rinneadh d'fhéiniómhá theangeolaíoch an chainteora dhúchais Gaeilge ag leathnú an chaighdeáin. Ní raibh sé sách so-lúbtha le glacadh le réalta réigiúnacha. De réir Bliss (1981: 80), chothaigh an choimhlint ortagrafaíoch seo coimpléacs ísleachta i measc cainteoirí dúchais i dtaobh a gcanúna féin. Ba anróiteach dóibh foirmeacha an Chaighdeáin Oifigiúil (C.O.) a fhoghlaim mar bhí siad ró-iargúlta ó na leaganacha a chleacht siad féin. Ach níos bunúsaí ná an coimpléacs seo is ea dearcadh searbh MC i dtaobh a chuid oideachais agus an easpa foghlama a bhraitheann sé atá air de bharr theagasc mí-éifeachtach scoile:

*...Cheapfá nuair a bheifeá ag goil ag an scoil go bhfaighfeá ómós agus meas agus – cúnamh a thabhairt don pháiste le ghoil ar aghaidh sa saol go mbeadh sé in ann obair a fháil, beagán scoil a bheith air le ghoil thríd an saol, ach mo léan, bhí athrú de scéal agam nuair a thosaíos<sup>10</sup> ag goil ar scoil.*

*...Bhí dhá mháistir sa seomra seo, fear sean go maith - bhí mise ag ceapadh go raibh - agus fear óg, nuair a chuaigh mé isteach sa tríú rang. Bhí rudaí ag tarlú, bhí mé ag breathú ar ghasúir á mbualadh, níor buaileadh mé fhéin fós, níor buaileadh mé go ceann cupla lá, ach bhí mé ag breathú ar ghasúir á mbualadh ar bheagán údair. Mara mbeadh a fhios agat - mara mbeifeá in ann do lesson a léamh go maith nó mara mbeifeá in ann do sums a dhéanamh, gheobhaidh tú<sup>11</sup> beagán traíail, agus mara dtóigfidh tú suas go sciobtha é, má bhí tú ag titim siar sa rang, bhíothadh ag iarraidh thú a thabhairt chun cinn leis an maide agus bhí sé sin á úsáid gan aon teorainn in áit an rud ba cheart dó fhéin a mhúineadh don ghasúr, anois bhí sé ag iarraidh é a bhualadh isteach ann, in áit an gasúr a bheith ag tóigeáil é seo isteach sa deireadh bhí asal déanta den ghasúr aige. Ní raibh a fhios aige cén uair a bheadh sé ceart nuair a bhíodh sé ag tabhairt freagra ar na ceisteannaí a bhí ag goil air agus sa deireadh sé an maide i gcónaí a bhí ag obair.*

*...Rinne siad an brocamas ar feadh na mblianta. Is iomaí gasúr a tháinig amach as an scoil a raibh mise aici agus ní raibh sé in ann a ainm a scríobh agus chaithfidís a bheith ag goil*

---

10. Foirm tháite gan a bheith i suíomh macallach.

11. Tá briseadh sa ngnáthchomhréir anseo. Bheifí ag súil le foirm an choinníollaigh anseo.

*ag an scoil go mbeidís cheithre bliana déag. Cheithre bliana déag de spídiúlacht! (2.3.2 MC)*

Mhínigh mé dó nach raibh fúm an téacs a réiteach de réir threoir an C.O. agus go bhféadfainnse é a chur i dtoll a chéile i bhfoirm chanúnach, ach fós chreid sé gurb aisteach an cur chuige é d'fhear a raibh eolas aige ar an C.O.. Bhí iontaoibh aige as an leagan amach caighdeánach seachas sa gceann canúnach i ngeall ar an ngradamúlacht a shamhlaigh sé a bhain le friotal caighdeánta. Is é an cúram a ghlac mé orm féin tras-scríobh ortagrafaíoch a dhéanamh ar shleachta roghnaithe ón gcaint taifeadta agus eagar a chur ar na sleachta sin le go mbeadh leanúnachas sa scéal. Go simplí bhí mé i mbun eagrú an téacs agus fágadh forás an scéil faoi MC agus scaití faoina dheartháir, JC.

## **Dinimic an traidisiúin bhéil agus na litearthachta i gcomhthéacs stair chultúrtha ár linne**

Is minic a bhréagnaíonn an comhthéacs cultúrtha an coibhneas neodrach acadúil a shamhlaítear, ag leibhéal dromchlach, idir an scoláire agus ábhar a thaighde, agus feictear nach dtagann an léamh neodrach seo leis an gcoibhneas cumhachta a bhfuiltear ag feidhmiú ann. Tá téama den chineál seo cíortha i gcás thraidisiún scoláireachtúil an Iarthair i leith an Oirthir ag Said (1979). Soláthraíonn 'Oirthearachas', mar a thug sé ar an bhfeiminéin, cur síos agus dioscúrsa ar an Oirthear a réitíonn leis an gcoibhneas cumhachta a fheidhmítear ar leas na gcoimhthíoch Iartharach. Daingníonn smacht an choimhthígh ar an dioscúrsa an coibhneas bunaithe toisc go mbronnann sé íomhá leochailleach discréideach ar an gcultúr dúchais agus ceileann sé fíornádúr an tsaoil iartharaigh ar an bpobal eile a bhfuil trácht á dhéanamh air. Sáinníonn an radharc aontaobhach seo an cur síos i ndioscúrsa inar gá na léirithe ar an gcultúr oirthearach a chur i bhfeiliúint do riachtanas an choibhnis leis an gcultúr coimhthíoch. Sampla maith den dearcadh seo i gcás na hÉireann is ea tuairimí William Wilde (1888: 345-6)<sup>12</sup> ar bhunús ciníoch mhuintir na hÉireann:

We are coming to a later period. The Romans had occupied Britain, the Saxons followed; the Danes had partial possession for a time; the Heptarchy prevailed until Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, fell at Hastings, and England bowed beneath that mixture of Norman, Gaulish, Scandinavian, and general Celtic blood that William brought with him from the shores of France. The Saxon dynasty was at an end, but the Britons of the day accepted their fate; and not only the soldiers, but the Norman barons fused with the people of that kingdom, and largely contributed to make it what it now is. This fusion of races, this assimilation of sentiments, this interchange of thought, this kindly culture, the higher elevating the lower, among whom they permanently reside, must always tend to great and good ends in raising a people to a nobler intellectual state....

---

12. Bunaíodh an t-alt seo ar léacht a thug Wilde don Anthropological Section of the British Association i mBéal Feirste i 1874.

It appears to me that one of our great difficulties in Ireland has been the want of fusion – not only of races, but of opinions and sentiments, in what may be called a “give and take” system. As regards the intermixture, I think there cannot be a better one than the Saxon and the Celt....

Is féidir a áiteamh nach ann do dhinimic seo an oirthearachais i gcás an choibhnis idir mé féin agus MC toisc nach bhfuil na túsphointí cultúrtha atá againn beirt rófhada óna chéile. Anuas air sin níl aon tsuim agam fuint a dhéanamh ar sheanchas MC ar bhealach a fheileann do mo chuid riachtanas cultúrtha féin i leith an choibhnis eadrainn. B’fhéidir gur fearr breathnú ar an dinimic seo ó thaobh na taithí éagsúla atá againn beirt ar chultúr iarchoilíneach na hÉireann seachas ar dhinimic ann féin a bhaineann leis an gcoibhneas idir an traidisiún béil agus an litearthacht nó ar dhinimic a bhaineann leis an gcaidreamh atá ag an taighdeoir páirce agus leis an tráchtairé ó chultúr dúchais. Is fearr an spléachadh a fhaightear ar dhinimicí na litearthachta agus na heitneolaíochta i gcomhthéacs níos leithne an tsaoil chultúrtha a bhfuil taithí ag an mbeirt againn air. I gcás na hÉireann, ar aon chaoi, is féidir na dinimicí seo a lonnú i ndioscúrsa atá níos leithne ná na réimsí léinn a n-eascraíonn siad astu.

Feictear dom, chomh maith, gur laghdaíodh go mór ar an gcoimhlint idir feidhm an taighdeora agus cur in iúl an tráchtairé de bhrí go bhfuil i bhfad níos mó tuiscintí comónta cultúrtha eadrainn ná mar atá ann go hiondúil i dtionscnamh eitneolaíoch den chineál seo. Is minic a thagann an t-eitneolaí nó an taighdeoir i dteagmháil leis an gcultúr (pobal andúchasach allúrach go hiondúil) atá faoi chaibidil mar choimhthíoch iomlán. Éiríonn leis, de réir a chéile, eolas a chur ar chultúr agus ar ghnásanna saoil an phobail eile agus is beag a fhoghlaimíonn na dúchasaigh faoi shaol agus faoi chultúr an taighdeora. Tá an caidreamh cultúrtha agus sóisialta idir an dá thaobh bunaithe ar chleachtas agus riachtanas an taighde amháin go hiondúil.<sup>13</sup> Tá dlúthbhaint ag forbairt chuntas MC leis an gcaidreamh atá agam le MC, ach tá an coibhneas eadrainn i bhfad níos casta ná caidreamh taighde mar tá neart eolais againn ar ghnásanna saoil agus cultúrtha an duine eile atá neamhspleách ar an aithne a chuir muid ar a chéile de bharr an chomhoibrithe ar an saothar seo.

Is cainteoir neamhmhaoithneach dúchais Gaeilge MC a thograigh scéal a bheatha a réiteach agus a d’aimsigh eagarthóir nach den inneach cultúrtha<sup>14</sup> céanna teanga é le cúnaimh a thabhairt dó a scéal a chur i bhfoirm théacsúil. Ar an gcéad sracfhéachaint shamhlófaí bearna chultúrtha sách leathan idir an dá chomhthéacs seo, ach má théitear i mbun na gnéithe eitneacha den idirdhealú a iniúchadh, ní thioctar ar dheighilt ghlan idir an dá staid. Níl aon dabht ach go bhfuil túsphointí éagsúla againn, ach níl bunús inaitheanta eitneach leis an éagsúlacht eadrainn níos

---

13. Léiriú den bhearna chultúrtha seo is ea eitneagraf Mhessenger (1969), *Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland*, ar Inis Oírr. Tá an plé a dhéanann Standún (1993) ina úrscéal, *The Antraipeologicals*, ar an gcol a ghlac ‘muintir an Ghleana’ leis an méid a léiríodh fúthu i bhfoilseachán an antraipeolaí bunaithe ar an dearcadh doicheallach a bhí ag cuid mhór de mhuintir Inis Oírr ar shaothar Mhessenger.

14. Baile Átha Cliathach a tógadh le Béarla atá ionam.

mó i ngeall ar an sealbhú éagsúil a rinneadh ar bhunteanga a chéile i gcomhthéacs staid dhébhéascnach a bhfuil an dá theanga á labhairt inti. Dar ndóigh, ba shealbhú éigeantach a chuir MC i gcrích i bhfianaise oll-láithreach na mórtheanga sa gcoibhneas teangeolaíoch. Is fada seo ón rogha shaor a rinne mé féin i gcomhthéacs stádais mhionlaigh/mhórlaigh a bhfuil an dá theanga ann in Éirinn iarchoilíneach ár linne, rogha a raibh pribhléid an oideachais mar bhuntaca léi. Ní gá a rá gur lú an riachtanas atá le foghlaim teanga a bhfuil stádas íseal léi, ach is sealbhú riachtanach é má táthar le heolas a chur ar an bpobal sin. Ar an gcaoi chéanna go bhfuil eolas ag MC ar chultúr teanga an mhórlaigh beag beann ar staidéar comhfhiosach, tá neart eolais agamsa ar chultúr MC a dtiocfaí air b'fhéidir, agus fráma tagartha na heitniúlachta a bheith agat nó gan a bheith, i ngeall ar an gcoibhneas cultúrtha atá idir an dá theanga.

Is cinnte go bhfuil taithí éagsúil againn ar an gcoibhneas seo, ach i ndeireadh na dála, is é an coibhneas céanna é. Tuigeann na páirtithe sa tionscnamh seo gur áit imeallach, in ainneoin reitric idé-eolaíochta agus foirmeáltacht teanga eilimintí den aicme ceannais agus stáit, atá ag an nGaeilge agus ag an nGaeltacht i bhforás soch-chultúrtha agus eacnamaíoch Éire ár linne. Fearacht formhór mhuintir na Gaeltachta níl MC ná JC dall ar an tsáinn íoróineach chultúrtha a bhfuil siad ann – saintréith eitneach an Éireannachais a bheith imeallaithe ag an náisiún-stát Éireannach. Thagair Ó Riain (1994: 98) agus An Coiste Comhairleach Pleanála Bhord na Gaeilge (1988: xxxi) do na próisis seo mar dhearcadh *laissez faire* an stáit chórais. Baineann Ó Ciosáin (1991: 15) úsáid as téarma Hechter (1975) 'internal colonialism' le cur síos a dhéanamh orthu. Déanann Ó Huallacháin (1994: 160-61) anailís ar neamhchúram an stáit i gcás na teanga beo. Deir Ó Murchú (1970: 29):

Tá Béarla in uachtar in gach réimse sa chuid is mó den tír agus níl ag an nGaeilge, d'ainneoin feidhm na heitniúlachta a bheith i gcónaí aici, ach ionad ar imeall an phatrúin.

Maíonn Ó Crualaoich (1989: 117) go mbreathnaíonn an státchóras ar an nGaeilge mar chineál 'consumer commodity' is gá a choinneáil ar an margadh oscailte; anailís atá gaolmhar leis an dearcadh *laissez faire* a aithnítear in aeráid chultúrtha ár linne.

### **Eitniúlacht agus difríochtaí cultúrtha**

Is féidir na difríochtaí cultúrtha idir mé féin agus MC a aithint go héasca ag leibhéil shoch-chultúrtha ar nós contrárthachtaí uirbeacha/tuaithe, aoise (glúinte éagsúla), aicme (oilíuint fhoirmeálta) agus teanga dúchais, ach ba dheacra deighilt eitneach shoiléir a aimsiú eadrainn. Tá an bheirt againn dátheangach, le teangacha dúchais éagsúla, ach ní fhéadfaí a mhaíomh go bhfuil taithí againn ar chultúr dé-eithneach.<sup>15</sup> Tá an iomarca treasnaithe agus comhthuisicintí idir an dá phobal teanga sa gcomhthéacs iarchoilíneach a chruthódh deighilt sho-aitheanta eitneach eadrainn.

---

15. Pléann Fishman (1989: 190) coincheap na dé-eitniúlachta (*di-ethnia*).

Maíonn Fishman (1989: 24-28) go bhfuil dhá bhuntréith chomhlántacha a shainmhíniú eitniúlacht do phobal eitneach, is é sin atharacht agus oidhreacht.<sup>16</sup> Breathnaítear ar an atharacht mar thréith dhothrachta a bhfuil bunús gineolaíoch léi agus tagraíonn oidhreacht do shraith tréithe is gá a shealbhú le go mbeifí in ann a bheith páirteach i saol cultúrtha an phobail; feictear san eitniúlacht meascán de thréithe bitheolaíochta agus foghlamtha:

The paternity dimension of ethnicity is related to questions of how ethnicity collectivities come into being and how individuals get to be members of these collectivities. The patrimony dimension of ethnicity is related to questions of how ethnic collectivities behave and to what their members do in order to express their membership. ...

Paternity defines those who inherit a heritage. Patrimony is the bulk of that heritage (of collectivity-defining behaviors) *per se*, which some may put to good use and others may squander and still others may ignore entirely. Paternity is evaluative primarily *vis-a-vis* those who are outside the fold. Patrimony, on the other hand, is evaluative, both on an external and on an internal dimension. Conceptual systems and cosmologies that emphasize the paternity to the exclusion of patrimony (or vice versa) break out of the fold of ethnicity *per se* and become either racial/caste systems, on the one hand, or achieved status systems, on the other hand. It is a defining distinction of the ethnicity experience that it requires both paternity and patrimony emphases, regardless of the tension and the movement that may go on between them (Fishman 1989: 28).

Comhlíonann MC dhá choincheap na heitniúlachta, atharacht agus oidhreacht, ach is comhlíonadh coimpléascach páirteach atá agamsa. B'fhéidir go gcomhlíonaim cuid mhór de riachtanais na hoidhreachta a bhaineann le heitniúlacht MC, ach is cinnte nach gcomhlíonaim riachtanas na hatharachta; ní hann don nasc bitheolaíoch nó gineolaíoch, nasc a shamhlófaí mar ghaol fola nó clainne leis an bpobal. Ach feictear dom go ligeann pobal eitneach na Gaeilge riachtanas na hatharachta ar ceal má théann baill an phobail teanga eile in Éirinn i mbun shealbhú na hoidhreachta Gaeilge i gcaoi sách dáiríre. Is as comhthuiscintí stairiúla ar an Éireannachas, atá ag an dá phobal teanga in Éirinn, a eascraíonn an scaoilteacht seo ó thaobh choincheap na hatharachta de. Cuireann na comhthuiscintí seo comhthéacs ar an díshealbhú teangeolaíoch a thit amach ón tseachtú haois déag ar aghaidh, ach nár cúireadh dlús leis ach sa naoú haois déag. Is cuid lárnach den fhéinaithint eitneach iad na slait tomhais atá ag an bpobal eitneach le duine coimhthíoch a aithint agus a dheighilt amach óna n-eitniúlacht féin. Feictear nach mar a chéile go hiondúil na slait tomhais a chuirtear i bhfeidhm le tomhais eitneach a dhéanamh ar Éireannach a d'fhoghlaim an Ghaeilge agus ar dhuine ó thír iasachta a shealbhaigh í. Géilleann an dara duine sa dá chás thuas do shainmhíniú cruinn an choimhthís, ach tá an chéad duine i gcás níos achrannaí. Is féidir leis a bheith coimhthíoch agus páirteach sa dúchas ag an am céanna.

---

16. Is iad 'paternity' agus 'patrimony' na téarmaí a mbaineann Fishman (1989:25) úsáid astu.



Má mhaítear go bhfuil cumas dátheangach againn ach i gcomhthéacs dé-eithneach, caithfear a mhaíomh, mar sin, go bhfuil duine de phobal MC a thugann a chúl lena theanga dhúchais ag maireachtáil sa gcomhthéacs céanna mar is fada an lá anois ó d'iontaigh an Ghaeltacht ina haonad dátheangach (cf. Ó Tuathaigh 1990, Ó Murchú 1970: 32). Dar ndóigh, ba áiféiseach an ráiteas í; is aonad dátheangach an Ghaeltacht, ach ní aonad dé-eitneach í.

Má fhágtar páirt JC<sup>17</sup> sa tionscnamh as an áireamh go fóill beag feictear gurb éard atá ann ná saothar comhoibritheach a chuir beirt, a bhfuil neart comhthuisicintí eitneacha eatarthu, i dtoll a chéile i gcomhthéacs na bhfadhbanna litearthachta atá ag an bpobal Gaeltachta i gcónaí, agus is saothar é a tháinig faoi anáil an fhoráis atá tagtha ar litearthacht na teanga de bharr shaothrú na Gaeilge ag leibhéal na litearthachta ar an lámh eile.

### **Eitneagrafaíocht agus an cainteoir dúchais**

Ethnography's disappearing object [cultúr dúchasach] is, then, in significant degree, a rhetorical construct legitimating a representational practice: "salvage" ethnography in its widest sense. The other is lost, in disintegrating time and space, but saved in the text. The rationale for focusing one's attention on vanishing lore, for rescuing in writing the knowledge of old people, may be strong (though it depends on local circumstances and cannot any longer be generalized). I do not wish to deny specific cases of disappearing customs and languages, or to challenge the value of recording such phenomena. I do, however, question the assumption that with rapid change something essential ("culture"), a coherent differential identity, vanishes. And I question, too, the mode of scientific and moral authority associated with salvage, or redemptive, ethnography. It is assumed that the other society is weak and "needs" to be represented by an outsider (and that what matters in its life is past, not present or future). The recorder and interpreter of fragile custom is custodian of an essence, unimpeachable witness to an authenticity. (Moreover, since the "true" culture has always vanished, the salvaged version cannot be easily refuted) (Clifford 1986: 112-3).

Is ceist anróiteach í feidhm an antraipeolaí nó an bhéaloideasóra nó an taighdeoir teanga i gcomhthéacs an chultúir eile. Dar le Clifford (1986: 113) go mbíodh an antraipeolaíocht chultúrtha go mór faoi anáil dearcadh seanbhunaithe éigeandála agus léamh éabhlóideach ar chultúr. Is féidir rian áirithe den dearcadh seo a aithint ar an disciplín i gcónaí, dar leis. Is é sin go dtairgíonn an brainse seo den eolaíocht an deis deiridh tarrthála do na cultúir imeallaithe sa domhan nua-aoiseach. Maíonn sé go bhféadfaí olltionchar na dinimice seo a aithint ar léann na hantraipeolaíochta agus go bhfuil cleachtas na heolaíochta seo préamhaithe i gcontrárthacht dhénártha réamhcheaptha idir an tsibhialtacht agus an primitíbhéachas.

---

17. Is spéisiúil ann féin gurbh i dtaobh tráchtairéachta ar a n-óige i gConamara ba mhó a theastaigh cúnaimh JC cé gur óige JC ná MC. Baineann cáil JC i leith an tseanchais le hábhar anseo, braithim go n-airíonn MC go gcaithfidh sé géilleadh do scil reacaireachta JC nuair atá an bundúchas i gConamara á phlé i ngeall nach gcreideann MC go bhfuil sé chomh hinniúil le JC ó thaobh na teanga de leis an dúchas seo a thabhairt chun solais.

Is minic a phléitear téama na tarrthála i gcomhthéacs bhéaloideas na hÉireann chomh maith. Tá sampla maith le fáil sa léacht a thug J. H. Delargy d'Acadamh na Breataine i 1945:

The pressing need for the present is the systematic and active collection of the oral tradition of the peoples of the world, for soon will come a time when no man can work, when the resources of tradition will have dried up in the drifting sands of progress, and the voice of the story teller and tradition bearer will be stilled forever. Those of us who are at work in the ever-narrowing field of Gaelic oral tradition have no illusions. Our duty is clear, the task is an urgent one, and we have so little time (Delargy 1945: 46).

Tá a fhios agam nach scéalta béaloidis ná eitneagraf<sup>18</sup> atá i saothar MC agus nach bhfuil mise ag glacadh cúram an eitneagrafaí i gcás chultúr MC, cé go bhfuil léargais ar eitneagrafaíocht a chultúir ina scéal, ach ó thaobh an disciplín de ní gaol rófhada amach é idir iad agus an stair shaoil a dtugann sé cuntas dúinn air. Ach tá a fhios agam ón aithne atá agam ar MC nár le teann tarrthála a chuaigh sé i mbun na hoibre go príomha agus nár earcaíodh mise sa tionscnamh mar speisialtóir tarrthála. An fonn chun é féin a chur in iúl ba bhunús lena thabhairt faoin tionscnamh, ach d'airigh sé a éagumas litearthachta mar bhac sa bpróiseas agus ba i ngeall air sin a chuaigh sé ar thóir cúnaimh leis an gcuid sin den chur in iúl a chur i gcrích.

Is fíor nach féidir éalú go hiomlán ó dhioscúrsa na tarrthála nuair a théitear i mbun acmhainní béil a chur i bhfoirm théacsúil:

Every description or interpretation that conceives itself as “bringing a culture into writing,” moving from oral-discursive (the “native’s,” the fieldworker’s) to a written version of that experience (the ethnographic text) is enacting the structure of “salvage.” To the extent that the ethnographic process is seen as inscription (rather than, for example, as transcription, or dialogue) the representation will continue to enact a potent, and questionable, allegorical structure (Clifford 1986: 113).

Is áis sheachta, inscaipthe an téacs a bhunaíonn an insint aonair agus a d'fhéadfadh a ghabháil i gcion ar léamha reatha den chultúr sin fiú ag leibhéal an traidisiúin bhéil. Ach tá an fhoirm thras-scríofa d'acmhainní béil i bhfad níos neodraí i gcás dhioscúrsa na tarrthála (seachas más cúis tarrthála atá ag an reacaire, dar ndóigh) mar is léiriú é a fhágann an insint, den chuid is mó,<sup>19</sup> faoi smacht an chainteora seachas faoi smacht an taighdeora nó an scríbhneora. Níl ann ach géilleadh páirteach do riachtanas an mheáin nó do mhodheolaíocht an disciplín; ní ghéilleann an cainteoir a léamh ar an ábhar go hiomlán don speisialtóir.

---

18. Is é eitneagrafaíocht an téarma atá agam den bhrainse seo den eolaíocht; tagraíonn eitneagraf do shaothar eitneagrafaíochta agus is é eitneagrafaí an *nomen agentis*.

19. Dar ndóigh is ceist smachta í chomh maith dualgas an eagarthóra: céard a chuirtear ann nó as; cén t-ord a leagtar an cur síos amach ann; agus cén mhodheolaíocht a roghnaítear mar bhunús leis an gcóras tras-scríofa.

Ceist chasta atá ann sa ngluaiseacht seo ón insint bhéil go léiriú téacsúil ar thaithí an duine nó a léamh ar a chultúr.

Whatever else an ethnography does, it translates experience into text.... Since antiquity the story of a passage from aural/oral into writing has been a complex and charged one. Every ethnography enacts such a movement, and this is one source of the peculiar authority that finds both the rescue and the irretrievable loss – a kind of death in life – in the making of texts from events and dialogues. Words and deeds are transient (and authentic), writing endures (as supplementary and artifice). The text embalms the event as it extends its “meaning.” ... And much of the power and pathos of ethnography derives from the fact that it has situated its practice within this crucial transition. The fieldworker presides over, and controls in some degree, the making of a text out of life (Clifford 1986: 115-6).

Tarraingíonn an téacs, dar le Clifford, gné nua isteach sa dioscúrsa mar is féidir leis an téacs áit a ghlacadh i ndioscúrsa an traidisiúin bhéil ar nós gur gluaiseacht fhille atá i gceist leis ó amháibhar an chultúir go léiriú téacsúil agus ina dhiaidh sin is féidir leis an téacs a ghabháil i bhfeidhm ar an gcultúr ar tháinig sé as. B’fhéidir nach mbeadh pobal an traidisiúin bhéil sách oilte le hiniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an bhfianaise téacsúil, ach ní hin le rá go mbeidís dall ar an méid a scríobhadh fúthu. Deir MC:

*An méid atá scríofa faoi Ráth Chairn go dtí seo, daoine óga a scríobh é – rudaí a chualadar ó dhaoine eile. Bhuel, ní hé gur chuala mise é, tháinig mé thríd, tháinig mé thríd chuile shórt acu seo agus tá mé ag inseacht mo scéal sa gcaoi a bhfaca mé rudaí. Tá mise ag tabhairt pictiúr sa scéal seo ar Chonamara agus ar Ráth Chairn, tá mé ag tabhairt an phictiúr ar an rud a tharla. An dream óg a bhí ag scríobh – bhuel, cén chaoi a mbeadh a fhios acu sin tada. B’fhéidir go dtiocfaidís ag caint le seandúine go n-inseodh sé rud eicínt dhóibh agus thiocfaidís go dtí an chéad fhear eile agus d’inseodh sé rud eicínt eile dhóibh. Níl acu ach scéalta a chualadar, ach tá mise ag inseacht an rud a tharla, an rud a chonaic mé fhéin agus tá mé in ann seasamh taobh thiar de chuile fhocal atá mé a rá. (MC 8.4)*

Ní gá go mbeadh an léiriú atá sa téacs costha orthu de bhrí nach bhfuil siad féin inniúil ar na scileanna ba ghá leis an téacs a chruthú sa gcéad áit. Fágann sin nach bhfuil monaplacht ag an eitneagrafaí ar an gcultúr sin níos mó (Clifford 1986: 117); tugann an téacs (nó léargais an téacs) deis do na dúchasaigh a mbrí féin a bhaint as an léiriú a tugadh ar a gcultúr san eitneagraf agus is minic is féidir leis an bpobal dúchasach na léargais a d’eascair as an ngluaiseacht ó ghnás an traidisiúin bhéil go dtí riachtanas na litearthachta a insealbhú sa bhféin-íomhá atá acu orthu féin. I ndeireadh na dála feictear gur coibhneas é a bhfuil gluaiseacht i gceist ón dá thaobh ann nó mar a deir Clifford (1986: 119):

If the ethnographer reads culture over the native’s shoulder, the native also reads over the ethnographer’s shoulder as he or she writes each cultural description.

## Reacaireacht agus feidhm an eagarthóra

Is minic a bhraitear caidreamh doicheallach, i gcás saothar eitneagrafaíochta, ag an cur in iúl a rinneadh sa gcaint bheo i gcomhthéacs an chaidrimh idirphearsanta leis an modh oibre a cleachtaíodh leis an ábhar a chur ar fáil i bhfoirm théacsúil:

In oral history the balance of power between the informants and historians is in the historian's favor, for he asks the questions, sorts the accounts for the relevant information, and edits his way through a coherent whole (Titon 1980: 283).

Life history materials are seldom the product of the informant's clearly articulated, expressive chronological account of his life (Langness 1965: 48).

Pre-literate (the phrase contains a story) societies are oral societies; writing comes to them from the "outside," an intrusion from the wider world. Whether brought by missionary, trader, or ethnographer, writing is both empowering (a necessary, effective way of storing and manipulating knowledge) and corrupting (a loss of immediacy, of face to face communication Socrates cherished, of the presence and intimacy of speech) (Clifford 1986: 118).

Tugtar faoi deara i saothair eitneagrafaíochta go ndéanann an lucht eagarthóireachta iarracht phointeáilte lena ról agus a bhfeidhm i gcruthú an téacs nó an chuntais a léiriú. In éindí le cuntas nó faisnéis an chainteora, léirítear ceisteanna an eagarthóra nó cén uair a stop an t-eagarthóir an tráchttaireacht ar mhaithe le pointe a shoiléiriú dó féin. Baineann an phointeáilteacht seo leis an bplé seo ar sheilbh an ábhair; tá an t-eagarthóir sa gcás seo ag iarraidh a bheith oscailte faoin anáil a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ag a stiúir ar fhorás na faisnéise. Níor bhac mé féin le gnásanna eagarthóireachta den chineál seo toisc go bhfuil cuid mhór den chuntas bunaithe ar thráchttaireacht a d'aithris sé as a stuaim féin agus, maidir liomsa, cheap mé go mbainfeadh nótaí léiritheacha den chineál seo d'fhorás an chuntais agus agus den téacs. Leag mé amach sa modh eagarthóireachta, a cuireadh le buntéacs MC, an t-eolas a mheas mé a bheith riachtanach i gcás mo róil féin sa tionscnamh, agus ina dhiaidh sin bhreathnaigh mé chuige go ndíreofaí ar fhorás an chuntais.

Go híoróineach, b'fhéidir go mbeadh an t-eagarthóir ní ba sháití in insint an reacaire ná mar a theastódh uaidh sa gcéad áit mar thoradh ar an dearcadh ríphointeáilte seo i dtaobh an chuntais. Shíl mé gur mhacánta cur isteach an eagarthóra sa dioscúrsa a choinneáil amach as an léiriú téacsúil chomh fada ab fhéidir. Le modh oibre ar an mbonn seo tugtar tús áite don bhuninsint nó d'amhábhair an chuntais. Is cinnte go bhfuil an modh eile níos léirithí, ach feictear dom go mbíonn an cuntas loicthe ag tíorántacht na modheolaíochta sa gcás sin agus go mbíonn an bunábhar atá le léiriú plúchta ag riachtanas na heolaíochta, agus is marú le cineáltas a thoradh sa deireadh. Tá a fhios agam dá ndéanfainnse an eagarthóireacht ar an gcaoi léiritheach ar ábhar MC go mbeadh sé ina chúis inní dó go raibh mo ról sa tionscnamh rófheiceálach. Ceist údaráis í go bunúsach, thuig MC gur aige a bhí an t-údarás toisc gur leis an cuntas, agus i ndeireadh na dála ní ar mhaithe le cúinsí taighde a chuaigh sé i mbun na hoibre an chéad lá.

Cé go gcreidim go dtugann an modh oibre seo níos mó saoirse don reacaire, ó thaobh insint an chuntais de, caithfear a admháil nach nochtaítear gach eilimint dá chuid reacaireachta go huile is go hiomlán de bharr mhí-fheiliúnacht na

modheolaíochta i gcorráit. Ach siod iad na teorainneacha a leagtar anuas ar an bpróiseas sa ngluaiseacht ón gcuntas taifeadta go dtí an téacs. B'fhéidir go dtabharfaí chun solais ní b'fhearr iad dá bpléifí le cuid den ábhar ag leibhéal an phróis, ach dar liom go mba liopasta an cur chuige imeacht ón insint bhéil go dtí cumadóireacht phróis de réir mar a d'fheilfeadh sé don ábhar. Ní hionann cuntas béil agus cuntas próis agus b'fhánach cuntas amháin a thomhas i dtéarmaí an fhráma thagartha atá ag an gceann eile:

You cannot without serious and disabling distortion describe a primary phenomenon by starting with a subsequent secondary phenomenon and paring away the differences (Ong 1993: 13).

Is léir go mbreathnaíonn pobail neamhliteartha ar an scríbhneoireacht mar ghné choimhthíoch dá saol. Ba sa gcomhthéacs seachtrach seo a chonaic MC riachtanas na litearthachta do léiriú a chuntais; b'éard a tharla sa deireadh ná go raibh air a ghabháil taobh amuigh dá dhlúthphobal áitiúil agus de phobal Chonamara, ag leibhéal níos leithne, le duine a aimsiú a bheadh in ann nó toilteanach cúnaimh a thabhairt dó. Dar ndóigh, ní pobal réamhliteartha nó neamhliteartha pobal Chonamara, ach is ea i gcás thaithí MC air; scríobh Ong i dtaobh an phointe seo:

Today primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality (Ong 1993: 11).

There is hardly an oral culture or a predominantly oral culture left in the world today that is not somehow aware of the vast complex of powers forever inaccessible without literacy (Ong 1993: 14-5).

Agus ní duine neamhliteartha é MC; tá sé eolasach ar chuid mhór de *chorpus* litríocht bhéil na Gaeilge agus ar thraidisiún saibhir na n-amhrán i gConamara,<sup>20</sup> agus anuas air sin tá léamh an Bhéarla aige, ach níl léamh na Gaeilge aige agus mar sin is féidir linn glacadh leis gur duine neamhliteartha é ag leibhéal feidhmiúil chomh fada is a bhaineann sé le cúraimí na hoibre seo. Is seanscéal é laigeacht litearthachta chainteoir dúchais Gaeltachta sa nGaeilge le hais litearthacht an Bhéarla in Éirinn, agus is cinnte nach bhfuil sárú na faidhbe seo aimsithe go fóill in ainneoin oideachas a bheith ar fáil sna Gaeltachtaí ag an dara chomh maith leis an mbunleibhéal sa lá atá inniu ann, cf. Denvir (1989: 21-22),

... tá ag teip ar an gcóras oideachais litearthacht fholláin Ghaeilge a chur ar fáil do Ghaeilgeoirí ó dhúchas ar chaighdeán na litearthachta ag a macasamhla de chainteoirí Béarla, agus is i ndonacht a théas an scéal de réir mar is sine an páiste. Rud coitianta ag cainteoirí dúchais Gaeilge a n-aois léitheoireachta Béarla a bheith i bhfad chun cinn ar a n-aois léitheoireachta Gaeilge... Go dtí go mbeidh comhlitearthacht ag daoine óga i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla, áfach, ní bheidh ag an nGaeilge in intinn cainteoirí óga dúchais ach áit an tsoip.

---

20. Cuireann Denvir (1996: 37) duine d'fhilí an traidisiúin seo, Colm de Bhailís, i gcomhthéacs níos leithne thraidisiúin leanúnach na héigse dúchais.

Tá na ceantracha dúchais Gaeilge ag gabháil i ngleic le gnásanna nua litearthachta i gcónaí atá éagsúil leis an traidisiún liteartha a fáisceadh as cúinsí soch-chultúrtha dúchais. Tá nualitearthacht á brú anuas ar sheanghnás liteartha agus ar thraidisiún béil faoi anáil ghnásanna nua maireachtála a bhfuil cumas litearthachta riachtanach iontu. Is gá, áfach, an oll-litearthacht nó an nua-litearthacht a iniúchadh mar fheiniméan soch-pholaitiúil seachas mar chleachtas nua cultúrtha ann féin. Ní fhéadfaí croí na dinimice idir an reaire agus an t-eagarthóir a nochtadh go hiomlán le hanailís atá bunaithe ar mhúnlaithe éagsúla síceolaíocha atá préamhaithe sa traidisiún béil nó sa litearthacht. Is gné lárnach é an comhthéacs cultúrtha a maireann an dá pháirtí sa tionscnamh ann do léiriú na dinimice seo i ngeall ar an léargas a thugann sé ar an gcoibhneas nó ar an gcontrárthacht eitniúlachta, más ann dó, idir an reaire agus an t-eagarthóir.

### **Téis Ong agus saothar MC**

Ar an gcaoi chéanna le MC níl cumas litearthachta aige, ach tá a fhios aige go dteastaíonn sé don chur in iúl atá beartaithe aige dá scéal. Músclaíonn sé seo an cheist faoin gcoibhneas idir an cultúr béil agus gnás na litearthachta, agus faoin tionchar atá ag an dá ghné seo ar mhúnlú an chuntais bhéil. Nó mar a mhaíodh Ong, b'fhéidir go bhfuil MC agus mé féin ag breathnú ar an sprioc céanna, téacs cóirithe a chur ar fáil, ach go bhfuil muid ag díriú ar an ábhar ar bhealaí éagsúla i ngeall ar na frámaí tagartha síceolaíocha a bheith múnlaithe ag an dá thaithí saoil éagsúla: MC ag an traidisiún béil agus mise ag an litearthacht. Ach i gcás an phlé atá anseo faoi shuíomh MC sa dioscúrsa seo, caithfear a aithint i dtosach nach bhfeileann a chás seisean go héasca don teoiric a bhaineann le dinimicí síceolaíocha an chultúir bhéil mar níl an taithí saoil atá aige teoranta don bhunstaid chultúrtha seo. Aithníonn Ong (1993: 11) gur ar éigean atá ann don bhunstaid ghlan seo sa domhan níos mó agus go bhfuil an duine sa gcultúr béil agus an duine le cumas litearthachta ag teacht faoi anáil 'secondary orality' theicneolaíocht físe agus leictreonach Bhaile Dhomhanda McLuhan (Ong 1993: 136). Is cultúr béil nua é ach ar scála i bhfad níos leithne.

Aithnítear sa leasú a dhéanann Ong ar léamh Lévi-Strauss ar an meon primitibheach i gcomhthéacs a chuid anailíse ar dhinimicí síceolaíocha an traidisiúin bhéil go dtagann sé faoi anáil na seanchontrárthacha antraipeolaíochta idir an primitibheachas agus an tsibhialtacht: 'the savage mind totalizes (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 245)' le hais 'the oral mind totalizes (Ong 1983: 175).' Samhlaíonn sé struchtúrú éagsúil ar dhearcadh saoil an duine réamhliteartha ó dhearcadh an duine liteartha i ngeall ar na dinimicí síceolaíocha éagsúla atá taobh thiar den dá staid seo.

Persons whose world view has been formed by high literacy need to remind themselves that in functionally oral cultures the past is not felt as an itemized terrain, peppered with verifiable and disputed 'facts' or bits of information. It is the domain of the ancestors, a resonant source for renewing awareness of the present existence, which itself is not an itemized terrain either. Orality knows no lists or charts or figures (Ong 1983: 98).

Orally managed language and thought is not noted for analytic precision (Ong 1983: 104).

Dar leis go bhfuil scileanna anailíse an duine réamhliteartha múnlaíthe ag an gcaidreamh sóisialta, go míníonn sé é féin i gcomhthéacs an tsaoil lasmuigh agus go gcaithfidh sé breathnú ar an bpobal agus an áit atá aige ann sula féidir leis féinmhíniú a sholáthar dó féin:

A sound-dominated verbal economy is consonant with aggregative (harmonizing) tendencies rather than with analytic, dissecting tendencies (which would come with the inscribed, visualized word): vision is a dissecting sense (Ong 1983: 73-4).

Maíonn sé go bhfuil an cumas anailíse atá ag an duine liteartha in ann a bheith inbhreathnaíoch toisc nach bhfuil a chuid próiseas smaointeoireachta teoranta go hiomlán don chaidreamh sóisialta níos mó. Tugann an litearthacht deis don duine seasamh siar ó nósmaireacht ealaíne agus cultúrtha an phobail réamhliteartha a bhfuil a luachanna agus a chuimhní léirithe tríothú agus túsphointe anailíse i bhfad níos neamhspleáiche a aimsiú dó féin. "Writing and print isolate (Ong 1983: 74)." Ach in éindí leis an tsaoirse anailíse nua seo a bhronnann an litearthacht ar an duine, tagann éiginnteacht, de réir Ong. Tá áit an duine sa gcomhshaol litearthachta i gcomhthéacs an chaidrimh shóisialta i bhfad níos éiginnte agus cothaíonn an staid aonarach seo inní ann (Ong 1983: 134). Bhronn nósmaireacht ealaíne an traidisiúin bhéil na múnlaí síceolaíocha ar an duine a chuidigh leis a chomhfhios a chomhtháthú le comhfhios coiteann an phobail. Scriosann gnásanna aonraithe na litearthachta straitéis chomhtháthaithe an phobail agus fágtar an duine a bhfuil taithí aige ar an gcomhshaol litearthachta leis an straitéis a chumadh dó féin. Briseann an litearthacht an teorainn atá leis an tsíce comhchoiteann agus spreagtar claonadh inbhreathnaíoch leis an oscailt seo:

Orality-literacy dynamics enter integrally into the modern evolution of consciousness toward both greater interiorization and greater openness (Ong 1983: 179).

Baineann Ong le hábhar anseo suas go pointe, ach ní dóigh liom go míníonn a théis shíceolaíoch an dinimic idir mé féin agus MC go hiomlán. Is cinnte gur spreag an caidreamh sóisialta, comhráití agus agallaimh, a bhí agam le MC agus JC cuid mhór den tráchtairacht: "Sustained thought in an oral culture is tied to communication (Ong 1983: 34)," ach rinne MC cuid mhór den tráchtairacht a thaifeadadh as a stuaim féin sula raibh agus tar éis go raibh aithne agam air.

Tá easnaimh ar chumas litearthachta MC, ach ní hionann sin agus a bheith dall ar impleachtaí an chumais sin; léiríonn sé ina iarratas go gcuirfí stíl an phróis fhoirmeálta ar a chuid tráchtairachta go dtuigeann sé, mar shampla, eilimintí de réim teanga, is é sin nach ionann an chaint i gcomhrá neamhfhoirmeálta nó reacaireacht seanchais agus réim an phróis fhoirmeálta. Cheap MC go gcaithfeadh sé a chuntas a chur i bhfeiliúint do riachtanas litearthachta nach raibh greim sách láidir aige air. Feiniméan a dtarraingíonn Ong (1983: 59) aird air ar bhealach: 'Learning to read and write disables the oral poet.' Díríonn an léitheoireacht agus an scríbhneoireacht, de réir Ong, aird an fhile bhéil ar nádúr agus smacht na faisnéise

leanúnaí, léargas a chuireann isteach ar nádúr na cumadóireachta a chleachtaíodh sé roimh shealbhú na tuairime seo; tá an chumadóireacht ag teacht faoi anáil cumais eachtraigh as sin amach.

Dar ndóigh, ní file béil é MC; is féidir breathnú ar a chuntas mar reacaireacht a cumadh i gcomhthéacs na litearthachta, ach táim den bharúil gurbh fhearr breathnú ar éifeacht na litearthachta ó thúsphointe na hidé-eolaíochta seachas ón dearcadh síceolaíoch. Tá impleachtaí síceolaíocha don aithris bhéil i gceist leis an athrú seo, ach ní ghlacaim leis gur athstruchtúrú síceolaíoch i bhfianaise réaltacht nua na litearthachta is bunús leo.

Ba ghá go gcuirfí athrú bunúsach polaitiúil i bhfeidhm le go mbeadh deis ag pobal béil (nó go mbrúifí an deis ar phobal béil) a theacht isteach ar an oll-litearthacht agus buntáistí na hinniúlachta seo thar ghnás an traidisiúin bhéil a aithint. Bunathrú sochpholaitiúil a thit amach go mórmhór ag tús an naoú céad déag ba chionsiocair leis an gclaochló cultúrtha seo. Leathnaíodh agus feabhsaíodh córas riaracháin an stáit lárnaigh sa tréimhse seo, agus eilimint riachtanach i bhfeidhmiú an chórais leathnaithe ba í an litearthacht. Leis an leathnú seo méadaíodh ar chumhachtaí an stáit i leith shaol an ghnáthdhuine agus leathnaíodh ar dhearcadh saoil an duine thar teorainn an cheantair dhúchais dá bharr, ach ba í an litearthacht an pas gluaiseachta sóisialta san athstruchtúrú sochpholaitiúil seo. Cinneadh comhfhiosach a dhéanann an pobal réamhliteartha géilleadh do riachtanas nua a bhrúnn an saol lasmuigh orthu; sealbhú scil nua i bhfianaise athraithe sóisialta seachas creimeadh síceolaíoch an mheoin réamhliteartha atá i gceist sa dinimic seo, dar liom.

Is anseo a fheicimse an deacracht leis an gcontrárthacht dénrátha idir bealaí atá préamhaithe sa bprimitíbhéachas agus sa tsibhialtacht fhorbartha sa tseananailís éabhlóideach antraipeolaíochta agus leis an gcontrárthacht shíceolaíoch sa dioscúrsa faoin ngluaiseacht ón traidisiún béil go dtí saol na litearthachta. B'fhearr liom breathnú ar an dinimic seo mar choibhneas roghnach a gcaithfidh an pobal dúchais, nó i gcás na litearthachta, an pobal réamhliteartha nó neamhliteartha, a ghabháil i ngleic leis i bhfianaise luí trom nó éadrom an tsraith bhreise saoil a dtagann siad i dteagmháil léi. Léiríonn anailís MC anseo go bhfeidhmíonn an coibhneas seo ag leibhéil éagsúla seachas mar chontrárthacht ghlan nó mar rogha dromchlach a bhfuil eilimint mhór éigeantach mar bhunús léi. Dar ndóigh tá na heilimintí seo i gceist, ach feidhmíonn siad ag leibhéil éagsúla.

Baineann an litearthacht leis an tsraith bhreise saoil seo a bhféadfadh MC a ghabháil i ngleic leis nó í a fhágáil as an áireamh. Nuair a thograigh sé tabhairt faoin tionscnamh seo tharraing sé an dioscúrsa faoin traidisiún béil agus litearthacht anuas air féin, ach rogha a bhí ann tarraingt ó nósanna saoil lasmuigh a sholáthródh comhlánú ar a chuid acmhainní neamhliteartha. Is cinnte nár bhreathnaigh MC ar ghnásanna na litearthachta mar bhagairt dá thráchttaireacht mar, i ndeireadh na dála, rinne sé neamhaird den dioscúrsa agus d'fhág sé fúmsa é an coibhneas idir a chuid cainte agus téacs a oibriú amach. Cheap seisean cuid mhór den am nach raibh ina chuid cainte ach amháibhar an scéil agus go gcaithfinn leasuithe móra a chur i gcrích le go mbeadh téacs inléite mar thoradh ar an gcomhoibriú. Ach sa deireadh ní hin an chaoi a ndearnadh é agus níor ghá tabhairt faoi eagarthóireacht den



chineál sin. Is é mo thaithí ón saothar comhoibritheach seo gur ábhar inní don eitneagrafaí nó don taighdeoir an coibhneas seo agus ní don duine ón bpobal dúchasach. Tá an cumas aige len é féin a chur in iúl ina chomhthéacs cultúrtha féin, is é sin a scéal a aithris. Is ionann é sin agus an cur in iúl liteartha a chleachtann an pobal liteartha. Sa léamh a dhéanann Clifford (1986: 117) ar Dherrida (1974) deir sé:

What matters for ethnography is the claim that *all* human groups write—if they articulate, classify, possess an “oral-literature,” or inscribe their world in ritual acts. They repeatedly “textualize” meanings.

Léiriú téacsach atá san aithris béil i gcomhthéacs an chultúir bhéil; ar an dul céanna is ionann an téacs agus an léiriú sa gcultúr liteartha.

Mara mbeadh MC ach ag iarraidh a scéal a chur ar fáil dá phobal féin ní bheadh aon chall dó eagarthóir a aimsiú. Baineann an litearthacht le sraith saoil eile agus roghnaigh sé an léiriú seo, nach raibh taithí aige air, le go leathnófaí scóip na hinste. Sa gcás seo aithníonn sé an buntáiste dá phlean sa gcoibhneas idir an dá shraith agus ní fheicim go bhféadfaí a mhaíomh go bhfuil buninsint a scéil plúchta ag gnás eachtrach mar ní mar sin a shamhlaítear an coibhneas do MC.

Ní thagann fianaise a fhaightear i dtráchtairacht MC le hanailís Ong i dtaobh na contrárthachta idir cumas anailíse an duine neamhliteartha agus liteartha. Maíonn Ong (1983: 104) gur deacair don duine ó phobal neamhliteartha féin-anailís chriticiúil a fhorbairt agus gurb í an litearthacht a spreagann an fhéith seo sa duine:

Self-analysis requires a certain demolition of situational thinking (Ong 1983: 54).

Ba leis an litearthacht a thosaigh an duine ag breathnú thar chlaí an bhaile fearainn, dar leis, agus bhris an radharc nua seo fráma tagartha síceolaíoch a d'éascair as suíomh an duine aonair i leith chaidreamh sóisialta a phobail dúchais. Maidir leis an gcultúr béil:

Judgement bears in on the individual from outside, not from within (Ong 1983: 55).

Arís caithfear a admháil nach mbaineann MC le staid ghlan chultúrtha neamhliteartha, ach ar an taobh eile is beag taithí atá aige ar ghnásanna na litearthachta. Ach is féidir dinimic Ong a aithint ar anailís MC in áiteanna, go háirithe nuair atá sé ag trácht air féin i gcomhthéacs an tsaoil a chaith sé i gConamara – baineann an cur síos sa gcás seo leis an gcaidreamh sóisialta agus le gnásanna maireachtála go mór mór. Feictear an tábhacht a chonaic sé sa gcomhthéacs sóisialta thiar agus é ag trácht ar an aistriú aniar go Ráth Chairn:

*I dtosach, b'iontach an rud é do chomhluadar a thabhairt in áit – ní raibh a fhios agat cé raibh tú ag goil, ní raibh a fhios agat cén chaoi a dtóigfí thú san áit a mbeifeá ag goil.... B'iontach an smaoiniú é, an muinín a bhí (acu) – do chlann uiliug a thabhairt an áit a mb'fhéidir nach raibh siad do t'iarraidh. Bhí na seandaoine ag caint ar rudaí mar sin. Níl sé an-éasca imeacht as do theach agus an áit a rugadh agus tóigeadh thú agus t'athair romhat, an méid a tháinig romhat, é sin a fhágáil in do dhiaidh agus a ghoil isteach in áit nach raibh a fhios agat tada faoi. B'iontach an misneach é a bhí acu san am ...(3.1.2 MC)*

*Ach ní raibh an oiread sin ansin ag iarraidh a ghoil ann. [Chuir go leor síos a n-ainmneachaí agus tharraingíodar amach as mar ní mórán fonn a bhí ar dhuine ar bith gach a raibh aige a dhíol, ach an talamh, ní fhéadfá an talamh a dhíol, .... do mhála a líonadh suas agus bualadh go Contae na Mí, tú fhéin agus an chlann. Ba mhór an rud le déanamh é, agus rud eile bhí tú ag imeacht ó do ghaolta agus ó do chomharsa agus an dream a raibh aithne agat ar feadh do shaoil, bhí tú ag tabhairt cúl do lámha dhóibh.] Bhí sé uafásach crua ar sheandaoine; bhí seandaoine os cionn cheithre scór – tháinig dar aniar anseo cuid acu, agus bhí siad ag fágáil an áit ar chaitheadar a saol, [an dream a raibh aithne agus eolas acu air agus ag goil isteach san áit nach raibh aon eolas orthu. Tháinig go leor aniar anseo nach dtáinig mórán siar ariamh.] ... (3.1.3 JC [MC]).*

Sa gcur síos a dhéanann MC agus SC ar an saol a chaith siad i gConamara feictear léiriú ar chaidreamh sóisialta i measc phobal bocht tuaithe ar mhaolaigh a leagan amach comhoibritheach cruatan a gcáis. Is spéisiúil gur cur síos seachas anailís den chuid is mó atá sa gcuid seo den seanchas, cf. m.sh.,

*Ach ní air sin atá mé ag caint anois, ach ag caint ar amantaí go mbeadh an bhó imithe amach nó, b'fhéidir go mbeadh dhá bhó imithe amach tirim agus nach mbeadh mórán bainne sa teach. Ach.... gheofá bainne óna gcomharsain. [Dhá mbeadh teach ann a mbeadh páiste lag ann agus an bhó imithe amach, ....thabharfá an oiread seo bainne chuile lá mar bhíodh bainne ag teastáil le haghaidh an pháiste. ....Bhínn ag goil isteach aige (comharsa) ag iarraidh rud ar bith, bhíodar mar a bheadh aon chomhluadar amháin, agus iad fhéin ag tíocht go dtí thú ansin ag iarraidh rud ar bith – bhíodar fhéin ag tabhairt rudaí dhá chéile, nó dhá dteastódh cúnamh uait, thabharfadh an chomharsa cúnamh dhuit. Bhíodar iontach ar an gcaoi sin!] Ach chuala mé caint ar leaid eicínt, tháinig sé ag iarraidh: “tá mé ag iarraidh ubh chirce,” a deir sé “go mbéarfai cearc” .... (2.2.5 JC [MC])*

*Bhí go leor den fheamainn a bhí ag m'athair, bhí sé taobh thoir de Charraig an Logáin, soir ag áit a dtugaidís Inis Léith (in aice le Leitir Móir) air. Bhí sé cupla míle ó bhaile agus chaitheadh sé a ghoil soir tríd an Droichead - Carraig an Logáin ar maidin roimh an lá nó de réir<sup>21</sup> an taoille, hé bith cén chaoi a mbeadh an taoille ag imeacht. .... Bhí sé fhéin agus an chomharsa ansin ar feadh an lae ag baint feamainne le scian, agus lochtófaí an bád ansin; bhíodh frapaí curtha fúithi ar thalamh tirim nuair a d'imeodh an taoille amach uaithi. Chaithidís fanacht ansin nuair a bhíodh ualach le tabhairt isteach tráthnóna - b'fhéidir gan ach píosín beag d'arán agus b'fhéidir gan tada leis go minic, agus má bhí, b'fhéidir go mbeadh ruainne ime air, agus fanacht ansin go dteagadh an taoille faoin mbád aríst a thóigfeadh í, agus ansin d'iomróidís an bád abhaile siar trí Charraig an Logáin aríst. D'athrófaí an bád an tráthnóna sin le haghaidh a bheith faoi réir aríst le ghoil ag baint tuilleadh feamainne, b'fhéidir lá arna mháireach. B'fhéidir ag an bhfear eile a bheadh an chéad trá eile agus sin an chaoi a rabhadar ag obair, obair na gcapall a bhí ann. I dteannta an méid sin, chaithfí an fheamainn sin a tharraingt aníos aríst le cliabh, aníos ón gcladach.... (2.1.5 JC)*

---

21. /gə'leɪr'/.

Tá daoine ag caint ar saol<sup>22</sup> an lae inniu go bhfuil obair chrua orthu, ach an saol a bhí ann an t-am ar mhair na daoine siúd, m'athair agus mo mháthair agus chuile dhuine eile a bhí sa Máimín ag an am, ní amháin an Máimín ach chuile bhaile eile i gConamara. Bhí an saol uafásach crua, agus mar a deir an ceann eile, ba é an coileach ar maidin a dhúisíodh iad, ní raibh a fhios agam an raibh aon chlog acu, agus is í an oíche a chuirfeadh a chodladh iad, an oíche agus an tuirse, ag obair ó dhubh go dubh, go mórmhór amach san earrach nó shula dteagadh an t-earrach ag deireadh an gheimhreadh ag baint tránnaí feamainne nuair a d'fhaighidís an deis, ag goil amach roimhe an lá, ag goil amach leis an taoille agus ansin baint na feamainne sin agus a bheith á líonadh isteach sa mbád agus fanacht ansin i do shuí sa mbád aríst go snámhfadh an bád aríst le haghaidh í a thabhairt abhaile, í a thabhairt cupla míle agus, b'fhéidir, an bád sin a fholmhú aríst agus í a bheith faoi réir le haghaidh an trá aríst maidin lá arna mháireach. B'uafásach an obair í.... (2.2.1 JC)

San am sin dhá mbeadh leaid óg ag pósadh..., ní fhéadfadh sé an bhean óg, nuair a phósfadh sé, a thabhairt isteach mar bhí an teach lán cheana. Agus bhíodar ag déanamh tithe ar na sléibhte – sin é an chaoi ar thosaigh na tithe á dhéanamh amach ar na sléibhte – agus bhí tú in ann teach a dhéanamh an uair sin, ní chuirfeadh aon duine i t'aghaidh marach go gcuirfeadh an chomharsan,<sup>23</sup> agus corruair a chuirfeadh an chomharsan i t'aghaidh le teach a thóigeáil. Nuair a bheifeá ag tóigeáil teach san am sin – ní bheadh a leithéid seo ag iarraidh ach dhá sheomra, cisteanach agus seomra – dhéanfá é sin, b'fhéidir, seachtain nó coicís mar thabharfadh na comharsanaí cúnamh dhuit. Ar ndóigh, bhí neart de na clocha ar aon nós ann. Ansin dóib a gheobhaidís sa trá, agus aol a chuirfidís idir na clocha, agus dhéanfaidís urlár dhó seo freisin. Ní raibh caint ar bith ar cement a cheannacht ná rud ar bith mar sin, ní raibh mórán costas ar bith ag baint leis – le teach a thóigeáil san am. Ansin ceann a chuirfí air, bhíodh go leor maidí acu agus bhí go leor maidí giúsaí acu, agus chuirfidís an oiread sin do rataí air, agus ansin scraith, agus tuí a chur os a chionn sin. Sin é an chaoi a ndéanfaidís an teach agus, ar ndóigh, sin é an chaoi ar déanadh an teach le céadta bliain, siar faoi Chonamara agus na háiteachaí seo.... (2.2.23 MC)

Ach i sleachta eile sa scéal is léamh inbhreathnaíoch (tuiscint phearsanta faoi leith) nó cur síos atá níos leithne ná 'léamh logánta' a fhaightear sa tráchttaireacht, go háirithe nuair atá sé ag caint ar an bpolaitíocht ba bhunús leis an aistriú aniar go Ráth Chairn, cf. m.sh.,

Ach ansin nuair a tháinig muid aniar go Ráth Chairn, níl a fhios agam céard a tharla, ach déanadh dearmad ar fad ar mhuintir Ráth Chairn. Is iomaí uair a bhím ag smaoiniú, b'fhéidir gur dhúirt mé é seo cheana, gur cuireadh aniar iad mar gheall ar an teanga nó má cuireadh, déanadh dearmad orthu fhéin agus ar an teanga, nó b'fhéidir ar an taobh eile gur cuireadh aniar iad le níos mó fairsne a fhágáil ag an dream a bhí ina ndiaidh. Sin le rá: an talamh a d'fhágadar ina ndiaidh – roinneadh suas ar na comharsanaí é. Tá a fhios an talamh a bhí againne, roinneadh ar cheathrar é, go raibh dhá ghabhaltas againn, labhair mé faoi sin cheana. Sin le rá gur rinne sé maith ar dhaoine muide ag tíocht aniar go Contae na Mí. Dhá mba í an teanga a bheadh i gceist, feictear dhom gur cheart níos mó a dhéanamh san am le muintir Ráth Chairn a choinneáil sa mbaile. Níor tharla tada ach an rud céanna

---

22. Foirm gan séimhiú.

23. [ku:ršən].

*a tharla i gConamara. Ní raibh acu ach imeacht as an tír; ní raibh acu ach imirce..... (3.4.2 MC);*

feiceann muid anailís MC ar an leagan amach sóisialta a bhíodh i gConamara agus é ag trácht ar a chuid scolaíochta, cf, m.sh.,

*Rud amháin a bhí ag tarlú, bhí an sagart agus an garda agus an múinteoir – bhíodar in aon bhun amháin. Ní raibh tú in ann do bhéal a oscailt. Tá a fhios agam go ndeachaigh mé ag scéiméarach. Chuaigh daoine nach mé ag scéiméarach. Chonaic mé leaid amháin agus tugadh an fhuil amach thrína chraiceann le maide, amach thrína dhroim agus níor déanadh tada faoi, bhí an máistir ag múineadh go ndeachaigh sé ar pinsean. Is é an chaoi a raibh sé ag an am dhá dtiocfá in aghaidh sagart, b'fhéidir go mbeifeá mórán gearrtha amach as an bparáiste, chuirfeadh sé an méid eile den pharáiste in t'aghaidh. Ag gabháil in aghaidh sagart beannaithe, bhí sé beannaithe ceart go leor, bhí sé mallaithe! .... (2.3.2 MC);*

is iomaí sliocht sa téacs a léiríonn tuiscint MC ar an gcaidreamh a bhíodh ag an gcléir leis an bpobal, cf. m.sh.,

*Oíche amháin thugadar an fear seo amach ar an altóir, dúirt siad leis an slua go raibh siad ag goil ag spáint an diabhal anocht dóibh. Bhí an diabhal tagtha ann mar gheall ar an bpoitín agus dúirt sé: “ba shíod é an diabhal,” a bhí sé ag goil ag spáineadh dhóibh mar níor thug an fear seo mórán géilleadh do céard a bhí ar bun acu. Tháinig sé ag teach an phobail ar chuma ar bith, dúradh leis, is dóigh gob in é an fáth a dúradh leis é go dtabharfaí amach ar an altóir é. Agus tugadh amach ar an altóir é, fear bocht a raibh féasóg air. Fear nach raibh, b'fhéidir, a bhricfeasta ná mórán leis an dinnéar aige, agus iad seo a bhí ag at leis an méid a bhíodar a ithe, ag tabhairt an fear sin amach, ag déanamh pléisiúr agus ag magadh faoi ar an altóir, chuirfeadh sé ag smaoiniú thú cén sórt daoine a bhí sna sagairt seo. Is uafásach an úsáid a bhíodar ag déanamh<sup>24</sup> den chailéar a bhí ar a muineál ag goil thart ag bualadh daoine.*

*Ach meas tú an ndéanfaidís an lá atá inniu ann é nó an dtabharfaí mórán géilleadh dhóibh? Sé an chaoi a mbeadh an t-aos óg ag magadh fúthu. Ach i gConamara an t-am sin bhí daoine bochta ann nach raibh mórán oideachas orthu. Dhéanfaidís an rud a déarfaí leo; bhíodar umhal..... (2.4.3 MC)*

Nuair a d'inis mé do MC go raibh eagar curtha agam ar na sleachta tráchtairachta a bhain lena óige i gConamara, leis an aistriú aniar go Ráth Chairn, leis an saol a chaith sé san Arm, leis an tréimhse a chaith sé san ospidéal de bharr eitinne, lena shaol oibre i dTeach an Chondae i mBaile Átha Troim dúirt sé go raibh téip eile aige a thaifead sé leis féin. Cuntas ar a chuid cuimhní pearsanta a bhí ann a thug súil siar ar a shaol agus ar an gcaidreamh a bhí aige lena mhuintir. Anailís agus léamh inbhreathnaíoch a bhí i mórchuid na tráchtairachta seo; ba dheacair a mhaíomh go raibh na heasnaimh ar a chumas litearthachta ina bhac air agus é ag tabhairt faoin gcineál seo anailíse as a stuaim féin, cf. m.sh.,

*Tá muid ag smaoiniú i gcónaí agus go mórmhór nuair a thioctas tú in aois. Níl tada eile fágtha ach do chuid smaointe. Nuair atá tú óg tá tú ag breathú chun cinn. Tá tú ag feiceáil*

---

24. /d'i:nə/.

*pictiúr in t'intinn, rudaí atá tú ag ceapadh<sup>25</sup> a dhéanfá dhá mbeadh airgead agat nó dhá mbeadh rud eicínt agat le é a dhéanamh. Tá an duine óg ag smaoiniú i gcónaí. Ba cheart go mbeadh ar chuma ar bith.... ag breathú amach dhó fhéin sa saol seo. Ach nuair atá na blianta ag imeacht, sa deireadh níl agat ach a bheith ag breathú siar nuair a thioctas tú amach sna blianta. Níl agat ach breathú siar ar bhóithrín na smaointe, ar do shaol agus ar an gcaoi ar chaith tú é agus meas tú dhá bhfaighfeá do roghain aríst an dtiocfá thríd an rud céanna nó an ndéanfá difreáilte ar fad é. Níl a fhios agam!..... (MC 8.4)*

*Ach cailleadh beirt deartháir agus deirfiúr le mo mháthair le fiabhras agus bhíodar ina gconaí i mBéal an Daingin, áit a thaitnigh liom. B'fhéidir go raibh níos mó údar agam é ag taitneachtáil liom ná an Máimín mar nuair a thioctainn amach go Béal an Daingin bhí mé cineál saor; bhí cineál brú sa Máimín orm nuair a bhí mé ag fás suas agus ar an gclann a bhí in éindí liom. Duine áirid a bhí i m'athair, bhí bealach dhó fhéin leis. Níl mé ag rá nach raibh sé ar an bhfear is fearr oibre sa Máimín mar chruthaigh sé é sin in imeacht na mblianta, bhí sé go maith ag obair, ach ní fear maith clainne a bhí ann. Tá a fhios agam nuair a thioctadh sé isteach tráthnóna tar éis a chuid lá oibre go gcaithfeadh muid a mbéal a choinneáil dúinte. Ní raibh sé ag iarraidh a bheith ag éisteach linn mar tá chuile pháiste nuair atá siad óg – cloisfear iad san áit nach bhfeicfear iad. Bhí seisear againn sa gclann, bhí triúr deartháir agam agus beirt deirfiúr; bhí mise ar an darna duine ab óige. Nuair a bhí mé ag fás suas – tá mé ag rá nuair a bhí mé timpeall is deich mbliana – thug mé faoi deara nach mbíodh mórán cainte idir m'athair agus mo mháthair go leor amantaí, go raibh rud eicínt ag cur isteach orthu nach raibh a fhios agamsa agus b'fhéidir nach raibh a fhios ag mórán den chlann. Ach tá a fhios agam gur imigh mo mháthair – go ndeachaigh sí isteach sa Máimín ag m'athair in aghaidh toil a muintir fhéin agus ní raibh aon duine acu ag goil isteach don Mháimín. Is dóigh san am sin go mbeifeá in ann socrú leis an sagart – ní raibh aon chall dhuit fanacht an oiread sin achair le pósadh, go raibh tú in ann é a dhéanamh i cupla lá, is dóigh gob in é an rud a tharla nuair a chuaigh sí isteach gan é a inseacht dhá muintir nó go raibh briseadh amach eicínt ann idir na Conairí agus na Lupáin. Bhí deirfiúr de m'athair pósta i mBéal an Daingin beagán blianta shular phós mo mháthair agus níl a fhios agam ar tharla tada idir iad. Ach bhí a fhios go raibh rud eicínt ann nuair a bhí mé ag fás suas mar bhíodh sé ag tabhairt amach go minic. Bean chiúin a bhí i mo mháthair, ach ní raibh m'athair chomh ciúin sin. Cuimhním oíche amháin d'imigh sé as a chiall agus ní cheapaim go mbíodh sé ag ól. D'imigh sí amach agus chuaigh mise in éindí léi agus an deartháir ab óige...., ní raibh a fhios againn cé raibh sí ag goil, ní raibh mé ag cur an oiread sin suim ann. Bhíodh sé ag tabhairt amach i gcónaí, ag tabhairt amach ar bheagán údar. Bhíodh sé ag eascainí, ach ní hé an eascainí atá anois ann – ní f-ing ná h<sup>26</sup> ná rud eicínt mar sin a bheadh aige. Bhí sé crua nuair a bhí an t-athair ar an gcaoi sin, ach is dóigh go raibh údar aige, ach ní raibh a fhios againne cén t-údar. Bhí rud eicínt mar sin ann nach raibh muide a thuiscint cén fáth ar phós sé í.... (8.1.1 MC)*

Ceistíonn na léamha i saothar MC an dearcadh ar mhúnlu áirithe na síce neamhliteartha. Is minic nach mbacann le ball an phobail neamhliteartha na hacmhainní inbhreathnaíocha a fhorbairt sa saol traidisiúnta féinchothaithe a

---

25. /k'apə/.

26. Eascainí atá i gceist anseo.

maireann sé ann, ach ní hionann sin is a mhaíomh nach bhfuil an inniúlacht síceolaíochta ag an duine ón traidisiún béil na hacmhainní dioscúrsúla a chothú sula n-éireoidh leis sealbhú réasúnta forbartha a chur i gcrích ó thaobh inniúlachta litearthachta de. Sa deireadh threasnaigh sé an dioscúrsa idir dinimic an traidisiúin bhéil agus na litearthachta chomh héasca sin go gcuirtear ina luí orainn nach bhfuil an teorainn idir an dá staid chomh hinaitheanta sin. I ndeireadh na dála, is éard is mó a theastaigh ó MC agus is éard is mó a chuidigh leis agus é ag iarraidh téacs a bhunú ar a chuntas pearsanta ná straitéis a aimsiú le freastal ar riachtanas eile cultúrtha, ar ghné nua saoil dó féin é, i ngeall ar an acmhainn a chuir sé ar fáil dó a scéal a insint agus a chur in iúl i gcomhthéacs sóisialta ní ba leithne ná a phobal áitiúil.

## Tagairtí

- Bliss, A. 1981. 'The Standardization of Irish', *The Crane Bag* 5(2),76-82.
- Bord na Gaeilge. 1988. *The Irish Language in a Changing Society: Shaping the Future*. BÁC: An Coiste Comhairleach Pleanála Bhord na Gaeilge.
- Clifford, J. 1986. 'On Ethnographic Allegory', lgh. 98-121 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Eag. Clifford, J. agus Marcus, G.E. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cuero, D. 1970. *The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero*. California: Malki Museum Press. Ceantar Caomhnaithe na nDúchasach Morongo.
- de hÍde, D. 1933. *Abhráin agus Dánta an Reachtabhraigh*. BÁC.
- Delargy, J. H. 1945. *The Gaelic Storyteller*. Londain: The British Academy.
- Denvir, G. 1989. *An Ghaeilge, an Ghaeltacht agus 1992*. BÁC: Glór na nGael.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Amhráin Choilm de Bhailís*. Conamara: Cló Iar-Chonnachta.
- Derrida, J. 1974. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. [tagairt thánaisteach ó Chlifford 1986].
- Fishman, J. A. 1989. *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters 45.
- Greene, D. 1972. *Writing in Irish Today*. Corcaigh: Cló Mhercier.
- Hechter, M. 1975. *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966*. . Londain: Routledge
- Laighléis, T. 1981 [1977]. *Seanchas Thomáis Laighléis* (Eag. Tomás de Bhaldraithe). BÁC: An Clóchomhar.
- Langness, L. L. 1965. *The Life History in Anthropological Science*. Nua-Eabhrac: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (tagairt thánaisteach ó Ong 1983).

- Messenger, J. 1969. *Inis Beag Isle of Ireland*. Nua-Eabhrac: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Nic Eoin, M. 1982. *An Litríocht Réigiúnach*. BÁC: An Clóchomhar.
- Ó Ciosáin, É. 1991. *Buried Alive: A reply to The Death of the Irish Language* (Hindley 1990). BÁC: Dáil Uí Chadhain.
- Ó Criomhthain, T. (Eag. Pádraig Ó Siochradha) 1928. *Allagar na hinise* BÁC: Oifig an tSoláthair.
- Ó Criomhthain, T. 1928a. *Dinnsheanchas na mBlascaodaí*. BÁC: Oifig an tSoláthair.
- Ó Criomhthain, T. (Eag. P. Ó Siochradha) 1929. *An tOileánach*. BÁC: An Preas Talbóideach.
- Ó Criomhthain, T. (Eag. Séamus Ó Duilearga) 1956. *Seanchas ón Oileán Tiar*. BÁC: Comhlucht Oideachais na hÉireann.
- Ó Crualaoich, G. 1989. 'Máirtín Ó Cadhain agus Dioscúrsa na Gaeilge', lgh. 166-180 *Léachtaí Uí Chadhain 1* (Eag. Eoghan Ó hAnluain). BÁC: An Clóchomhar.
- Ó Dúshláine, T. 1974. 'Litríocht as Ithir an Dúchais', *Léachtaí Cholm Cille 5*, 54-68.
- Ó Giollagáin, C. 1996. "Stairsheanchas Mhicil Chonraí: Téacs cóirithe dá chuntas saoil." Tráchtas Ph.D. An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath.
- Ó Glaisne, R. 1982. *Raidió na Gaeltachta*. Gaillimh: Cló Chois Fharraige.
- Ó Huallacháin, C. 1994. *The Irish and Irish – a sociolinguistic analysis of the relationship between a people and their language*. BÁC: Irish Franciscan Provincial Office.
- Ó Murchú, M. 1970. *Urlabhra agua Pobal*. BÁC: Comhairle na Gaeilge.
- Ong, W. 1993. *Orality and Literature: The Technologising of the Word*. London: Routledge.
- Ó Riain, S. 1994. *Pleanáil Teanga in Éirinn 1919 – 1985*. BÁC: Carbad
- Ó Súilleabháin, M. 1933. *Fiche Blian ag Fás*. BÁC: An Preas Talbóideach.
- Ó Tuathaigh, G. 1990. *The Development of the Gaeltacht as a Bilingual Entity*. Páipéar Ócáide 8. BÁC: ITÉ.
- Said, E. 1979. *Orientalism*. Nua-Eabhrac: Vintage Books.
- Sayers, P. 1936. (Eag. Máire Ní Chinnéide) *Peig*. BÁC: An Preas Talbóideach.
- Sayers, P. 1938. (Eag. Kenneth Jackson) *Scéalta ón mBlascaod*. BÁC: Oifig an tSoláthair.
- Sayers, P. 1939. (Eag. Máire Ní Chinnéide) *Machtnamh seana-mhná*. BÁC: Oifig an tSoláthair.
- Sayers, P. 1970. *Beatha Pheig Sayers* (eag. Ó Gaoithín, M.). BÁC: Foilseacháin Náisiúnta Tta.
- Standún, P. 1993. *Na hAntraipeologicals*. Conamara: Cló-Iar-Chonnachta.

- Stenson, N. agus Ó Ciardha, P. 1986-87. 'The Irish of Ráth Cairn: a contribution to the Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish Dialects', *ZCP* 41-42, lgh. 66-137. (LASID RC).
- Titon, J. T. 1980. 'The Life Story', *The Journal of American Folklore* 93, 276-292.
- Wilde, W. 1888. 'The Ancient Race of Ireland', lgh. 329-347 in Wilde, "Speranza". *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*. Londain: Ward and Downey.
- Williams, N.J.A. 1988. *Cniogaide Cnagaide*. BÁC: An Clóchomhar.



# From Homo Hierarchicus to Homo Faber: Breaking Convention Through Semeiosis<sup>1</sup>

Diane P. Mines

Washington University, St. Louis

Every symbol contains the seed of its own destruction. That seed is the index. Making use of Peirce's theories of symbol and semeiosis, I show in this paper how indexes contribute to breaking and remaking ideational or symbolic structures. I aim not to replace the sturdy symbol with the shifty index. Nor do I aim to simply add indexicality to a list of tropes, as is commonly done in citing the most popular of Peirce's triads of sign types: icon, index, and symbol. Rather, I aim here to explicate the symbol by reaching for its indexical *aspect*.

By so explicating the symbol, I am able to reanalyze fruitfully an ethnographic problem familiar to scholars of South India. That problem is this: in South Indian villages, how is the "pantheon" of Hindu gods related to the social organization of human groups into "castes" (*jātis*)?<sup>2</sup> The answer most often posed to that problem is that the one "symbolizes" or "reflects" the other. I argue here that including indexicality in this symbolization results in a more accurate analysis that better fits South Indian ways of thinking about the relationship between gods and society. Data for my reanalysis comes from Yanaimangalam, a village of some 1700 people and some 35 temples and shrines in Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu, where I conducted fieldwork from 1988-1990.

The paper is organized as follows: (1) I open up the ethnographic problem and review its most common analytic frame. I begin this first section with a brief detour through the land of Symbols and Metaphors, with Levi-Strauss as our mis-guide. Levi-Strauss, like the previous analyses I review, segregates what should be joined: symbols from indexes, and structures from events. (2) I explore some aspects of Peirce's definition of symbol and semeiosis, focusing on the vital fact that symbols are not separable from indexes; for Peirce, symbols *in use* include an indexical aspect. Along the way, I briefly demonstrate that Peirce's semeiotics, precisely because it includes an indexical (material) aspect, is akin to some Marxian theories

---

1. This paper was originally presented as part of the panel "Rethinking the Symbol" presented for the 1996 American Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco. I wish to thank the panel organizers (Steve Coleman and Barney Bate), discussant (E. Valentine Daniel), and other participants (Dale Pesmen, Penelope Papailias, and Janet McIntosh) for their contributions to my rethinkings. Data used in this paper was collected during research funded by Fulbright-Hayes, American Institute of Indian Studies, and the National Science Foundation, which organizations I also wish to thank.

2. Ethnographic analyses concerning the relation of the "village pantheon" to social organization have been under production since early in the ethnographic history of South India, beginning with missionary reports (such as those by Du Bois and Ziegenbalg) and colonial District Manuals (e.g., Pate 1917), and continuing into the present among anthropologists, including Dumont 1986 [1957], Harper 1959, Beck 1972, Beteille 1965, Srinivas 1952, Babb 1975, Fuller 1979, 1987, and Reiniche 1979.

of praxis. (3) I return to the ethnographic case and demonstrate that by taking indexicality into account, the relation between gods and social orderings among humans in South India, including their ordering into caste rank, can be more fully comprehended.

## I. Symbolizing society

Remember how Levi-Strauss told us that animals are “good to think” and not just “good to eat” (1962:62)? He was talking, of course, about Totemism. He theorized that human groups represent themselves with Totems (Kangaroos, Wombats, etc.) not because of any positive relation of contiguity or metonymy (indexicality) between the group members and the species, as Durkheim ([1915] 1965:216-7, 223) and Radcliffe-Brown, in his early analysis ([1929] 1952), had surmised. Rather, he argued, humans represent themselves with Totems because of the compelling *metaphoric* relations between two systems of difference (1962:87). We may break this metaphoric or symbolic relation down into two aspects: icon and homology. Iconically, it is the *resemblances* among the differences that matter: the differences among animals in the animal system on the one hand, and humans in the human system on the other, are mapped as structural icons of one another. Homologically, it is the structure of thought itself that, projected onto both animal and human planes, creates the iconic resemblances among the differences (see for example, 1962:90-91). Levi-Strauss argued, in other words, that thought, a symbolic system of structured oppositions, projects onto and determines the iconic resemblance between animal and human planes.

In this model of Totemism, Levi-Strauss purposefully sundered metonym from metaphor (or index from symbol using Peirce’s terms). The metonym (indexical trope), he said, belongs to the order of *event* as opposed to the metaphor (symbolic trope) which belongs to the order of *structure* (*ibid.*:27). Totemism made sense to Levi-Strauss primarily on the level of structure.

This very same separation of metonym and event from metaphor and structure characterizes symbolic analyses that have been used to map the Hindu village pantheon to social orderings among castes in south Indian villages. Perhaps the most well-known of these analyses is Louis Dumont’s early ethnographic study of a caste known as the Pramalai Kallar in western Tamilnadu, a work that in many ways forms the basis for his later thesis on caste (1970). Based on fieldwork he conducted in the 1940’s, Dumont argued that the “Hindu pantheon” of gods in rank order from pure to impure (vegetarian to meat-eating) *mirrors* the hierarchy among castes. Pre-saging Levi-Strauss, Dumont formulated his argument on a principle of metaphoric homology, where an ideological principle (the opposition of pure and impure) is projected from an internal or purely mental system of ideas (the symbolic system) onto the outside, material world of castes and gods. In Dumont’s words:

It is impossible not to see that the [pantheon] *reflects* the opposition of the pure and the impure, that is to say the society of castes in its abstract elementary [mental] form [Dumont, [1957] 1986:460; my emphasis].<sup>3</sup>

Fuller, more recently, agrees in principle, saying,

...with Dumont, we can legitimately see the village deities as *symbols of caste society*, for their relational divinity *does reflect* the caste structure, wherein the high castes are *always* in a complementary hierarchical relationship with the low castes" [1987:33; my emphasis].

These analyses, like Levi-Strauss's of Totemism, limit their subject (and subjects!) to symbolic signs.<sup>4</sup> They posit ideational systems of symbols (in the mind) that give structure to an outside (non-mental) world.

These symbols and metaphoric associations match in some respects Peirce's definition of a symbol as a sign that "signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification." In other words, symbols and metaphors signify by ideational convention.<sup>5</sup> Any theory of meaning that focuses exclusively on this symbolic sign relation while it omits or sets aside the indexical also omits what is the "dynamo" (to borrow a metaphor from Sapir 1921:14) of semeiotic, including symbolic, processes so well described by Peirce. It is the indexical relation that generates the *process* of semeiosis (sign-action) of which both index and symbol are related parts (Colapietro 1989: 17). Let me make this idea clear.

## II - The Index in the Symbol.

An index is a sign that is contiguous with and determined by its object. Smoke, for example, is contiguous with and determined by fire. A soggy morning newspaper

---

3. Clearly, this is an early ethnographically informed formulation of the thinking that went into Dumont's later theoretical piece, *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970). This early formulation contains many of the problems that attend the later work, primary among these being the division of spirit from matter (cf. Marriott and Inden 1977)—another result of the same Cartesian split that leads so easily to the sundering of structure and event, of symbol and index, of idea and substance, that I am trying to reunite in this paper. South Asian concepts of action and mind—where doing is a kind of making (cf. Potter, n.d.)—do not presume this split.

4. These structural and "reflectionist" models have been previously criticized, starting with Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976) and continuing with Appadurai (1981) and Dirks (1987). My own reanalysis here differs somewhat from their work, however, in that I have not abandoned the original formulation of the problem. While their questions concern more the politics of ranking practices in temple ritual, I am still interested in taking into account the importance of the set of gods (the so-called "pantheon"—a term that misleadingly presumes a situation that does not exist, namely, a singular totality of gods in neat relationships) that reside in a given locality.

5. Most discussions of "symbols" presume that the symbol is a trope based on ideational convention. Saussure's "sign" falls under this definition of symbol. Others have more recently worked to move beyond the domination of the symbol/metaphor as trope par excellence (e.g., papers in Fernandez 1991, including that by T. Turner whose paper introduces concepts similar to those I work to develop here).

on the front porch is a sign contiguous with and determined by its object: a night rain. A falling leaf indexes the season's change, as its falling is also determined by that change.

While indexes are particular—an instance of smoke, this morning's paper, that falling leaf or that one—symbols are general. Symbols take their meaning not from contiguity with particular objects in particular contexts, but rather from shared understandings that are independent of any particular context, that are "context-free." Thus the term "rain" is a symbolic sign that has meaning because of the fact that English speakers share an understanding of the meaning of this term. There need not be any actual rain present to utter the word or to understand its referent, and the sound of the word "rain" is not at all bound in any material sense to the wet drops to which it refers. Similarly, to say that a pantheon of gods *symbolizes* the ranks among castes is to treat the pantheon of gods like a general term, a word, a noun. The pantheon-ranked-from-high-to-low is a symbolic sign of humans ranked from high to low. One stands for the other by virtue of an ideational convention.

That said, it is now time to consider the fact that while symbols may be based on conventional, context-free shared meaning (like Saussure's "sign"), they do not exist only "in the mind." In use, actors bring symbols into material reality, and it is here that the index's place in the symbol becomes relevant.

For Peirce, symbols--predicated on convention and shared understanding--and indexes--predicated on material contiguity--are not simply two different types of signs in some taxonomy of sign-types. Rather, the two types of signs are related in a true hierarchy, where one (the symbol) *includes* the other (the index). (Thus, you can have an index without a symbol but you cannot have a symbol--in use--without an index.) The included index is, moreover, what makes symbols *materially real*, for symbols cannot be brought into social or communicative reality without their indexical aspect. "Without indexes," Peirce writes, "it is impossible to designate what one is talking about" (1932:2.295) That is, a symbol needs its indexical aspect in order to refer to particulars, in order, for example, to assert a truth, to claim a rank, to utter a word, to refer to the rain, to display an emblem. As Peirce writes,

[A Symbol] "necessarily governs, or 'is embodied in' individuals. . . . Consequently, a constituent of a symbol may be an index..." [*ibid.*:2.293]

This realization that the symbol does not reside blithely in a purely mental, "inner world"—like some yogi in a trance--but is, rather, part of material processes of what Peirce calls the "outer world," is a central thesis of semeiotics (see for example 1932:5.470-90). It is this thesis that makes Peirce's semeiotics a theory of praxis, one that resonates with some Marxian formulations of human activity. Take for example this quote from the Marxist linguist Volosinov, who writes

Every ideological ["symbolic"] sign is not only a reflection, a shadow of reality, but is also itself a material segment of that very reality. Every phenomenon functioning as a [symbolic] sign has some kind of material embodiment, whether in sound, physical mass, color, movements of the body, or the like. In this sense, the reality of the sign is fully objective and lends itself to a unitary, monistic,

objective method of study. A sign is a phenomenon of the external world. Both the sign itself and all the effects it produces [these being what Peirce calls interpretants] (all those actions, reactions, and new signs it elicits in the surrounding social milieu) occur in outer experience [1971:11].<sup>6</sup>

Here Volosinov echoes Peirce, who defines semeiosis as the action of the sign, including the realization of all the sign's effects, that is, its "interpretants"--these being according to Peirce's list, feelings, actions and reactions, habits, new habits, and habit-changes (1955:283). It is sign-use that initiates the open-ended process of semeiosis. In use, a symbol has material reality and an objective relation of *contiguity* to its context of utterance.

I stated at the outset of this paper that every symbol contains the seed of its own destruction. That was really a very negative way of saying what I mean, which is that every symbol contains the seed of its own growth (see Peirce 1932:2.302). Every symbolic assertion, every convention put to use, contains the seeds of its own growth because every symbolic assertion, every use of a symbol, takes its place as part of the outer or external world of material reality and social intercourse, where it may engage dialogically (cf. Bakhtin 1981:269-275) with new or different or disagreeing signs that lead to new reactions and new ideas.

Sure, habits or conventions of thought (symbols from the mind) have effects on the outer world of sign-use, for "habit will have power to influence actual behavior in the outer world" (Peirce 1955:284). But the outer world--the material, objective world where signs come into being in "use and experience" (1932:2.302)--has a *greater* effect on the inner world of habit (1955:287). An idea (symbol) is brought into reality indexically, and once there engages socially in material reality, where its use might spawn a rethinking of the symbol, a new idea, an idea that might change other ideas, change habits and hence change "actual behavior in the outer world" (*ibid.*), etc., in a continuous, dialectical process.

In the remainder of this paper, I put theory to use by reintroducing the index into the symbolization of humans in a ranked order of caste (*jātis*) by gods in a ranked pantheon. Gods prove much more than symbols or frozen reflections of ranks among men. The indexical relation between gods and humans--their substantial contiguity--promotes the growth, the breaking and remaking (cf. Eco 1979:195, quoted in Colapietro 1989:35) of social conventions, of ideas about proper ranks and orders, and even promotes the growth of new ideologies-in-practice.

---

6. Consider also the famous passage from the *German Ideology*:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. *Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior....*Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.--real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. *Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process....*[my emphasis; 1970:47].

### III. Gods and humans in Yanaimangalam

Yanaimangalam's residents rank human *jātis*, as well as its collection of gods, along several dimensions. They describe *jātis* as relatively high (*ocanta*) versus relatively low (*taInta*), as big (*periya*) versus little (*cinna*), as clean (*cuttam*) versus unclean (*acuttam*) (the latter correlating roughly with vegetarian on the one hand and meat-eating on the other). They describe gods in similar terms, as high to low, big to little, vegetarian to meat-eating, and soft (*metuvāna*) to fierce (*ukkiramāna*).<sup>7</sup> Both humans and gods may be further distinguished residentially. Some live relatively inside and some relatively outside the main settlement, surrounded by fields and outer hamlets. Higher and bigger *jātis*, as with the higher and softer gods, live in the central main village settlement, while the lowest *jātis* and the fiercest gods who eat raw blood, live on the periphery of the central residential area, and often out across the fields at some distance.<sup>8</sup>

Given these parallel associations between humans on the one hand and gods on the other, associations explicitly described by village residents, it is certainly easy to see why many scholars have favored analyses where the pantheon of ranked gods "symbolizes" ranks among human *jātis*. I, too, find the metaphoric resemblances stark and convincing. Yet, this symbolization is only one aspect of the story. The relation between gods and social orderings among humans can be more fully comprehended by re-introducing the indexical, metonymic relation into the equation.

Gods and devotees in Tamilnadu are indexically linked, and humans understand their relations to gods (lineage gods—*kulatēvaṅkaḷ*—particularly) in this way. The indexical relation between humans and gods can best be described as a metonymic relation, a substantial relation of part to whole.<sup>9</sup>

This metonymic relation is neither *a priori* nor absolutely essential. Metonymic relations are made through action and explained mytho-historically, as the following narrative illustrates.<sup>10</sup> This narrative tells the origin of a relation among a lineage of a middle-ranking *jāti* (Muppanar)--one of Yanaimangalam's three politically and economically dominant *jātis*--and a low-ranking, blood-eating, fierce god named Mundacami who lives out beyond the edge of village fields at the

---

7. The latter distinction fits neatly to Ramanujan's (1986: 57-62) description of goddesses into two categories. Breast goddesses are the nurturing, married goddesses ("soft" as say in Yanaimangalam) while tooth goddesses are bloodthirsty, devourers ("fierce").

8. For a detailed analysis of center and periphery as values in village caste relations, see Raheja 1988.

9. That a metonymic as opposed to metaphoric relation among humans and gods might predominate Tamil thinking is consistent with Ramanujan's (1990) observations that metonymic thinking is foregrounded in South India.

10. This story is my retelling of a story narrated to me by Mukkan, a man of the Dhobi (Washerman) *jāti* in Yanaimangalam.

cremation ground with his brother, the god Cutalaimatan (“Fierce god of the Cremation Ground”).

One day, about a hundred years ago, the story goes, a man of the relatively high Muppanar caste was out working in his field by the river bank. He saw something floating down the river towards him. He fished it out, and found it was a banana *kanru* (shoot). He planted it on the edge of his field.

Now, it just so happened that his field lay in the line of sight of a god named Cutalaimatan, whose stone power-filled image stood nearby positioned to look across this field. Cutalaimatan is the god of the cremation ground and he is known as a fierce god (*māṭan*) who has a propensity to attack—sometimes quite violently—passersby who displease him or who make him jealous. So, people tend to avoid him, to tiptoe around him. But if your field lies right in the god’s line of sight, there’s not much you can do about it other than defer to him, soften him up, and hope for the best.

The Muppanar farmer did just that. He tried to win over the god by making a vow. He promised Cutalaimatan that he would give him the first stalk of bananas that his new tree produced, in return for the god’s protecting the plant and field.

Well, a year passed and the banana plant flourished and produced a big stalk of bananas. The owner came out and cut the stalk and took it home, forgetting his vow to Cutalaimatan. He took one banana from the stalk, peeled it, and took a big bite. Immediately he choked, spat out the banana, and could eat nothing from then on.

He realized that the fault was his for forgetting his vow and so this higher caste man went to see a local man favored by Cutalaimatan, a lower-ranking Dhobi (Washerman) named Mukkan, to enlist his aid and find a solution. He went to Mukkan because he and his entire lineage were the special devotees of Cutalaimatan. They took care of him and he took care of them. Mukkan was the one whose connection to the god was closest: Cutalaimatan regularly possessed him and communicated his needs through this human host (*cāmiyāṭi*, lit. “god-dancer”). The solution that the Dhobi and the god offered was that the Muppanar man and his whole lineage should adopt Cutalaimatan’s younger brother, Mundacami, as their own special god. They should construct a shrine to Mundacami opposite Cutalaimatan’s shrine, and worship there from now on, side by side with the low-ranking Dhobis, *as equals*. So, to this day the Muppanar and Dhobis are equals that temple.

A chance event (a banana shoot floating down the river) led to a vow made, and then a vow broken. A vow broken established a permanent relation between a low-ranking, peripheral god and a relatively high-ranking, central *jāti*. This relation between Mundacami and the Muppanar lineage is metonymic. It is understood as an enduring, substantial, bodily relation between the god and lineage members and it cannot be attenuated at will. The Muppanar lineage (which corresponds roughly to the local Muppanar *jāti* grouping) is forever more substantially connected (*cērntatu*) with their new god. The god inhabits their houses, bodies and lives. The

god eats what they eat, the god possesses them, the god fills them with energy and can also cause them illness if weak or displeased.

There are many examples of individuals and families in Yanaimangalam attempting unsuccessfully to break or avoid the relationship between themselves and their lineage gods (*kulatēvaṅkaḷ*), or at least to weaken its intensity. One man named Arunacalampillai, now an old man who “dances” for the village goddess, recalled to me how as a young man he avoided the goddess temple after his brother had died. His brother had been the oracle, the “god-dancer” (*cāmiyāṭi*) for this goddess, a task for which the goddess chooses a man and his whole patriline. Arunacalampillai feared that, now his brother was dead, the goddess would call him as her next god-dancer, a job he did not want. One day, during her festival, he walked far upriver away from the temple in order to bathe without having to pass by the temple, but after his bath, as he put it, his legs simply walked him--against his own will--to the goddess temple. She activated him. Another example has parents locking their unmarried son in the house so that their fierce lineage god would be unable to walk him to their lineage temple. This god had no god-dancer yet, and had possessed the youth once previously. They felt their son, because unmarried, was not yet pure (*tupparavu*) enough to survive repeated powerful possession by their lineage god. Yet, somehow--no one knew how but they all credited the god--the youth ended up at the temple, dancing for the god.

That gods and their devotee lineages are contiguously linked is further illustrated by the case of a young woman named Pecciyamma who started “cooking” for her husband before the two were married. Her husband-to-be happened to be the *cāmiyāṭi* of his lineage god. On the very day that the couple was finally wed, that god possessed the bride violently and spoke, through her, his anger. He was angry that she had fed him (with food fed to her husband) without being of the lineage (*kulam*). Her lack of contiguity with the god made her an inappropriate feeder of the god. And her contiguity, established upon marriage—an act which substantially joined her to her husband’s lineage<sup>11</sup>—opened the channel for the god to possess her, too.

To return to the case introduced in the narrative, the new relation of “equality” established between Muppanars and Dhobis takes on a social, publicly enacted reality in temple festivals that take place three times a year at the cremation ground temple that houses both lineage gods. South Indian temple rituals, as is widely reported, are venues where ranks among participants, as well as community inclusions and exclusions, are established through multiple ranked transactions from the god to the devotees in an idiom of “honor” (*mariyātai*) (see, for example, Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976, Appadurai 1981, Dirks 1987, 1991, Dumont [1957] 1986). During the festival at the Cutalaimatan/Mundacami temple, one of many ways that ranks are established are through ordered transactions in which the Dhobis receive first honors and the Muppanars receive second honors (and others in

---

11. It is widely reported for most parts of India that upon marriage, a woman is substantially joined with her husband, becoming his half-body. In Yanaimangalam, too, a woman, once wed, becomes part of her husband’s lineage and counts his relatives as hers.



order afterward). That is, the Dhobis receive their shares (*paṅku*) of the temple leftovers first, and have authority over the distribution of remaining shares. Moreover, when devotees make their rounds, visiting the gods at the shrine, they pay homage first to the Cutalaimatan and his Dhobi god-dancer and only second to the Muppanar's lineage god and god-dancer. The Dhobi, being the representative of the older brother god is, it turns out, first among equals. These temple orderings reverse the normally expected rank ordering between these two *jātis*, though it is important to state that the firstness (*talaimai*, *mutalmai*) enjoyed by the Dhobi god-dancer at the temple, spills over into daily life and makes him much less deferential to village residents than the other Dhobi lineage head in the village.

The events recounted in the narrative, and the regular temple rituals themselves, challenge and even subvert conventional rankings of high to low among village *jātis*. Similar contests over rankings are waged among other *jātis* in other village temples (see Mines 1995). The relation between the Muppanar and Dhobi lineages at the temple challenges not only specific rankings among humans, but challenges, too, the habit of thought that promotes ranking among all things and beings by asserting a different (and perhaps "postcolonial"?) value or idea of being socially "equal" (*camam*).

While the ranking among gods may indeed be said to "symbolize" the value of rank as it also iconically reflects rankings among humans, I have argued here that such an analysis falls short of fully explicating the relation between gods in a pantheon and humans in ranked social orders. Gods are not merely symbols that stand for relations among humans, echoing frozen and unitary ideational structures whose origins are mysterious. Gods are real powers contiguous with humans, powers that make humans into powerful agents with the capacity to potentially restructure the system of conventional rankings that may exist at any given moment. In the present case, the symbolic value of rank from high to low (and if I were to carry the analysis further, from center to periphery, as well), is both reversed and then denied through the metonymic or indexical relation between gods and humans. The symbolic value of rank is reversed when a higher ranking human lineage becomes substantially joined with a lower ranking god and must socially enact their new subordination to the Dhobi lineage in temple ritual. Rank is denied when the Dhobi insists on describing this relation as one of equality among brothers rather than one of rank between castes. In other words, Yanaimangalam's Dhobis draw on the substantial relation between gods and humans--and, ironically, make use of the symbolic value of rank--to assert an alternative value of equality. Gods, as real, present, material beings thus participate in the process of making social relations, and remaking conventional understandings of social relations. Gods, indexically linked to humans, help make symbols grow.

In Yanaimangalam, there are thirty-five temples, most of which convene associations that hold occasional festivals (from thrice a year to once in five years). In each festival, ranks are asserted and sometimes subverted (see Mines 1995 for more examples). All over South India, humans have multiple indexically defined relations to gods. Humans are thus overlapping agents, they have many (and

sometimes conflicting) powerful sources of agency. They participate in multiple “societies,” multiple rankings, misrankings and unrankings--in multiple social realities. In Yanaimangalam, ranks of high to low--and even the ideology of rank itself--may be broken and made and even denied altogether in multilateral discourses among actors who are agents of local gods, and who become agents of local gods not because of *a priori* symbolic associations, but rather because of contingent past events and actions, such as the above narrative illustrates.

#### IV - Conclusion

To separate index from symbol results in the separation, too, of event and structure (a separation almost celebrated by structuralism, and certainly expressed nowhere more clearly than in distinctions between *parole* and *langue*, and diachrony and synchrony--distinctions that form the basic problem of semiology deriving from Saussure). I have attempted, in this paper, to demonstrate that understanding the indexical aspect of symbols-in-use integrates event and structure into a continuous (seamless) semeiotic process of sign growth.

*Semeiotics* is a practice theory that enables systems of meaning to be analyzed not merely as *a priori* systems of representation or frozen ideational structures. Rather, semeiotics is at core dialogic. It starts with action, and from action generates further action, including the action of ideas on other ideas. Because it centers on sign-use and action, and because it is at core dialogic, semeiotics (of the Peircian variety and spelling<sup>12</sup>) may offer a theoretical handle to many pressing concerns of contemporary anthropological theory. Semeiotic theory can handle the reality of overlapping discourses, of disagreement, of non-total, overlapping cultures, of only partial sharings of ideas, of the agency of those of lesser power in structures of domination, of the complicated entanglements of meanings in this “post-colonial” world.

There is some irony, I suppose, in showing that a hierarchical relation of sign-types, where the symbol includes the lower indexical sign, deconstructs the presumed hierarchical relations among gods on the one hand and castes on the other. But in fact, both hierarchies--of signs and of gods/castes--operate alike. The indexical aspect of the symbol leads to the potential growth and change of the symbol, while the metonymic relation among gods is what leads to a potential rethinking of the idea and reality of social hierarchy among the castes they symbolize.

#### References

Appadurai, Arjun and Carol Breckenridge. 1976. “The south Indian temple: authority, honour, and redistribution.” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (n.s.) 10(2):187-211.

---

12. As Daniel (1996:213n.3) promotes.

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1981. *Worship and Conflict under Colonial rule: A south Indian Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Babb, Lawrence. 1975. *The Divine Hierarchy: Popular Hinduism in central India*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Beck, Brenda. 1972. *Peasant Society in Konku: a Study of Right and Left Subcastes in South India*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Beteille, Andre. 1965. "Social organization of Temples in a Tanjore village." *History of Religions* 5(1):74-92.
- Colapietro, Vincent. 1989. *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany: SUNY.
- Daniel, E. Valentine. 1996. *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dirks, Nicholas. 1987. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Ritual and resistance: Subversion as a social fact." In *Contesting Power*, Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, eds., pp.213-238. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dumont, Louis. [1957] 1986. *A South Indian Subcaste: Social Organization and Religion of the Pramalai Kallar*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1970. *Homo Hierarchicus: the Caste System and its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. [1915] 1965. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.
- Eco, Umberto. 1979. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fernandez, James W. 1991. *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fuller, C.J. 1979. "Gods, priests, and purity: On the relation between Hinduism and the caste system." *Man* (n.s.) 14:459-476.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. "The Hindu pantheon and the legitimation of hierarchy." *Man* (n.s.) 23:19-39.
- Harper, Edward. 1959. "A Hindu village pantheon." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15:227-234.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1962. *Totemism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Marriott, McKim. 1990. *India Through Hindu Categories*. New Delhi: Sage.

- \_\_\_\_\_ and Ronald B. Inden. 1977. "Toward an Ethnosociology of South Asian Caste Systems." In *The New Wind*, ed. Kenneth David. The Hague: Mouton.
- Marx, Karl. 1970. *The German ideology*. New York: International Publishers.
- Mines, Diane P. 1995. "Making and Remaking the Village: The Pragmatics of Social Life in Rural Tamilnadu." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago.
- Pate, H.R. 1917. *Tinnevelly District Gazetteer*. Madras: Government Press.
- Peirce, Charles S. 1932. *Collected Papers*. Vols. 1-4, C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, eds.. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1955. *Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications.
- Potter, Karl. n.d. "Karma: the metaphor of making." Typescript, 15 pp.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. [1929] 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Raheja, Gloria Goodwin. 1988. *The Poison in the Gift: Ritual, Prestation, and the Dominant Caste in a North Indian Village*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ramanujan, A.K. 1986. "Two Realms of Kannada Folklore." In *Another Harmony*, Stuart Blackburn and A.K. Ramanujan, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1990. "Is There an Indian way of Thinking?" In McKim Marriott op. cit.
- Reiniche, Marie-Louise. 1979. *Les Dieux et les Hommes: Etude des Cultes d'un Village du Tirunelveli Inde du Sud*. Paris: Mouton Publishers.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co.
- Srinivas, M. N. 1952. *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Turner, Terence. 1991. "'We Are Parrots,' 'Twins Are Birds': Play of Tropes as Operational Structure." In *Beyond Metaphor*, ed. James W. Fernandez, op. cit.
- Volosinov, V.N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

# Evolution and Degeneration in the Thought of Roger Casement<sup>1</sup>

Séamas Ó Síocháin  
St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

## Abstract

Biographers have tended to stress the element of emotional instability in the personality of Roger Casement. Instability, however, is made to appear greater to the extent that some of the significant contexts of his life and the patterns of his thought are neglected. The present essay explores one such patterning of thought: ideas of evolution and degeneration, or progress and decay, in his thinking with regard to a range of societies: Ancient Rome, the peoples of Africa and South America, Britain and Germany, and Ireland. The essay draws on recent work on degeneration in the history of ideas.

## 1. Introduction.

### CASEMENT'S CAREER.

In 1884 Roger Casement, a young man of twenty, arrived to take up the first of a series of employments in the Congo region. This was just seven years after Henry Morton Stanley completed his famous three year journey across Africa (1874-77), in which he discovered the course of the Congo River. The Scramble for Africa was beginning. Casement was to spend the next twenty years of his life in Africa, stationed in the Congo, the Niger Coast, Lourenco Marques, South Africa and St. Paul de Loanda (Angola). His career in Africa was to end with one of his most notable achievements, his investigation into and Report on atrocities perpetrated by officials of the Congo Free State against its native population. The Report was published in early 1904; for it Casement received the C.M.G.

After Africa came, first, the beginnings of his immersion in Irish affairs, during a protracted period of leave (1904-06), and, then, his appointment to Brazil, where he served in Santos, in Pará and, as Consul General, in Rio de Janeiro (1906-10). He was to repeat his Congo feat with a similar Report on the wholesale exploitation of Indian peoples in the Putumayo region of the Upper Amazon, in Peruvian territory (1910-12). He was knighted afterwards.

Returning home, he was soon to resign, turn completely to Irish affairs, involve himself in the Irish Volunteer organization, travel to Germany after the outbreak of WWI, be captured in Ireland on the eve of the Easter Rebellion in 1916, be tried and hanged.

### EMOTION VS. INTELLECT.

---

<sup>1</sup> A version of this paper was given at a joint Anthropology-Sociology Seminar in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, in January 1997. I thank the participants for many useful comments.

In 1890 Joseph Conrad made the acquaintance of Roger Casement on the Congo, where he stayed for two weeks as Casement's guest. His diary records a positive impression. Later, in 1904, when Casement tried to enlist influential friends to help bring public pressure on the British Government to act on abuses in the Congo, Conrad again wrote in positive vein about Casement to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, the Scottish writer-campaigner. But in 1916, shortly before Casement's execution, he gave a different, less generous, assessment of Casement:

"He was a good companion; but already in Africa I judged that he was a man, properly speaking, of no mind at all. I don't mean stupid. I mean that he was all emotion. By emotional force (Congo report, Putumayo, etc.) he made his way, and sheer temperament - a truly tragic personality: all but the greatness of which he had not a trace. Only vanity. But in the Congo it was not visible yet."<sup>2</sup>

While drawing attention to the shift in Conrad's assessment and to the lack of generosity in the later one, Casement's biographer, B.L. Reid, still finds Conrad's later view insightful:

"His (Conrad's) statement was cold and it was perhaps overemphatic; but it was shrewd and it moved toward essential truths. Perhaps no more penetrating observation of Casement was ever made."<sup>3</sup>

Reid goes on to present what tends towards being a psychobiography of Casement, which stresses the emotional instability of the subject's personality. Not only is Casement an emotionally-driven and, therefore, less than rational man, his personality is deeply divided in a number of ways: religiously (Protestant father, Catholic mother), politically (public servant of the Crown, secret nationalist), sexually (secret and increasingly promiscuous homosexual). Elements of a similar approach, foregrounding flaws in Casement's personality, are common to all recent biographies.<sup>4</sup>

While not wishing to deny the emotional dimension in Casement's personality and life, more systematic attention to the various contexts of his life and to the patterns of his thought reveals his behaviour to be considerably more complex than is generally recognised.

A broader, contextual, approach would include the following:

(i) giving attention to the specific contexts of his career, i.e. the locations, employment responsibilities (e.g. consular duties), historical contexts in which he worked. This should apply, not only to major episodes, such as the Congo and the Putumayo, but to the Niger Coast and Lourenco Marques, for example;

---

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Conrad to John Quinn, 24/5/1916, quoted in Reid p.15.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See, also, Sawyer p.1ff. Rene McColl, in addition, characterises Casement (wrongly, in my opinion) as a regular bungler.

(ii) giving attention to the larger historical moments in which he lived, e.g. the Scramble for Africa, the Second Anglo-Boer War, the tensions leading to the outbreak of World War I, and the Irish situation from the Cultural Revival to the tension surrounding the Third Home Rule Bill;

(iii) giving due attention, not only to the personal correspondence of Casement, but to his consular reports and to his published writings, for what they reveal of the patterns of his thought, of his world view. Casement's private personal correspondence has been the main source for recent biographies and it is a vital source. It frequently reveals a side to the man not evident in despatches to the Foreign Office. But there has been a tendency to under-use his consular reports and to ignore the articles, admittedly few and admittedly campaigning, written in the latter part of his life, which also yield important clues to his concerns and manner of thought.<sup>5</sup>

In the present essay, I wish to survey, briefly, some of the evidence for what I think is one such pattern in Casement's thought, i.e. notions of progress and decline in the life-history of societies.

## 2. Progressivist evolutionary thought.

I have drawn attention, elsewhere, to the progressivist dimension of Casement's thought and to his use of terminology with evolutionary implications:

**Civilization**, or its variants, is a term which appears very frequently in Casement's writings. It has an evolutionary connotation, being contrasted regularly with **savage(ry)**, **barbarism**, and **wild**. The evolutionary assumptions are indicated by such phrases of his as: a 'stage of human progress,' 'higher in the human scale,' and the failure of the rubber company to introduce 'civilisation to replace savagery'.<sup>6</sup>

A graphic example of his evolutionary thinking is contained in an undated draft article on the Niger Coast, housed in the National Library of Ireland Casement collection. It contains the following passages:

[The Niger Coast] offers the contradictory spectacle of a soil but little less fertile than that of Egypt, possessed by a people as remote from our civilization as were the very earliest inhabitants of the Nile Delta, and yet administered in accordance with the very latest method of Foreign Office control.

---

<sup>5</sup> I have been struck at B.L. Reid's neglect of Casement's consular writings and of his published work. In the case of the latter, it seems due to his poor opinion of Casement's literary and nationalist writings (many of which have been collected in the volume **The Crime against Europe**, quoted below). Roger Sawyer, in contrast, is the first biographer to thoroughly examine Casement's consular role and writings.

<sup>6</sup> S. Ó Síocháin, "Roger Casement, Ethnography, and the Putumayo", **Éire-Ireland**, XXIX, (2), 29-41. p.33.

A Consular Court sits to enforce the Africa Order in Council - passed by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty... in relation to a race of savages who date their most recent beliefs from an era well before Moloch. In this intricate network of creeks - deep, still and hidden - far from our ways of thought as the most hopelessly unrecalable days of antiquity, and yet almost within sound of the mail steamer's whistle...<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere, we find Casement comparing Islamic with non-Islamic societies in Africa, again with assessments as to progress. For example, in one instance he contrasts naked tribesmen with Islamic civilization while, in a letter to his friend, Edmund Morel, he suggests that Congo natives are a long way behind Nigerian Mohammedans.<sup>8</sup>

In specific as opposed to general terms, he registered what he saw as positive and negative characteristics of native life. On the negative side, Casement disapproved of or was appalled by witchcraft belief, human sacrifice, cannibalism, warlikeness, laziness. On the positive side, he noted agricultural or gardening productivity, house construction, trading networks, family affection and loyalties.

### 3. Colonialism as "civilizing process".

The bulk of Casement's despatches from Africa deal with his consular duties, especially looking after the interests of British subjects - registration of births, marriages, deaths; helping the destitute; logging of shipping movements and mediating in cases of accident; responding to enquiries from Government Departments; producing annual Trade Reports. One can identify, however, some broad features of his thinking on colonialism from his despatches. Enlightened European intervention could, he believed, help raise Africans to a higher plane of civility.

I have argued elsewhere that Casement broadly accepted the three traditional components Europeans had to contribute to African life, - "the white man's burden" - the three Cs: Christianity, civilization, commerce.<sup>9</sup> Analysis of his writings reveals what his conception of proper colonial administration entailed. This conception is often implicit in his criticisms of the methods of the Portuguese in Lourenco Marques and Angola and, more so, of the methods of the Congo Free State.

In the first place, one detects a deep religious and moral aspect infusing all of Casement's attitudes. His approach was altruistic; a European presence was only justified to the extent that it offered a helping hand. Colonialism should be

---

<sup>7</sup> "Negroland" (NLI Ms. 13082 (1/i)).

<sup>8</sup> NLI Ms. 13082 (1/i) Mecklenburg; LSE, MP F8/24, Casement to Morel, 22/4/1911. Edmund Morel was one of Casement's closest friends. He was the principal campaigner in the Congo agitation and Secretary of the Congo Reform Association.

<sup>9</sup> Ó Síocháin 1994.



non-exploitative. He frequently commented on native rights. He generally recoiled from violence, though he did condone “punitive expeditions”, while in the Niger.

Secondly, the helping hand should involve the stimulation of trade, the improvement of farming methods and the provision of infrastructure and of civic services. One of his major criticisms of Leopoldian intervention in the Congo was that it had destroyed the vibrant preexisting patterns of trade on the river, in which the local populations had played a key role. Again, writing to Magherintemple, he regretted the absence in the Niger Protectorate of productive husbandry such as that practised by his uncle.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, he regretted the wasteful manner of rubber harvesting. With regard to technology and civic services, he was involved in the planning process for roads and railway, while his criticisms of the Congo found fault with the failure to provide hospitals and a non-exploitative administrative and judicial system.

Thirdly, throughout his consular career, one notes a preoccupation with efficiency.<sup>11</sup> He was regularly critical of inefficiency and of the waste of human potential. As well as being a theme with regard, for example, to the Portuguese colony during his tenure at Lourenco Marques, it also appeared regularly in his despatches to the Foreign Office regarding the organization of the consular system.<sup>12</sup>

Between 1901 and 1904 a major change in Casement’s attitudes took place. During this period he increasingly directed his energies at unmasking the system in operation in the Congo Free State. His personality began to take on an emotional intensity which was to stay with him for the rest of his life - he had become a crusader against wrongs.

But, by 1904, his opposition wasn’t only to the Congo regime, he had become a determined critic of the British Empire. While it is easy to understand his zeal with regard to the Congo, it is more difficult to trace the causes of his rejection of British Imperialism. This can only be dimly traced in the surviving record, but was virtually complete by the time his Congo Report was published in early 1904. The evidence that does exist suggests an increasing disaffection with British policies in South Africa from the time of the Boer War on.

From this point on his treatment of terms like “civilization” and “commerce” were to be much more ambivalent (as was, though for different reasons, his attitude to Christianity). He more frequently talks of cruelty, force, of greed and capital. He is

---

<sup>10</sup> PRONI T3787/8, Casement (Old Calabar) to John Casement (Magherintemple), 27/1/1893.

<sup>11</sup> One can see why Joseph Chamberlain, the liberal-imperialist and standard-bearer for efficiency, was an early hero of Casement’s. He remained so as long as Casement himself was, effectively, a liberal-imperialist. Once the latter’s imperialism went, Chamberlain became an object of contempt.

<sup>12</sup> It is not possible to address Casement’s emotionalism properly, e.g. his crabby letters from Brazil, without, for example, taking full account of the deficiencies of the consular system as experienced there.

more likely to apply the term “cannibals” to Leopold and his supporters than to the natives of the Congo basin. And one finds him stressing the inoffensive or positive characteristics of native peoples: their gentleness, childlike character, resistance to oppression.

Casement’s optimistic, progressivist thinking, while it was never replaced (in the latter part of his life he still envisages a civilising mission for Europe in South America), was complemented later by a more sombre counterpart, a degenerationist mode. I believe the shift, both at a personal psychological level and in his thinking was connected with his growing disillusionment with colonialism, in general, and with British Imperialism, in particular.

While it can to some extent be attributed to personality characteristics and to the nature of his experiences in Africa, I believe that it reflects another source as well—a concern with the decline of societies or civilizations.

#### **4. Degeneration.**

The focus on evolutionary thought in the nineteenth century has, until recently, been heavily on its progressivist dimension. Recently, however, increasing attention is being devoted to a neglected dimension of evolutionary thought, yet one which was of considerable concern in the nineteenth century and beyond, namely the possibility of evolutionary decline or degeneration. Fear was for the decline, not so much of “inferior” races, but of the European heartland itself. The theme has been explored in detail by Daniel Pick (1996).<sup>13</sup>

Pick’s work begins with the observation that evolution as progress has been extensively studied, but that a major concern in the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the First World War, i.e. the possibility of decline, degeneration, in the most developed Western nations, the very heartland of civilisation, has been virtually ignored or forgotten.

The concern manifested itself in a range of types of writing: biology, criminal anthropology, medico-psychiatry, social and political commentary, and literature. It was not confined to any single political orientation, but was found among conservatives, liberals and socialists.

Pick’s book focuses on selected manifestations in Italy (Cesare Lombroso...), France (B.A. Morel...) and England (Henry Maudsley...). It was, in part, related to tensions derived from unification in Italy, to revolutions and defeat in war in France, and to the emergence of mass democracy and socialism, on the one hand, and fears of degeneration in the city, on the other, in England. He draws attention to the fact that concern with degeneration and its host of component issues (physical and mental deformity, criminality, sexual perversion, the mob, racial purity, eugenics..) was not confined to Germany but was widespread throughout Europe. His work,

---

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Angus Mitchell for bringing Pick’s work to my attention. The topic of degeneration is also discussed in Young (1995).

therefore, is a corrective to the preponderance of focus on the genesis of Nazism in Germany, where such issues had a cataclysmic end.<sup>14</sup>

In late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, fears grew among the middle classes of degeneration among the urban poor:

Although the debate, and the fear, can be traced back much earlier in the Victorian period, it is in the 1880s, Stedman Jones insists, that the theory of hereditary urban degeneration first received widespread support from the middle classes and found its authoritative backing in the work of Booth, Marshall, Langstaff, and Llewellyn Smith. And at the edge of the writing of those 'sober' commentators, there was a huge populist literature which saw the social problem in truly cataclysmic terms.

The fears persisted in the 1900s. Amidst the early disasters of the Boer War and the scandal of an apparent deterioration in the average physique of potential recruits, the fear of urban degeneration found its apotheosis.<sup>15</sup>

While the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration (1904) rejected the term and the reality of degeneration in a sense, Pick points out that its recommendations gave it credence in another. The Report, however, stressed environmental factors rather than hereditarian ones:

The evil is, of course, greatest in one-roomed tenements, the overcrowding there being among persons usually of the **lowest type**, steeped in every kind of degradation and cynically indifferent to the vile surroundings engendered by their filthy habits, and to the pollution of the young brought up in such an atmosphere.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Pick points out that the image of the **parasite** "informed late-nineteenth century eugenics and the biological theory of degeneration". The parasite was a prime example of degeneration. For example, the American Eugene Talbot wrote:

The essential factor of crime is its parasitic nature. Parasites, in a general way, may be divided into those which live on their host without any tendency to injure his well-being...; those which live more or less at his expense, but do not tend to destroy him; and finally, those which are destructive of the well-being of man and lack proper recognition of individual rights which constitutes the essential foundation of society.

Francis Galton applied the image of the parasite to society. There was an absolute

---

<sup>14</sup> Fritz Stern's (1965) discussion of the growth of pessimism in German ideology, though approaching the topic from another angle, is also relevant.

<sup>15</sup> Pick p.202. The reference is to Gareth Stedman Jones, **Outcast London; a Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society**. Harmondsworth. 1984 [1971].

<sup>16</sup> Inter-Departmental Committee 1904, **Report**, p.17, quoted by Pick p. 185, emphasis added by Pick.

contrariety of ideals between the beasts that prey and those they prey upon, between those of the animals that have to work hard for their food and the sedentary parasites that cling to their bodies and suck their blood...<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Casement and degeneration.

I will now try to demonstrate that Casement thought, not only in progressive terms, as outlined earlier, but that the theme of decline, of degeneration, was also an important component of his thought. It became stronger as his own mood became more intense and more pessimistic. As well as reflecting a personality change, I believe that it formed part of a theory of society, one that was built up through the course of his life. In addition, it seems plausible to suggest that he was reflecting concerns being aired in his day. I will look at views of his on: the decline of Rome; the decline of the Putumayo Indians; the cases of Germany, France and Britain; and the case of Ireland.

A. Rome: In a letter to his close English friend, Richard Morten, in which Casement takes issue with his friend's attitude toward the Chinese labour question in South Africa, the discussion turns on the circulation of money and the nature—healthy or unhealthy—of labour. Casement writes:

If the labour be unhealthy, demoralising and only possible in a compromising environment the character of the labourer and therefore of the nation to which he belongs is deteriorated... 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 - just as, identically as, Leopold is exploiting the india rubber mines of the Congo by Bantu 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** the 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. The case against Chinese labour rests on moral and economic grounds I believe.<sup>18</sup>

This passage reveals that Casement drew on Montesquieu's **Consideration sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence**, written in 1731-3. This is the only reference of his to Montesquieu that I have found, but it is revealing. Montesquieu described the love of liberty in the Roman Republic and Rome's decline under the Empire due, partly at least, to softness. He touched on other

---

<sup>17</sup> Pick 173; 233; 23, quoting Talbot, **Degeneracy: Its Signs, Causes and Results** (1898) p.318; 198, quoting Galton, **Essays** p.36. Galton coined the word eugenics in 1883.

<sup>18</sup> NLI MS. 13,600, Casement to Dick Morten, 2/1/05. South African mine owners had imported Chinese indentured labourers due to a labour shortage. The issue, including their treatment, engendered political controversy in Britain.

issues, which may well have had an influence on Casement, such as a negative attitude to the Spanish Empire, the attribution of a spirit of liberty to the Germans, and a notion of **esprit general**, akin to Casement's sense of national character. If, as I suspect, Casement studied this work as a school text, we have an indication of the source of part of a set of views, which would remain with him (though further developed) throughout his life.<sup>19</sup>

B. The Putumayo Indians. In 1912, the **Contemporary Review** published an article by Casement on the Putumayo Indians. As well as describing the area, its component tribes, alluding to the history of slave raiding parties from Brazil, and travellers' comments, Casement speculates on Indian origins. They were not, he felt, native to the forest region.

Commenting on the songs of the Indians, which were sung "in words that none of the Peruvian or Colombian white men, who often spoke the native language of the tribe with extraordinary fluency, could understand anything of," Casement was informed that the songs were "old, old songs that no one knew the origin of and the very words of which were meaningless outside the dance." The songs, continued Casement, "referred to some dim, far-off events that none of the whites could learn anything about; the Indians only said they came down from their remote past. That that remote past was something wholly different from their present-day environment I became more and more convinced as I studied these innocent, friendly, child-like human beings."

While lost in the forest, in a depressing environment and with the most basic material culture, "their minds were the minds of civilised men and women." He explains:

Yet nothing became more clear the more these Indians were studied than that they were not children of the forest, but children of elsewhere lost in the forest - babes in the wood, grown up, it is true, and finding the forest their only heritage and shelter, but remembering always that it was not their home. They had accommodated themselves, as far as they might, to their surroundings, and made a shift at living there; but had never really accepted this environment. Thus while their bodies were strayed and lost in the trees, their minds, their memories, maybe refused to accept these surroundings. They never gave the impression of being at home. They had refused to make the material best of circumstances. While their knowledge of the forest and everything it possessed was profound, one felt that these age-long denizens of the woods were not citizens of the forest, but strangers, come by chance amid surroundings they did not love, although they knew them by heart, and that their lives were spent in an hereditary picnic rather than in a settled occupation. All their material surroundings were temporary - their only permanent possessions were mental, and if I may use the word, spiritual.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Robert Shackleton, **Montesquieu**, pp.156-170. Casement, who could not remember the precise title of the **Considerations**, comments to Morten: "it is years since I looked at the delightful book."

<sup>20</sup> R. Casement, "The Putumayo Indians", **Contemporary Review**. 102 (1912) 317-28.

C. Germany, France and Britain. Germany. While Great Britain was the first country to industrialise, by the latter part of the nineteenth century, others were closing the gap. Among these was Germany. The unification of Germany and the establishment of the German Empire in 1871 followed Prussian military successes against Denmark in 1864, Austria in 1866 and France in 1870. Economic growth, the expansion in trade, colonial endeavours all followed. Towards the end of the century and into the twentieth, Germany embarked on a policy of naval expansion, which led to a naval armaments race with Great Britain, each side producing numbers of the new type warship, the dreadnought. German population expanded also.

The salient characteristics of German growth can be seen from the following summary:

By the year 1906, 25 years after the founding of the Empire in 1871, the Reich's population had grown from about 41 million to 62,863,000. National income had risen from the early 1890s, when it stood at 22,638,000,000 marks, to 39,919,000,000 marks by 1906..... The transformation of the German Empire from an agricultural to an industrial society was rushing ahead. In 1871 63.9% of the population had lived in rural areas; 40% did so in 1910..... Between 1897 and 1906 hard coal extraction had risen from 91 to 136 million tons, pig iron production had doubled, and German foreign trade had risen in value from 8,455,000,000 Mk to 14,582,000,000 Mk..... Germany's industrial base and population were already larger than that of the United Kingdom and she had become a serious threat in trade and finance, activities hitherto dominated by British enterprise.<sup>21</sup>

Casement saw Germany as a rising nation, France and Britain as declining ones. The following extracts from his late essays, published as **The Crime against Europe**, reveal how he saw and interpreted the direction of German development:

The laws of progress demand that efficiency shall prevail. The crime of Germany has been superior efficiency, not so much in the arts of war as in the products of peace. (p.13)

During the first six months of 1914, German export trade almost equalled that of Great Britain. Another year of peace, and it would certainly have exceeded it, and for the first time in the history of world trade Great Britain would have been put in the second place. German exports from January to June had swelled to the enormous total of \$1,045,000,000 as against the \$1,075,000,000 of Great Britain. As war against such figures could not be maintained in the markets, it must be transferred to the seas. (p.12)

Europe reproduces herself yearly at the present time at the rate of about five million souls. Some three-fifths of the number are to-day absorbed into the life of the Continent, the balance go abroad and principally to North America, to swell

---

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Steinberg, "The German background to Anglo-German relations, 1905-1914" p.193.

the English-speaking world. Germany controls about one-fifth of Europe's natural annual increase, and realising that emigration to-day means only to lose her people and build up her antagonist's strength, she has for years now striven to keep her people within German limits, and hitherto with successful results far in excess of any achieved by other European States. But the limit must be reached, and that before many years are past. Where is Germany to find the suitable region, both on a scale and under conditions of climate, health and soil that a people of say 90,000,000 hemmed in a territory little larger than France, will find commensurate to their needs? No European people is in such plight. (p.45)<sup>22</sup>

France. In contrast, Casement saw France as being in decline. We find him, in the same essays, writing such phrases as: "her stagnant population of 40,000,000" (10); "Her life blood is dried up" (13); "France as a great free power is gone" (14); in decline (20); "France, far from needing outlets, increases not at all, and during 1911 showed an excess of close on 40,000 deaths over births. For France the day of greatness is past." (46)<sup>23</sup>

England. England, too, Casement saw as declining, due to the related phenomena of the degeneration of her urban population and general population decline. In one of his first nationalistic writings, in opposing Irish enlistment in the British army, he states:

Let her arm and drill the sickly population of her slums; the men of the hills and the country places in Ireland will go no more.<sup>24</sup>

On other occasions, too, Casement referred to Britain's "army of slum dwellers."<sup>25</sup> And Brian Inglis cites Casement's parody on a poem of Henry Newbolt, one verse of which goes:

Down thy valleys, Ireland, Ireland  
Down thy valleys green and sad  
Still thy spirit wanders wailing  
Wailing, wailing, wailing, mad.

To which Casement responded:

---

<sup>22</sup> **The Crime Against Europe.**

<sup>23</sup> **ibid.** See, also, p.20.

<sup>24</sup> **Irishmen and the English Army**, Dungannon Club Publications No.1. 1905. p.102 (Hobson). The pamphlet was coauthored by Alice Stopford Green, Bulmer Hobson and Casement. Casement regularly drew attention to the use by England over the centuries of Irishmen to fight its wars, while depriving Ireland of its manpower to defend itself.

<sup>25</sup> **The Crime Against Europe.** p.66.

Up thy chimneys, England, England  
Up thy chimneys black and sad  
Goes thy smoke-wrapped spirit, paling  
Goes pale-aleing - feeling bad.<sup>26</sup>

On the question of population decline, he contrasted Germany's population of 66,000,000 "the vast majority of them of German blood" with the British Empire's 59,000,000 "made up of various national and racial strains." With her own population in decline, she relied more and more on the peoples of the Empire for her manpower. <sup>27</sup>

D. Ireland. Moods of deep pessimism with regard to the future of Ireland regularly swept over Casement. This pessimistic attitude was shared by others.<sup>28</sup> Alice Stopford Green, the historian and a close confidant of Casement's, wrote in 1903 to James (later Lord) Bryce, declining an invitation to travel with him to Greece:

In Ireland all is so critical - every hope if there are people to work and every ruin if there are none. Greece is dead - except in print, but Ireland is only on its death-bed, the still living Ireland.<sup>29</sup>

Another friend, Ada McNeill, wrote to him in 1905, asking whether he thought an Irish Ireland possible under English rule? The Gaelic Leaguers didn't, she felt. She herself spoke of Ireland being too weak, of the need to build up, of "keeping alive through a dark epoch - the spirit of the old, old race - we are like our own native turf - the fire is always there - only wanting blowing up."<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Roger Casement, p.117.

<sup>27</sup> Details can be found on p.65ff. of **The Crime against Europe**.

<sup>28</sup> In a recent book review on a biography of the Irish nationalist figure, Tim Healy, Liam de Paor wrote:

"Now that the Ireland of a hundred years ago and more falls into the perspective of history, we can notice more clearly perhaps one striking feature of the time: shame; self-loathing; a revulsion from the shoddiness of this second-rate province of the British Empire. It shows in the writing of Joyce, of Yeats, of Pearse, of lesser people like D.P. Moran. Its epitome was T.M. Healy, so much so that his current political biographer, Frank Callanan, at the end of his Acknowledgements, half hints that there is some shame attached to devoting 'close on two decades' of his own life and work to that witty, vituperative, hate-filled Catholic conservative nationalist."

Liam de Paor, review of Frank Callanan, **T.M. Healy**. Cork University Press, 1996. **Irish Times**, 14/12/96. It seems to me that the motif of shame, raised by de Paor, and the pessimism associated with degenerationist views are closely related.

<sup>29</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford. MsBryce 72 fols. 112-70. Alice Stopford Green to Bryce, 26/5/1903?

<sup>30</sup> NLI MS. 13073 (12/ii) Íde Ní Néill (Ada MacNeill) to Casement, 28/11/05.



An English friend, "Shelagh", a member of the household of the Lord Norbury, was even more pessimistic in two letters written in 1905. In the first, while referring positively to reforms proposed by Lord Dunraven, she suggested that all was a grasping at straws - nothing could save Ireland now - all were emigrating. In her second letter, again referring to the Dunraven scheme, she exclaimed that Ireland's wrongs would make the stones cry, but that reform was too late - 30/40 years too late. The population was emigrating, and railways and steamers were only facilitating the process.<sup>31</sup>

Casement's own pessimism is evident in general comments he made from time to time in his correspondence. Writing to his friend and fellow campaigner, Edmund Morel, he wrote:

there is work here for an Irishman to do - and when one's country is going downhill so fast as Ireland is it is the duty of all who care for her to make her lot theirs.<sup>32</sup>

Writing to his cousin, Gertrude Bannister, he said:

It is a shameful thing that a whole race should be slowly and relentlessly done to death and refused the right to heal themselves. First stricken to the dust, drained of their wealth - their industries destroyed, their land entirely confiscated - their religion, their laws, their language banned - until too weak to resist they gave up all and sank in despair - and now to be chucklingly regarded as a fair green isle that can, all in good time, be replaced with the dregs of English City life.

The history of civilisation offers no more shameful picture than the persistent agony of Ireland... and..no parallel.. to the steady, persistent clinging to their own lofty generous ideal of kindly humanity as the Irish people present.<sup>33</sup>

To an unidentified correspondent, he wrote:

The people are sleeping.. It may be a lost cause - it probably is. I fight with despair in my heart. That matters nothing - it even makes you keener..<sup>34</sup>

And to Alice Stopford Green:

Africa can wait - for centuries and centuries. She will still be Africa. Leopold might murder millions but nothing could destroy or efface the ineffaceable negro - his ways, his colour, his mind, his stature and all that makes him the negro. No matter how cruel the persecution he might suffer the negro will remain unchanged and unchangeable and Africa could always be reconstituted by her own sons and the

---

<sup>31</sup> NLI Ms. 13073 (46/xvi) "Shelagh" (Carlton Park) to Casement, 25 May and 26 July, n.y. (1905?).

<sup>32</sup> LSE, MP F8/22 Casement (Ballycastle) to Morel, 1/8/1907.

<sup>33</sup> NLI MS. 13074 Casement to Gertrude Bannister, 15/3/05.

<sup>34</sup> NLI MS. 13089. Casement to ? (partial).

waves of European misgovernment ebbed back leaving no trace upon her shores or native character." - not so Ireland.<sup>35</sup>

Writing again to Mrs. Green, he referred to the people of the South and West as being in a penal swamp:

One is conscious that one is talking to men who are not yet quite free and still have the fears and weakness of slavery round them.<sup>36</sup>

Casement was widely read in Irish history, particularly in the work of nationalist-minded historians (though he also refers to Froude, Lecky etc.). I suggest that it is possible to interpret his orientation to Irish history as a reflection of the degenerationist pessimism common in his day as much as it is to treat it simply as a recounting of 700 years of conquest.

One of the striking images he uses to interpret Irish history is that of the parasite.<sup>37</sup> England was a parasite feeding off Ireland and squeezing the life-blood from her. It is possible to identify the source of this image: it was a book by Henry Walter Bates titled **The Naturalist on the River Amazons**, first published in 1863. Bates, a naturalist, spent eleven years (1848-1859) on the Amazon and the book was one of the results. Casement possessed a copy, which he perused when in South America.

He wrote:

The British Empire is no northern oak tree. It is a creeping, climbing plant that has fastened on the limbs of others and grown great from a sap not its own. If we seek an analogy for it in the vegetable and not in the animal world we must go to the forest of the tropics and not to the northland woodlands. In the great swamps at the mouth of the Amazon the naturalist Bates describes a monstrous liana, the 'Sipo Matador' or Murdering Creeper, that far more fitly than the oak tree of the north typifies John Bull and the place he has won in the sunlight by the once strong limbs of Ireland...

The analogy is almost the most perfect in literature, and if we would not see it made perfect in history we must get rid of the parasite grip before we are quite strangled. If we would not share the coming darkness we must shake off the murderer's hold, before murderer and victim fall together. That fall is close at hand. A brave hand may yet cut the 'Sipo Matador', and the slayer be slain before he has quite stifled his victim.<sup>38</sup>

The crucial period of English conquest for Casement was the Tudor and following reigns. He regularly refers to the "pious Tudors and their pilfering pirates". The Irish were gradually defeated militarily, their land taken, industry destroyed and

---

<sup>35</sup> NLI MS. 10,464 (3) 20/4/07. Casement to Alice Stopford Green.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* (7) 11/11/13.

<sup>37</sup> For the significance of the parasite in the discussion of degeneration, see Section 4, above.

<sup>38</sup> **Crime**, pp.83-4. See, also, Ch.XVIII, "The Emerald Isle and its Giant Parasite."

trade subordinated subsequently to that of England. The Act of Union was equally an act of perfidy. But the process was clearly in evidence in his own day. Three examples have importance: depopulation, the use of Irishmen in the British army and navy, and the overtaxation of Ireland.<sup>39</sup>

From whatever point of view we survey it we shall find that England's Empire at bottom rests upon Ireland to make good British deficiencies. The Dominions are far off, and while they may give battleships they take men. Ireland is close at hand - she gives all and takes nothing. Men, mind, food and money - all these she has offered through the centuries, and it is upon these and the unrestricted drain of these four things from that rich mine of human fertility and wealth that the British Empire has been founded and maintained.<sup>40</sup>

## 6. Conclusion.

Casement's thinking exhibited both evolutionary and degenerationist elements and a related concern with patterns of growth and decline in individual societies. Evolutionary thinking is more evident in the earlier part of his career, in Africa, while degenerationist concerns strengthen in the latter part of his life. Decline in societies, in Rome and imperial Spain, for instance, was partly explicable by moral failure and this was true in the case of Britain. Casement's treatment of Britain's decline echoes the degenerationist themes current at the time. Ireland's decline, on the other hand, was due to the parasitic hold of her predatory neighbour throughout the centuries. Part of his pro-Germanism is also attributable to this pattern of thought.

Thought-patterns such as these have gone unrecognised, hitherto. They have to be reconstructed, mostly, from scattered comments in his writings, public and private. Casement was not a scholar or a systematic follower of academic debates but, variously, a busy consular official and a public campaigner in causes. To the extent that his opinions reflected concerns such as that on degeneration, he almost certainly derived them from general reading in newspapers, reviews and selected books and from his social intercourse.<sup>41</sup> But they were also markedly influenced by the specific experiences of his life. His experiences as consul in Portuguese colonies in Africa and his years in South America, for example, helped form his ideas on Iberian civilisation, which he then contrasted with Teutonic civilisation.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Two of his publications in 1905, when he was seriously concentrating on Irish affairs, have population decline as their backdrop: the anti-recruitment pamphlet and his article on Redistribution. The shadow of the Famine and the subsequent emigration fall heavily over the page.

<sup>40</sup> *The Crime against Europe*, p.68.

<sup>41</sup> Casement had a collection of travel books, which, like Bates' work, are likely to have been mixtures of personal adventure, ethnography and natural history.

<sup>42</sup> I have drawn attention to this in my 1994 article.

B.L. Reid has written that “Casement’s admiration for Germany was an old story, but it was shallowly based and largely theoretical. Aside from a couple of brief tourist experiences he really knew almost nothing about Germany.”<sup>43</sup> And a few pages later: “Loving ‘Ireland,’ hating ‘England,’ admiring ‘Germany,’ all as absolutes and at least one of them virtually unexamined.....” The development of Casement’s admiration for Germany, to which Reid makes reference, whatever one makes of it, was hardly “virtually unexamined”, but derived from a complex set of ideas, one part of which has been the subject of the present essay.

Undoubtedly, Casement was an emotionally-driven man. But the failure to give due attention to the patterns of his thought and, indeed, to recognize the extent to which many of them were widely-shared at the time has led, at times, to a one-sided portrayal of the man.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources.

Bodleian Library Bryce Papers

Casement, Roger. 1912. The Putumayo Indians. *Contemporary Review*. 102(1317-28).

Casement, Roger. 1958. The Crime against Europe. *Writings and Poems of Roger Casement*. ed. Herbert O. Mackey. Dublin: C.J. Fallon Ltd.

London School of Economics (LSE) Morel Papers.

National Library of Ireland (NLI)

Ms. 10,464 Casement to Alice Stopford Green.

13,073 Various corresp. to Casement, 1895-1916.

13,074 Casement to Gertrude Bannister, 1889-1915.

13,082 Articles, poems etc. by and about Casement, 1890-1916.

13,089 Miscellaneous items on Casement, 1901-45.

13,600 Miscellaneous photocopy letters.

---

<sup>43</sup> Reid, p.184. See the rest of that passage and his comments on p.188. Reid’s comment relates to 1913. Yet, his first account of Casement’s admiration for Germany, on pp.91-2 of his book, relate to 1909 and is referred to in the index as “Germany, early praise of”!

## Secondary Sources.

- Hart, Neil. 1987. *The Foreign Secretary*. Lavenham, Suffolk: Terence Dalton Ltd.
- Hobson, Bulmer. 1968. *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*. Tralee: Anvil Books.
- Inglis, Brian. 1973. *Roger Casement*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- McCull, Rene. 1965. *Roger Casement*. London: Four Square Edition. 1965 [1956]
- Ó Síocháin, S. 1994. Roger Casement, Ethnography, and the Putumayo *Éire-Ireland* XXIX (2), 29-41.
- de Paor, Liam. 1996. Review of Frank Callanan, T.M.Healy, Cork UP , *Irish Times*, 14/12/96.
- Pick, Daniel. 1996. *Faces of Degeneration: a European Disorder. c.1848-1918*. Cambridge: University Press. [1989]
- Reid, B.L. 1976. *The Lives of Roger Casement*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sawyer, Roger. 1984. *Casement; the Flawed Hero*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Shackleton, R. 1961. *Montesquieu: A Critical Biography*. Oxford: University Press.
- Steinberg, J. 1977. The German background to Anglo-German relations, 1905-1914. in F.H. Hinsley (ed.), *British Foreign Policy Under Sir Edward Grey*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Stern, Fritz 1965. *The Politics of Cultural Despair*. N.Y. Anchor Books.
- Young, R.J.C. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London: Routledge.

# Misunderstanding Ethnicity: Ancient Hatreds, False Consciousness and Rational Choice

Andy Storey

## Introduction

Ethnicity and 'ethnic conflict' are some of the most widely discussed phenomena of our time, and yet the level of understanding of what the concepts actually mean is often woefully inadequate. This is particularly the case in much media or 'populist' discourse, the subject of the first section of this article. However, misunderstandings of other sorts also arise -including those I have labelled 'false consciousness' and 'rational choice' varieties - and these are discussed in later sections of the article. My intention is not to review the enormous literature on ethnicity (see Nederveen Pieterse 1996), but rather to make some limited observations which may assist the nonspecialist reader in making sense of current commentary surrounding ethnicity.

By way of definition, my starting point is that of Stephen (1996):

Anthropological theorists today consider ethnicity as subjective, dynamic concept through which groups of people determine their own distinct identities by creating boundaries between themselves and other groups through interaction ... Ethnicity is a creative and improvisational process, fluid and ever changing (17,18).

This definition is deliberately open-ended: ethnicity often does not allow of precise delineation though it can be none the less potent for that, if not in the way or for the reasons commonly assumed.

## The Populist Misunderstanding

Writing in the Irish Press (24 April 1995), John O'Shea, head of the Irish aid agency Goal, described the Rwandan situation thus:

Two groups are bent on destroying each other... The dispute is ethnic. Last April, the Hutu tribe turned on their Tutsi neighbours and butchered 800,000 of them... There is out-and-out hatred between the two groups... The Tutsi are now bent on revenge.

This crude analysis typifies a certain approach to ethnicity and ethnic conflict. The specific simplifications and distortions of O'Shea were challenged by Rakiya Omaar in a subsequent letter to the Irish Press (28 April 1995):

[T]o portray the issue in Rwanda as hatred between Hutus and Tutsis is simply wrong. Prominent moderate Hutu politicians were the first to be killed in April, 1994, by extremist Hutus. During the Genocide, thousands of Hutus refused to kill their Tutsi neighbours, despite the threats to their own lives... The vast majority of Hutus chose to remain in their country or have returned since [the end of the civil war]... More than half the [current] cabinet is Hutu.

So the picture of the Rwandan conflict emerges as rather more complicated than its populist depiction. Unfortunately, simplifications can be politically influential. In particular, it often suits the interests of powerful groups to describe conflict they have engendered as springing from a source other than their own policies, a tendency well summarised by the organization Human Rights Watch:

Communal violence is often seen simply as the product of 'deep-seated hatreds' or 'ancient animosities'... At times this view is promoted by journalists who lack the time or inclination to trace more complex causes. Governments presiding over communal violence may also promote this view, since if 'ancient animosities' are seen as the 'cause', then communal violence takes on the appearance of a natural phenomenon which outsiders have no right to condemn and no hope to prevent. Some members of the international community have also conspired in this view, since inaction in the face of communal violence is more easily excused if the source of that violence is understood to be beyond control (Human Rights Watch 1995: vii).

Chris McGreal, writing in the Guardian (3 December 1994), spelled out the details of this approach from the point of view of the genocide organisers in Rwanda:

the main purpose of the [genocide organisers'] defence is to ensure that one of the swiftest and most organised mass murders of modern times is seen, not as a political act, but as an African tribal bloodletting that nobody could predict and nobody could prevent.

And the warning from Human Rights Watch of how outside actors may use the pretext of 'tribal hatred' to excuse inaction is perfectly captured by a New York Times editorial (15 April 1994), written at the time the Rwandan genocide had just begun:

No member of the United Nations with an army strong enough to make a difference is willing to risk centuries-old history of tribal warfare and deep distrust of outside intervention.

As Human Rights Watch has noted regarding Rwanda, "while little can be done to stop two entire populations from killing each other, the relatively small group that was orchestrating the genocide could readily have been identified and stopped" (Human Rights Watch 1995: ix). It is ironic that some of those who call most vociferously for outside intervention in the world's conflicts may, by their use of the language of inexplicable and irreparable communal hatred, militate against such intervention on the grounds that it seems a hopeless and thankless task.

This then is the first misunderstanding of ethnicity which I wish to highlight - the tendency to see the categories and conflicts concerned as being grounded in ancient, atavistic emotions, rather than in modern, political strategies.

## **The 'False Consciousness' Misunderstanding**

An emphasis on the strategies of political elites is a useful and necessary corrective to what I have termed 'populist' misunderstandings of ethnicity and ethnic conflict. However, an over-emphasis on this dimension can generate its own misunderstandings. Some commentators have gone so far as to argue that the masses who are mobilised on an ethnic basis "subscribe to an ideology that is inconsistent with their material base and therefore unwittingly respond to the call for their own exploitation", as Mafeje (1971: 259) has claimed regarding African 'tribalism'. Sklar (1967: 6) has claimed that such movements are "created and instigated to action by... men of power in furtherance of their own special interests".

There is, as we have seen, more than a grain of explanatory power in these comments, and they are useful insofar as they highlight the close interrelationship between ethnic identity (and the creation thereof) and the struggle for power; as Bayart (1993: 55) observes:

in the context of the contemporary state, ethnicity exists mainly as an agent of accumulation, both of wealth and of political power. Tribalism is thus perceived less as a political force in itself than as a channel through which competition for the acquisition of wealth, power and status is expressed.

The 1995 Human Rights Watch report discussed above states that "time after time, proximate cause of communal violence is governmental exploitation of communal differences" (vii). But the Mafeje and Sklar positions are also reductionist in that they do not allow that the 'masses' (or significant sections thereof) may themselves have very real interests at stake in the processes of ethnic conflict and mobilisation; they may not, in other words, be suffering from the 'false consciousness' sometimes attributed to them.

For example, the historian Leroy Vail criticises those who would attribute ethnic consciousness in Africa solely to the machinations of colonial and post-colonial politicians:

[This approach] tends to depict Africans as little more than either collaborating dupes or naive and gullible people, beguiled by clever colonial administrators and untrustworthy anthropologists, a situation which empirical evidence fails to corroborate... [It] goes too far in depicting ordinary people as being credulous, blindly accepting the ethnic party line from their devious betters. It fails to explain why, today as in the colonial period, the ethnic message should find such resonance with ordinary people (Vail 1989: 3-5).

Instead, Vail proposes a theory of ethnicity in Southern Africa which stresses how the sense of belonging to an ethnic community allowed male migrants to retain a measure of control over land and women: "[t]he new [ethnic] ideologies stressed the historical integrity of the tribe and its land and, especially, the sanctity of the family and its right to land" (14). These ideologies became prominent at a time when massive levels of male labour migration, which necessitated men's physical distance from 'their' land and which opened up possibilities for independent female action, were threatening male control. Ethnicity thus represented a strategy of popular



male resistance to feared loss of power over productive and reproductive resources; there was nothing misguided about it.

In similar vein, Peter Ekeh (1990) argues that the origins of modern 'tribalism' (Ekeh notes that 'ethnic group' is usually a polite way of saying 'tribe' in much African studies) lie in the reaction of ordinary Africans to the slave trade. The existing forms of the state in Africa often turned against their own citizens and helped sell them into slavery, or at least usually failed to offer them protection against the slave trade. People turned instead to kinship networks for support and protection - these were the building blocks of the 'tribes' which colonialists encountered (and often cultivated and reinforced) and which they believed to be much more ancient and immutable than they actually were. The colonial period cemented the trend by further widening the divide between African states and their claimed societies (in terms, for example, of local rulers' legitimacy, or the lack of it).

Basil Davidson takes up Ekeh's thesis in his celebrated study, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (1992):

Left with the shells of a fragile and fallible civil society, the majority have sought ways of defending themselves. The principal way they have found of doing this is through 'tribalism', perhaps more accurately, clientelism: a kind of Tammany Hall-style patronage, dependent on personal, family, and similar networks of local interest (12).

Both Ekeh and Davidson bemoan the consequences of this 'tribalism', but neither claims that it arises from anything other than an understandable response by a large number of people to a particularly difficult situation in which they found themselves. There was no 'false consciousness' involved.

A non-African example of rational adaptation at work is documented by Stephen (1996) in the context of Zapotec communities in Mexico, where Zapotec identity in Teotitlan Del Valle has been mythologised and sentimentalised in order to boost the market for textiles produced by the community; the textile sellers are also selling their customers (who are outsiders and who expect the producers to live in an Indian idyll) a version of Zapotec history which exaggerates community solidarity and self-reliance. As one producer is reported as saying, "Sure we market an embellished story, but I fear the rugs would lose credibility if this cultural background were lost" (in Stephen 1996: 23). The principal gainers from this strategy are the community's merchants, but other members of the community gain also and will go along with the myth of a unified community when required to do so for marketing purposes. Again, ethnicity (or the projection of ethnicity) is not purely a primordial bond (the first misunderstanding), nor is it purely a reflection of the manipulations of political leaders (the second misunderstanding); it can also be a strategy through which a significant section of a population pursues its own self-interest.

## The 'Rational Choice' Misunderstanding

To emphasize the role of rational choices in the creation and sustaining of ethnic identities is, like the earlier highlighting of the strategies of political elites, a valuable and important corrective to misunderstandings about ethnicity. But, also as with that earlier highlighting, it is an emphasis which can be taken to extremes.

For example, the political scientist Robert Bates, a pioneer of New Political Economy (NPE), characterises an ethnic group as "a kind of winning coalition with a wide enough margin to guarantee profits in the struggle for the division of spoils but also sufficiently restructured to maximize the per capita return on these profits" (in Bayart 1993: 56). This is fair enough up to a point, but NPE can easily fall into the trap of reductionism - people are never seen to act for reasons other than self-interest. As Leys comments, in relation to Bates' attribution of the Kenyan Mau Mau revolt to the supposedly 'sparse microfoundations' of economic self-interest:

Is it really plausible that people would have taken the terrible oaths, and accepted the risks and suffering of such a grossly unequal war, without having undergone a religious, national, ethnic and racial mobilisation over several generations, a mobilisation whose causes were necessarily far too complex to be accounted for by any 'sparse' structure? (Leys 1996: 100-1f).

People may act for reasons which simply defy calculations of apparent self-interest i.e., for ideological reasons, where the ideology, whatever its origin, does not reflect direct economic interests. Ethnic ideologies can take a particularly firm hold in this way despite the often mythological bases (such as purity of descent) on which they are constructed; in reference to such mythologies of ethnicity, Brown comments:

these histories are not subjected to dispassionate, scholarly scrutiny because they are usually passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. These stories become part of a group's lore. They tend to be highly selective in their coverage of events and not unbiased in their interpretation of events. Distorted and exaggerated with time, these histories present one's own group as heroic, while other groups are demonized. Grievances are enshrined, and other groups are portrayed as inherently vicious and aggressive. Group members typically treat these ethnic myths as received wisdom (1993: 11).

The ethnic myth is one for which people have demonstrated a powerful propensity to both kill and die. To deny that 'irrational' impulse is to subscribe to what I have here labelled the 'rational choice' misunderstanding about ethnicity - (Clearly, to avoid that particular trap does not demand that one retreat to the opposite extreme of attributing all actions to 'irrational tribalism').

## Conclusion

Understandable impatience with populist descriptions of ethnicity in terms of ancient, tribal forces may lead to an emphasis on the manipulative role of political elites in promoting ethnic mobilisation. This emphasis can, if taken too far, lead to another misunderstanding, if it asserts that ordinary people follow the ethnic party

line without reference to their own self-interest. And, finally, an over-emphasis on self-interest can lead to a third misunderstanding - that people never act for reasons other than self-interest, whereas in practice they often do extraordinary things for a range of 'causes', including the cause of the ethnic community. These conclusions offer no comfort to those who seek uni-dimensional explanations to the phenomenon of ethnic politics.

## References

- Bayart, J.-F. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. Longman.
- Brown, M.E. 1993. Causes and Implications of Ethnic Conflict. in Brown, M.E. (ed.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Davidson, B. 1992. *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State*. James Currey.
- Ekeh, P.P., 1990. Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting Uses of Tribalism in Africa. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 32, No. 4.
- Human Rights Watch, 1995. *Playing the 'Communal Card': Communal Violence and Human Rights*. published by Human Rights Watch.
- Leys, C. 1996. *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory*. EAEP/Indiana/James Currey.
- Mafeje, A., 1971. The Ideology of 'Tribalism'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2.
- Nederveen Pieterse, J., 1996. Varieties of Ethnic Politics and Ethnicity Discourse. in Wilmsen, E.N., and P. McAllister (eds.), *The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sklar, R.L., 1967. Political Science and National Integration - a Radical Approach. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1.
- Stephen, L. 1996. The Creation and Re-creation of Ethnicity: Lessons from the Zapotec and Mixtec of Oaxaca. *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 23, No. 2.
- Vail, L. 1989. Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History. in Vail, L. (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* James Currey/ University of California Press.

## **PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: HELPING TO SEE THE “INVISIBLE”.**

Eileen Kane

In Baluchistan, officials believed that it was impossible for girls and boys to attend school together. It was later discovered that there were 28000 girls in boys' schools. Many of these were recorded as boys

\* \* \*

“Where’s the girl in that household? Why isn’t she on the map?”, asked a little boy when he saw the researchers and villagers making a community map which showed how many children were in school and not in school.

“She’s not on the map because she’s not of school age,” said the older man. “She’s fourteen and about to get married.”

So while surveys showed nearly equal enrolment ratios for primary-aged boys and girls in some Gambian villages, researchers accidentally discovered that about 25% of all girls were “invisible” - not being counted at all.

\* \* \*

In the Baluchistan female Education Program, teachers were supposed to be permanent residents of the villages in which they taught. Some city women claimed to be villagers, because “no matter where one goes, the village of one’s grandparents or great grandparents for past centuries will always be considered as their home village....”

\* \* \*

In a project in Pakistan, villagers were anxious to get a girls' school. When it was built, no village girls were sent. The school had been built twenty yards beyond the villages “invisible” boundary.

\* \* \*

In another finding of the Baluchistan Female Education Project, “ghost schools” emerged -- schools with no enrolment, but teacher’s pay being withdrawn.

Invisible girls, ghost schools, invisible boundaries, invisible homelands, girls becoming boys...! Educators need reliable, timely, cost-effective information in order to address the urgent problems of girls' education. But how DO you study the “invisible” and all the other seeming intangibles associated with something as complex as education? This paper looks at how to get this and other kinds of information which are not easily obtained through conventional research methods. It focuses on one rapid assessment strategy, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

Participation is “a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them.” (World

Bank 1994) But development initiatives have to be based on sound information. PRA takes the participatory process back a logical step: stakeholders, and particularly local people involved in a project, should help to determine the agenda for inquiry, participate in collecting the information, analyzing it, and deciding what to do about it.

PRA is a flexible research strategy which draws on community expertise and involvement to get action-based, timely, cost-effective and reliable information. It helps countries to stretch their scarce research resources, and complements other research techniques.

Although PRA has been widely used in many other fields such as agricultural research and natural resource management, its use in educational research has been very limited. This paper presents a basic picture of PRA, describes a sample project, looks at some questions which PRA might address, and shows how it can fit into a national research program.

### **The background:**

By the 1970s, two facts about development were becoming all too clear:

1. "Supply-side" economic inputs and technology transfer alone were not creating economic and social development. A more "holistic" approach had to be taken -- the environment, the economy, politics and social factors are all interrelated, and all have to be taken into account when working toward practical meaningful change.

But essential social and cultural factors were being overlooked: an evaluation of 2000 World bank projects showed that a major factor in unsatisfactory performance of projects was inadequate understanding of the local culture and informal institutions (World Bank 1990). A small body of literature was also emerging which indicated that taking "human" factors into account in development projects also led to greater financial cost-effectiveness: for example, a study of 68 projects, again for the World Bank, showed that projects which took social and cultural factors into account had twice the economic rate of return of projects which didn't (Kottak 1985:326).

2. It was also becoming obvious that each of the partners in development has a unique perspective to contribute. The views of donors, national governments, development workers, technical experts and researchers had always recognized. But various project failures around the world were making it clear that the participation and perspective of local people is as essential as any other "expert" contribution. After all, who knows best what the local "demands" are, and the socio-cultural environment in which they are embedded?

Both of these developments have an impact on our understanding of the problems of girls' education today. In fact, most of the papers presented at this seminar share these two common themes: the necessity, in addressing girls' education, of understanding and meeting "demand side" social and cultural needs; and the value of local participation in making programs workable. And there's a third, unspoken

theme: there are no universal “answers” --we must *find* solutions appropriate to each case, rather than apply “orthodox” remedies.

None of these realisations, however, has made life easier for the development practitioner, or for the development researcher. More sophisticated “in-depth” information is required. Viewing factors in isolation is out. Involving local people is essential. Strategies have to be practical and sustainable. And time and money are short. How do you manage all of this, and still do the job you’re being paid for?

### **One approach: Rapid Assessment Strategies**

For readers new to rapid assessment, a brief background will help to put PRA into context.

By the late 1970s, many development researchers, faced with all the issues described at the beginning of this paper, began to see the need for new ways of thinking about and carrying out research.

There were many problems with existing research; one was identified very clearly by Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, who, along with their colleagues at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, and colleagues at the University of Khon Kaen in Thailand, had begun to explore new ways of doing development-related research:

Decision-makers need information that is relevant, timely, accurate and usable. In rural development, a great deal of information that is generated is, in various combinations, irrelevant, late, wrong and or unusable anyway. It also often costs a lot to obtain, process, analyze and digest.

Chambers has called the worst excesses of this the “long and dirty” approach:

...the social anthropologist’s fieldwork published ten years later;...the extensive questionnaire survey with 30 pages of questions...which if asked are never coded, or if coded never punched, or if punched never processed, or if processed and printed out, never examined, or if examined, never analyzed and written up, or if read, never understood or remembered, or if understood or remembered, never actually used to change action.” (Chambers 1981:95, 97-98)

The alternative was for development practitioners to do the research themselves. But many were ill-equipped--often they were trained as if their technical specialization functioned in a vacuum, independent of people or local social and cultural variation. When such “old hands” took social considerations into account at all, they relied on gut reactions, ready reckoning and quick skirmishes into areas handy to the office, using what Chambers has called “development tourism” or the “quick and dirty” approach.

A second problem was bias: the strategies used in development research were often influenced by the investigator’s need for comfort and convenience: staying on the main road; talking only to “important people” (the more powerful, the more visible,

the men); avoiding the wet season are almost guaranteed to obscure the deepest poverty, the problems of the least powerful and the most deprived.

A third problem was failure to recognize the essential contribution which local people, through their participation and sharing of their knowledge, can make to understanding needs and opportunities. But people perceive reality in different ways. The men of a community, the women, the poor, the educator, the government official all see something different when looking at a situation. How to get at these multiple perspectives?

A fourth was the need to develop new methods which reflected new thinking in development. More practitioners began to realize that development is an adaptive process, as people respond to new circumstances, not a pre-determined single road to progress; and that when one part of a system changes, it affects all other parts. So the whole context of a situation must be studied. But how to study it in a short time?

A fifth was dissatisfaction with two techniques in particular--surveys, the most commonly used in development-related research; and participant observation. In educational studies, measures and assessment procedures were also standard. Each of these has its strengths, and for the practical problems of development-related research, some serious weaknesses, as well.

For example, surveys can give a great breadth of information and are often the most appropriate research tool. However, there are important problems. One is the practitioner's frustration with the worst aspects of survey questionnaires--the lengthy process of preparation, administration and analysis; and the cost, in money, resources and opportunity time. A second, as Chen and Murray have said, is the fear that

a Third World survey is the careful collection, tabulation and analysis of wild guesses, half-truths and outright lies, meticulously recorded by gullible outsiders during interviews with suspicious, intimidated but cowardly compliant villagers. (Chen and Murray 1976:241)

The dangers of irrelevance, inaccuracy and unreliability are heightened when questionnaires are used cross-culturally in order to compare answers from different countries. (Standardized tests and assessment measures often face similar problems of cultural validity--are they culturally-biased in what they measure?).

The other major research strategy, participant observation, is usually carried out by anthropologists over long periods while they live with the people they are studying. Material obtained by participant observation, is thought to have great "depth" and context. However, three problems have kept it from being used much as a practical technique in development-related research: the time involved--sometimes years; the fact that the researcher is trading "depth" for "breadth", so the results are often only applicable to the specific group being studied; and finally, the mystique surrounding the process--so little is written on how to do participant observation that it's almost necessary to do a study of an anthropologist doing a study in order to find out how to do it yourself.

In response to these problems, researchers developed a number of new approaches: FSR and FSA (farming systems research/analysis); RRA (rapid rural appraisal); PRA (participatory rural appraisal); PALM (participatory learning methods); LEARN (local environment analysis and assessment of rural needs); the *sondeo* approach; and a variety of surveys: rapid reconnaissance, exploratory, and diagnostic, among others. These are called, collectively, “rapid assessment procedures.” Participatory Rural, the most recent of these, is the focus of this paper.

## Participatory Rural Appraisal

Participatory Rural Appraisal emerged in the late 1980s and spread quite quickly, from early projects in Kenya, India and Nepal to other parts of Africa and Asia; training workshops in PRA for government and non-governmental agencies are now proliferating in a number of countries. It has been used in studies of gender issues, health, nutrition and family planning, irrigation, forestry, soils and water, and pastoralism, among others. It has rarely been used to study education, but as this paper shows, it could easily be adapted for this purpose.

Unlike most of the other rapid assessment strategies, and indeed, unlike most other “conventional” research techniques, which are *extractive* (outsiders carry out the research and analyze the results), PRA draws upon several *participant-oriented* traditions to bring another dimension to development-related research: local people are capable of determining what the important issues are, what information is needed, how to analyze it, and what can be done about it.

Since PRA is an adaptive learning strategy rather than a set of standardized techniques, each PRA project varies, but certain elements are common:

- \* taking a **holistic, multidisciplinary** approach.
- \* encouraging **reversal of learning**: researchers recognizing that local people are their teachers, not their subjects. Related to this is the importance of indigenous technical knowledge as a valuable source in planning projects which are sound and sustainable.
- \* using **multiple techniques, methods, researchers, and perspectives**, including the perspectives of local people, on the same issue or problem.
- \* adapting **progressive learning approach**—the information which emerges and the insights gained are used to plan the next steps in the study.
- \* **deliberately seeking diversity**--looking for variations on the pattern, exceptions, contradictions.
- \* recognising the principle of “**optimal ignorance**”—knowing what’s not worth knowing; and “**proportionate accuracy**” or “**appropriate imprecision**”—not being more accurate or precise than necessary (Chambers 1981:95). As the anthropologist



Clifford Geertz has said “It’s not necessary to know everything to know something.”

\* employing strategies and methods deliberately developed for **avoiding biases** described earlier which have characterized much “outsider viewpoint” research

\* using a wide range of techniques, some borrowed and amended from existing disciplines, some developed by practitioners, all of which are aimed at getting enough understanding of local knowledge, perspectives and viewpoints to enable the practitioner to investigate topics, explore problems, appraise or plan, monitor or evaluate projects

\* drawing from a “basket” of techniques, as the situation requires: **semi-structured interviews**, which allow local and individual viewpoints to emerge more readily; identification and interviewing of **key informants**; **observation**; working with groups through **mapping and modelling**; getting important dimensions and categorizations within people’s lives and environments through **taxonomies, scoring and ranking techniques, Venn diagrams**; studying change through **analysis of trends**, of historical, seasonal and life cycle patterns through **case histories, seasonal calendars, maps, photographs**; the development of **indicators and proxy indicators** in order to ascertain patterns and associations; **preference rankings** to investigate decision-making; **direct matrix rankings**; and **community workshops** to discuss findings, get feedback and assess options. **Surveys and questionnaires**, if used, are specific, short and usually used later in the exercise. Many of the techniques are carried on outside, in group settings, and where appropriate, diagrammed on the ground by local people.

\* encouraging researchers to use **their best judgement in each situation**, to **learn from error**, and to **share information and experiences** with other researchers, whether they be facilitator-experts or local people in other areas. Many of the techniques described for RRA are also appropriate to PRA, such as mapping, modelling, transects, ranking and scoring.

## Stages of a PRA Education Study

What follows is an outline of a hypothetical project which could be used in educational research.

### *A.Pre-field work*

The community, an organization, department or other interested body can initiate a PRA project. It begins by

\* selecting an experienced multidisciplinary team of at least two people and usually fewer than ten, including “outsiders”, “insiders” or local people, of both sexes, to get the benefit of multiple insights on common issues and problems;

\* consulting knowledgeable people; examining existing studies and material to get information on population, language, economy, culture, social and political organization, and any information disaggregated by sex, especially in relation to school enrolment, school persistence, school achievement, labour force participation, etc. This will help to suggest preliminary lines of inquiry and potentially important topics. A basic list of points to study may be drawn up; this will probably change as the research progresses;

\* developing research strategies; selecting methods and techniques and perhaps making visits to the community to explain the process and seek people's involvement, if the idea didn't originate with the community.

### ***B. Field activities***

\* fieldwork usually lasts four to ten days. The research techniques, questions and focus of the research may be amended as the research progresses. Frequent team meetings are held (perhaps once daily for the entire team, twice daily for sub-teams) to share material and insights; identify major patterns and relationships; explore variation and diversity; and amend the approaches as awareness grows. In the "*sondeo*" approach, the team breaks up into research pairs; the next day, members of the pairs are switched--for example, one day, an economist might look at a problem with an educator; the next day, he or she might examine the same problem with a sociologist.

In our hypothetical project, here are our field activities. Some provide **basic information** (how many children are in school, what are the community's problems in relation to education); **others relate problems to "causes" and potential solutions**; others help the community **assess options**; and still others help to **organize and plan strategies**.

1. The community discusses and ranks its problems, to see where educational problems fit in--have they a high or low priority? Often separate group discussions are held--older/younger people; men/women; members of different religious or ethnic groups, castes, etc. Sometimes, cultural dictates require this; other times, the perspective of each group is so different that it may be lost in a large group discussion. If separate group meetings are held, the results have to be integrated eventually, and the concerns of each group negotiated with the others.

2. Then the group or groups discusses its specific educational problems, and its current coping strategies, and possible solutions. Girls' education is then focused upon. The problems and solutions are drawn in a grid or matrix on the ground by local people--some problems might be school fees, fears for girls' security, distance from home, need for girls to work at home, etc. Some solutions might be a community savings scheme, help from NGOs, better marketing facilities, more female teachers, payment of fees after the harvest, expansion of a Koranic school, flexible school hours, childcare facilities at the school, etc. Symbols, such as

matchboxes, tins, leaves, are used to represent the various problems and solutions. This allows those who cannot read and write to participate.

The community then discusses how, for each problem, to allocate seeds, beads or other objects across the various solutions, with the best solutions for each problem receiving the most seeds. The result is a graphic display, easy to understand, of problems in order of importance, some possible solutions, and which solutions are thought to make the biggest contribution to each problem. Solutions which cover several of the most important problems may be strategies worth looking at further.

3. People draw a map of the community, indicating each household/compound, and the school-going age of children or each sex who are going/not going to school.

4. Using the information on the map, the team might list each household on a card. Working with a smaller group of six or seven, it asks people to sort the cards into meaningful categories. In this sample project, we ask them to sort the cards by “well-being”--which households are comfortable and secure? We then try to relate the resulting piles to educational participation--for example, do the people in the “poor” category generally send all their children to school, or only some, and if so, are they boys or girls? The same is done with every category. The results can be compared with the map--household 22 is poor--does the card sort reflect what the map said? This technique gives a lot of information, such as how local people group themselves, and what they think the groups do, but at its simplest, it acts as a check on the map. If they don't agree, more research is needed. (Sortings can also be made by ethnic group, religion, distance from school, education of parents, etc.)

5. The map can also be used to develop a sampling procedure for selecting households/individuals to interview. Selection may be *random* or *purposive* (i.e., typical cases, critical cases, contradictory cases, extreme cases, “information rich cases”). Individuals may also be interviewed at random, especially school-aged children, as a check to see if they appear on the map.

Interviews can take the form of simple questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, case-studies, etc. The team may want to collect information on the daily activities of girls, how poor families manage to send children to school, how “successful” women have managed to reach their goals, etc.

6. A variety of other techniques from the “basket” can be used now: for example, a calendar showing the months or seasons can be drawn on the ground and income, school expenses, demanding work periods for girls/boys, demanding school periods, etc. can be plotted. Do people have least income at the high points for school expenditure? Is girls' work heaviest at the most demanding times of the school year?

People can also draw pie charts to show school expenses as a portion of total expenditure, or to show family income resources, or time allocation, etc.

7. The findings are then reviewed with the group(s). Corrections, additions, etc. are invited. Each group chooses 3-5 of the most serious problems which can be addressed largely through local resources, and identifies possible solutions. Once

again, for those who cannot read, symbols, pictures or cartoons can be used to remind people of the problems which have emerged during the research. Then, in a community-wide meeting, the results are pooled, and 3-5 common problems selected. If individual groups (for example, men and women) are unable to meet, the choices of each have to be conveyed to the others, perhaps by a team member, and some common problems have to be chosen.

8. Then consultations are held among the PRA team, representatives of the local community and any necessary experts who may be required to help work out several options for carrying out each of the possible solutions to the community's problems. Inputs, skills, costs, materials, are all worked out.

9. The various options for addressing each problem are assessed by the local people, through voting, ranking, or various other options assessment techniques in the PRA "basket." Emphasis is placed on choosing solutions which can be carried out and sustained mainly through community mobilization, with minimal external help, unless an appropriate external agency is involved in the process. Fairness, low cost, quicker results all enter into the voting considerations.

10. A community action plan is made, spelling out which options have been selected, how they will be carried out, what is to be done, input and output indicators, who will be responsible, how people will measure "success."

11. A community resource survey may be made, to determine the extent to which the community can mobilize itself to carry out the options selected. At the same time, village institutions, NGOs, international donor agencies, religious groups and government departments may also be ranked in terms of their possible role in contributing resources.

### ***C. Completion of the study***

Theoretically, the job of the team is finished now, but return visits are often made for follow-up, consolidation and discussion, report preparation, further planning, etc.

This is also a good time to get more feedback: an important feature of the RRA approach is to "embrace error" and learn from it. A good RRA team will welcome criticism from participants, analyze limitations and failures, and pass their insights on--all part of the "progressive learning" approach.

\* \* \*

It must be emphasized that these steps are presented as an *illustration* of the process: because PRA is not a "cookbook" approach but a flexible strategy, projects will, vary considerably.

### **What is PRA Useful/Not Useful For?**

This hypothetical project should be put into the context of some larger issues about PRA. When can you use PRA, and for what?

It's important to be aware that while PRA can achieve some ends which other strategies and techniques can't, it also has limitations. Here are some examples:

**As a research method:**

PRA is useful for getting basic information where little is known; and for getting at the unique context of a place or situation. It is not useful for getting detailed information over a broad area or a broad period of time (surveys are better); and it is not useful for making specific comparisons between two or more places.

**As seen through the supply-side, demand-side model:**

This model, while over-simplistic for the complexities of the educational process, continues to be popular in the literature on girls' education. How does PRA fit into it?

Despite the fact that major international agencies, including the World Bank, continue to identify "demand-side" interventions in girls' education as being central to increasing access, retention and achievement, most Bank-financed projects in Asia and Africa, with few exceptions (the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Assistance Project 1993 is one, as well as some "sensitization" programs and scholarships in Africa) emphasize "supply-side" interventions. Therefore, although demand-side interventions are much discussed, and most informed observers believe they would be effective, there is little implementation evidence for them. More information on their impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness, would probably help to shift the Bank's direction. PRA is one way to get such information. And while participatory approaches (although probably not PRA) are thought to be more expensive at the initial stages, in part because so few people are trained/experienced in them (Hentschel 1994) if they lead to more sustainable, equitable and relevant projects, they will be more cost-effective in the longer term.

PRA is useful for:

<i>Local</i>	<i>National</i>
<p><b>demand-side issues</b></p> <p>identifying issues and needs in a holistic context</p> <p>identifying constraints and opportunities</p> <p><b>supply-side issues</b></p> <p>assessing strategies for action</p> <p>mobilizing for action</p> <p>identifying appropriate resources</p> <p>implementing projects</p> <p>refining planned / existing projects</p> <p>evaluating projects</p>	<p><b>demand-side issues</b></p> <p>informing decision-making and policy-making through local feedback</p> <p>“reverse socialization”--raising political consciousness</p> <p><b>supply-side issues</b></p> <p>assessing capabilities of organizations to meet client needs</p> <p>improving research capability</p> <p>“tailoring” policy, design and implementation</p> <p>providing commentary and feedback on policy, design and implementation</p>

But PRA is not useful

- \* for dealing with major supply-side national problems (political instability, fiscal crises, structural re-organization of the educational system, etc.)
- \* when implementation requires national-level action (co-ordination, staffing, management, procurement, information systems, legal changes, etc.)
- \* when the community does not have the resources or access to resources necessary to act on a problem
- \* when the community can't identify appropriate answers to its problems because their information base is too narrow or lacking
- \* when the situation or project doesn't permit flexible response or change
- \* when community action is hindered by political, ethnic or other considerations

## As part of a national research strategy:

What are the most useful strategies for integrating national/regional surveys, census information, etc., on the one hand, and the locally-specific information which usually arises from rapid assessment research, on the other? One suggestion is that prior to national, regional or local censuses, PRA techniques be used to establish meaningful categories of inquiry and questions. Following the survey, which will identify the distribution of various kinds of problems, PRA can be used again in selected local instances to “put flesh” on the statistical findings. Tentative policies and aims may then be drafted, and PRA used once again to see, practically, how selected communities might be able to mobilize themselves to participate in implementing aspects of the policy locally. From these lessons, policy and programs may be formulated. Finally, progress in selected areas may be monitored and evaluated through PRA.

But it's clear that PRA *complements* and is *complemented by* other research techniques; it may need, for example, input from large-scale survey research--for a pilot project, you need to know how representative the place is, so you will know to what extent the findings can be generalized. You may also need national statistical information, and information from the literature, to focus the PRA questions and issues. Even purely local-level PRAs are not necessarily entirely self-contained: you may need input from technical experts for costing and feasibility of options identified through PRAs. And often you will require backing from political leaders, government officials, NGO representatives, etc. to provide or supplement resources.

## Fine, but is it “scientific”?

Reams could be (and have been) written on this subject, and summarizing the issues is impossible in a short paper. But we can make a few observations.

Many people believe that only “quantitative” (research which produces numbers) is “scientific.” Anything in numbers is seen as more “scientific” than anything in words, and since we also confuse **precision** (exactness) with **validity** (soundness), anything in *very* precise numbers, like 8.243 is better yet. We believe that the use of instruments is more “scientific” than using a human (perhaps even the human who designed the instrument!). Instruments have the added advantage of putting distance between the observed and the observer, thus guaranteeing “objectivity.” But as one education expert points out, all it really guarantees is distance (Patton 1980). A **questionnaire**, therefore, is more objective and scientific than an **interview** in which *exactly* the same questions are asked. Even more “scientific” in the minds of many is the **experiment**--people believe that experiments “prove” things. In fact all an experiment can do is rule out alternative hypotheses--it doesn't *prove*. And for many of the kinds of problems which concern us about education in developing countries, meeting the exacting requirements of experimental conditions is impossible. So when people say “I did a little experiment,” they usually didn't.

Unconsciously, some people also think that the more a body of material is processed, the more “scientific” it is: a sample is drawn, a questionnaire given, the

answers ticked off in boxes, the results coded in numbers, the numbers fed into a computer, the computer results grouped and statistically analyzed. Thus our vague “yes” to a badly-conceived question passes into the system and comes out with the weight of three hundred years of “science” behind it. Finally, the *source* of material is important to us: information from “officials,” such as government ministers or project directors is more objective; information from local people is “impressionistic;” and the researcher who argues for the value of the local perspective is accused of “going native.”

All of this baggage influences our assessment of strategies such as PRA, and indeed, of other “qualitative” research techniques. In fact, PRA can produce both “qualitative” and “quantitative” information. But that’s not really the issue.

The idea of what constitutes “science” has changed radically in recent years: we are, in fact, in the middle of a “Second Scientific Revolution,” led by “hard” scientists themselves --people in quantum mechanics, chaos theory, and complexity theory among others. Each of these is moving toward some common ideas--that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, that things are ever-changing, uncertain and unpredictable, that the universe is moving toward greater complexity, that there is no single “reality” and that the observer is not an “objective” instrument, separate from the observed. Interestingly, some *social* scientists have been saying similar kinds of things for a long time.

PRA, of course, cannot and does not address all these issues, but it does focus on the complexity and dynamics of a situation, it recognizes that there are multiple perspectives on reality, that there are no universal “solutions” and that a situation must be studied in its context--the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is no more “objective” or “subjective” than any other research approach.

## Conclusions

Today, PRA for education is an idea whose time has come: new explorations in the realm of theory (Guba and Lincoln; Eisner; Quinn Patton); a new emphasis on “qualitative” research in education; (Miles and Huberman, Le Compte, Dobbert, Wolcott); new ideas about “development” and new efforts to adapt and develop valid, efficient approaches to development-related research (Chambers and his colleagues) and a new emphasis on participation (almost everyone) combine to give it greater credibility. It is particularly useful in meeting some of the needs of educators and those concerned with education who are anxious to get timely, appropriate, action-tied solutions which recognize the complexity of the educational process and the complexity of socio-cultural diversity of those who participate in it.

This paper has illustrated some aspects of that usefulness, given a hypothetical example, and issued some cautions. It remains now for people participating in the educational process to adapt the techniques, develop new ones, and share their experiences.



## References for This Paper

- Cernea, Michael, ed. 1985. *Putting People First*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank.
- Chen, Kwan-Hwa and Gerald F. Murray. 1976. "Truths and Untruths in Village Haiti: An Experiment in Third World Survey Research. In *Culture, Natality and Family Planning*, John F. Marshall and Steven Polgar, eds., pp.241-262. Chapel Hill: Carolina Population Centre, University of North Carolina.
- Chambers, Robert. 1981. "Rapid Rural Appraisal: Rationale and Repertoire. *Public Administration and Development* 1:95-106.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1981. Rapid Rural Appraisal: Rationale and Repertoire. *Agricultural Administration and Development* Vol.1:95, 97-98.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. *Putting the Last First* (London: Longmans)
- Dobbert, Marion Lundy. 1984. *Ethnographic Research: Theory and Application for Modern Schools and Societies*. New York: Praegar.
- Eisner, E. 1991. *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S, Lincoln. 1989. *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Newbury Park, Ca: Sage
- Hentschel, Jesko. 1994. *Does Participation Cost The World Bank More? Emerging Evidence*. HRO Working Papers, The World Bank: Washington D.C.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip. 1985. "When People Don't Come First: Some Sociological Lessons From Completed Projects." In *Putting People First*, ed. Michael M. Cernea. New York: Oxford University Press pp.325-356.
- Le Compte, Margaret L., Wendy Millroy and Judith Preissle. 1982. *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*. New York: Academic Press.
- Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 1990. *Qualitative Research Methods in Evaluation*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Wolcott, Harry. 1994. *Transforming Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- World Bank. 1994. *The World Bank and Participation: Report of the Learning Group on Participatory Development*. 1994 (draft).

## Further Readings

RRA Notes, and various publications of the International Institute for Environment and Development provide examples of applications, lists of free materials, contracts for field learning experiences and manuals for a variety of techniques. For

information on PRA in particular, see RRA Notes Number 13 (RRA Notes, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD, England)

A very comprehensive “how to” manual (not specific to education) is:

Theis, Joachim and Heather G. Grady. 1991 *Participatory Rural Appraisal for Community Development: A Training Manual Based on Experiences in the Middle East and North Africa*. London: Save the Children and IIED.

Some manuals of special interest to Asian readers include:

Campbell, Lorna and Gerard J. Gill. 1991. *PRA for Nepal: Concepts and Methods*. Research Support Series Number 4. Kathmandu: HMG Ministry of Agriculture-Winrock International.

Howes, Mick. 1993 *An Introduction to Rapid and Participatory Rural Appraisal in BRAC*.

Some other useful readings are:

ActionAid 1992. Action Aid The Gambia. *From Input to Impact: Participatory Rural Appraisal for ActionAid the Gambia*. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

Chambers, Robert. 1981. Rapid Rural Appraisal: Rational and Repertoire. *Public Administration and Development*. Vol.1:95-106.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1983. *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. London: Longmans.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *Relaxed and Participatory Rural Appraisal: Notes on Practical Approaches and Methods*. Notes for a workshop at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, (May 1992).

\_\_\_\_\_. 1994. The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal. *World Development* Vol.22, No.7:953-969.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1994. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience. *World Development* Vol.22 (forthcoming).

\_\_\_\_\_. 1994. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Challenges, Potentials and Paradigm. *World Development* Vol.22 (forthcoming).

Ford, Richard, et al. 1992. *Sustaining Development Through Community Mobilization: A Case Study of Participatory Rural Appraisal in the Gambia*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Clark University and ActionAid The Gambia.

Kane, Eileen. 1994. “Groundwork: Participatory Research for Girls’ Education. Manual and Video EDIAR/ AFTHR,” The World Bank: Washington D.C.

Kane, Eileen and Mary O’Reilly de Brun. 1993. “Bitter Seeds.” World Bank AF5PH: Washington D.C. (draft).

Kumar, Krishna. 1987. *Rapid, Low-Cost Data Collection Methods for A.I.D.* A.I.D. Program Design and Evaluation Methodology Report No. 8, USAID. Washington: USAID

- \_\_\_\_\_. ed. 1993. *Rapid, Appraisal Methods for A.I.D.* Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
- McCracken, Jennifer A. 1988. A Working Framework for Rapid Rural Appraisal: Lessons from a Fiji Experience. *Agricultural Administration* 163-184.
- Mascarenhas, James, et al. 1991. Participatory Rural Appraisal: Proceedings of the February 1991 Bangalore PRA Trainers Workshop. (*RRA Notes* Number 13) London: International Institute for Environment and Development.
- National Environment Secretariat (Kenya) et al. 1989. *Participatory Rural Appraisal Handbook: Conducting PRAs in Kenya*. Washington: World Resources Institute.
- O'Reilly de Brun, Mary 1994. "Tender Shoots." World bank AF5PH: Washington D.C. (draft).

## BOOK REVIEWS

Taylor, Lawrence J. *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics*. xv, 282 pp., maps, plates, bibliogr., index. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995. ISBN 1 874675 56 2. £15.

Lawrence Taylor's book, *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics*, comes to fill a fundamental gap in the ethnography of Ireland, being, as it is, one of the first major anthropological studies of Catholicism on the island, an issue which is unquestionably formative of Irish culture. Encompassing both Church and lay institutions and practices, Taylor explores the multifaceted 'fields of religious experience' of the Catholics of Southwest Donegal, from the turas or pilgrimage at holy wells, to the local narratives featuring clergymen, to participation in church-sponsored activities and lay prayer meetings and much more. *Occasions of Faith* is a book of considerable density, the result of over twenty years of meticulous field and archival research, which draws on a wide range of theoretical approaches, including those of Turner and Geertz, Weber and Elias, Asad and Foucault.

We are introduced to the people of Teelin, Kilcar, Carrick and other villages, entering into their homes, gardens and buses, where cloaked in vivid accounts of their environments, we hear their voices. They speak of their personal religious experiences and provide interpretations of the experiences of others, and in each vignette - or occasion of faith - the inherent aesthetics of the religious expression is sensitively preserved. We follow the faithful in their perpetual search for miraculous cures at wells, from drunken priests and at healing masses; in their appropriation of the church and its representatives to mark a local and national Irish identity; and in their use of religious organisations as contexts for personal fulfilment and recognition. What on the surface appears to be shared experiences in collective actions are shown to circumscribe individual agendas articulated through common media.

The most collective of all religious practices in the region is observable on Sundays, when nearly everyone goes to mass, indicating the powerful influence exerted by the Church in this peripheral corner of Ireland. Indeed, Taylor sees the Roman Catholic Church as one of the most powerful external forces in the transformation of local culture and landscape in Ireland, and it acted both in concert and in opposition to the British Protestant state. As the book progresses he outlines the penetration of the Church in the area with its 'civilising' agenda, as it combated, domesticated and appropriated vernacular expressions of religiosity. Yet, he also highlights the 'creative spaces' left open by the Church, in which the local 'religious imagination' reinterprets Catholicism according to its own agenda. Arguing that "one's interpretative framework is a product of both historical processes and personal experience" (p. 5), Taylor sees religion as process, linking the stories of real individuals to broad historical trends, showing how their actions and

interpretations of their actions participate in forging history, both in historical time and in the re-elaboration of the past in contemporary collective memory.

The centuries-old presence of Catholicism in the region is - Taylor shows us - inscribed in the local geography, where long ago the tears and footprints of local saints created wells that are still visited by individuals and groups, often under the leadership of local priests. In the *turas* relationships of reciprocity are established between the faithful and the sacred landscape, and a token is left at the well in exchange for a cure. The logic of the *turas* is reapplied to other quite different contexts, most notably in the attribution of curing powers to deviant clergy, whose wandering lifestyle and marginality within the ecclesiastical hierarchy unleash their undomesticated - yet arbitrary - power.

The endurance of this 'chthonic field of religious experience' might be explained by the late expansion of the Church as an institution into Donegal during English colonialism. During the early 19th century, however, a rapid wave of change swept the region, through the combined efforts of the state, the landlord and the Church. By the Victorian era, the Church had strengthened its position in Ireland, and its presence was evident in clerical numbers, newly built churches and control of the national schools. With the expansion of the Church the 'sacramental field of religious experience' emerged to provide a new dimension to local religiosity, linking the religious experience to the symbols and routine practices of the Church, rendering its civilising mission far more subtle and effective than that of the civil authority.

As Taylor demonstrates, the Church can hardly be seen as a unified, monolithic force, and it has remained unable to fully displace the chthonic orientation of the vernacular Catholic experience. Just as differentially situated members of the Church hierarchy constructed their discourses and actions out of their personal experiences, Churchgoers were equally operating their own agendas. Nonetheless a general theme emerged in the battle of competing discourses, linking Catholicism, the Church and Irishness. The Church strove to present itself as a powerful alternative to British rule, the true moral authority of the land; in the parlours of the local Catholic intelligentsia the chthonic was linked to a mode of 'civil Catholicism' to construct a respectable nationalist discourse; the poor Catholic tenantry found allies in particular priests in their confrontations with *na gall*, the foreigners, creating the 'heroic priest'. The combined effect of these discourses has kept anticlericalism - so common to other Catholic nations - at bay, without, however, producing "static uniformity of religious belief and practice" (p. 148).

The diversification of discourse and religious practice has continued, as, for example, with the recent charismatic movement, which brought new fields of religiosity to Southwest Donegal. Here too participation is multifaceted, and for some it follows a chthonic orientation, for others a sacramental orientation, and for still others it has marked a severance with the institutional Church. Similarly, the movement itself circumscribes distinct orientations within the clergy, who must nonetheless accommodate the diversity of fields of religious experience of their followers at the same time as they push forward with own discourses.

In conclusion, *Occasions of Faith* represents a significant contribution to the anthropology of world religions, a masterful example of contemporary ethnographic writing which links the micro to the macro without ever losing sight of the makers of history.

*Suzel Ana Reily, Queen's University, Belfast*

***Anthropology of Tourism* by Dennison Nash Tourism Social Science Series, Pergamon, 1996.**

Dennison Nash has produced a comprehensive overview of what he rightly regards as a neglected field in anthropological studies. He provides us with a possible account of this neglect by arguing that the anthropological community has shied away from tourism out of fear of guilt by association with an activity hitherto viewed as the antithesis of what anthropology sought in traditional sustained observation/participation. This lively argument is one of the few places Nash gives exercise to his own obvious passion for this area as much of the rest of this study is marked by a desire to cover as much ground as possible for as wide a readership as possible.

Nash sets out to provide an overview of the anthropology of tourism for the uninitiated but ends up providing the reader with something of an introduction to anthropology at the same time. This strategy runs the risk of disengaging the anthropologist and I was left wondering exactly who his intended reader might be; the curious anthropologist or those curious about tourism. He might have done better to assume his readership would know more about anthropology and desisted from rather banal descriptions of what the anthropologist does. For example he tells us that "The Point of anthropological work in the field is the formulation, and eventual publication, of as full and accurate a picture as possible of a people and their way of life". Or towards the end of the book he reminds us again that anthropologists have problems in explaining to others what it is we do. He would have done better to concentrate all his energy in converting the informed anthropology reader to this exciting new field of anthropological study.

Nevertheless, this is a thoroughly researched book. While alluding to the major theorists of modern tourism such as MacCannell, Crick, Urry, et al, Nash generally neglects what for me is a vital and interesting entry to the understanding of tourism and that is the exploration of the nature of the tourist. Instead, he opts for showing us how more tried and trusted anthropological approaches have been applied to this area. He provocatively quotes Seneca on touring from premodern times but does little to pursue the notion of whether tourism actually belongs to a definite historical or cultural period.

Nash is most enjoyable when writing about the relationship between tourism and development. He distinguishes between two types of research and this distinction runs throughout his study of tourism. Firstly, there is basic research which is

theoretically informed but sometimes seems to me to be dangerously close to a concept of market research. In this context he cites Greenwood's study of the *alarde* festival in the Basque town of Fuenterrabia. Nash, in his own words, is determined to "not get carried away ... with a discussion of theoretical points of view in any discussion of the anthropology of tourism". He succeeds in this goal. Secondly, he identifies applied research which necessitates well developed descriptive powers and the capacity for moral outrage. Nash rightly reminds us that this basic research is not sufficient here and he hopes to promote a synthetic model. The synthesis is convincing in that he is simply arguing that theory should be informed by practice and vice versa. Nothing startling here. However, it may be edifying for the naive basic researchers.

The anthropology of tourism, as a thoroughly neglected field provides the curious with very many modes of investigation. Nash pursues the relationship between development and tourist concerns as this allows him to say quite a few interesting things about development in passing.

The thoroughness of his span is revealed in refreshing reference to Central European studies such as the Polish journal in this field *Problemy Turystki* and the Croatian *Acta Turistica*. Nash uncovers a neglected field by the appropriate technique of referring to relatively neglected sources in anthropology. We might all take a lesson from this.

Nash is at his best when guiding us through the main paradigmatic approaches to tourism as he sees them. His reference to writings is pertinent and these chapters provide a useful guide to how writers such as Sahlins, Cohen, MacCannell, Turner and others have interpreted the tourist phenomenon. He takes us through developmental, acculturation, personal transition and superstructure models before offering us an assessment in the form of a summarising chapter where he clearly reviews the area. If anything, he errs on the side of being too well structured. To expand the paradigm he recommends an expanded version of the acculturation model which he hopes will account for the dynamic nature of host/tourist interactions. He then goes on to look at the issue of sustainable development which he feels interfaces well with the anthropological agenda.

Nash concludes that tourism is as vexed and complex a subject as any other object of anthropological study such as religion. Nothing too startling here or in the reminder to the novice anthropologist that anthropologists differ on the perspectives that they take in their studies. His hope is that this book will give the field some momentum. Perhaps he would have done better to simply accept the validity of his chosen object of studies and veered away from apologetics. There is always the danger of being unconvincing through trying too hard.

This is a very useful book for any student wishing to gain an insight into how anthropologists have and do approach complex issues of social change and cultural impact in a wide ranging cross-cultural context. The caution of the approach manifest in its thoroughness and the well meaning repetition however does have the effect of robbing this interesting topic of much of its excitement. Nash is not a

leading theorist or original thinker in this field but he has done his bit well for establishing the anthropology of tourism within the anthropological canon.

*David Slattery, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth*

***Political Ritual.* Edited by Asa Boholm. Gothenburg: Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology. 1996. Pp 206.**

This book is based on IASSA conference held in June 1994. The book draws its ethnography from a number of countries; Spain, Northern Ireland, medieval Rome, India, Sri Lanka, Liberia and Namibia. The major strength of the book is its theoretical rereading of rituals in the light of both old and contemporary ethnography. The book is impressive in its success in widening the scope of study of rituals to allow for innovation, improvisation, contextualization, in addition to its liberation from its traditional confinement within the occult.

After a lucid editorial introduction, the scene is set by an article by E. Tonkin and D. Bryan. The article looks the political rituals demonstrated in the annual parades of Northern Ireland and Liberia. It is a "two for the price of one" being two articles melded into a single blend. The blend however has a historical dimension as well. The article debunks our cherished if albeit simplified way of defining rituals as simply symbolic, standardised, and repetitive social acts. This is done through the authors apt emphasis on temporality. It is through this that a rich understanding of rituals is arrived at: symbolic but with selective fluid meanings, standardised but equally endowed with change and dynamism and repetitive but readily available for improvisation.

Many of the findings of the above article also run through the work on Namibia by Christopher Warnlof. The article examines annual ancestral parades of the Herero people in Namibia. Past symbols are drawn from traditional colonial history and relived through the parades within the present. Only through continuous reinterpretation of such symbols do the rituals become fruitful transformative social acts. Colonial subordination is turned into elements of liberation and resistance, ancestry symbolic of ethnic entities is represented as signs of national vision and "tribal" divisions are recreated as a base for national unity.

Those of us who are interested in the mechanics of electoral process of liberal democracy have a lot to learn in at least two articles in the book. These are contributions by J. Spencer on Sri Lanka and F. Cruces and A. de Rada on Spain. The articles come close to viewing the voters as fools acting on imaginary substances. While we may claim to vote for the mundane, it is only through manipulative tapping of the moral order that politicians lure us into their ballot boxes. Cruces and de Rada remind us that we are sensorial beings better led by our sensation and feelings than, perhaps, by appealing to our intellects. Periodic "charging of our batteries" is central to our galvanization towards a desired social



action. This, the authors claim, is indeed central to the process of legitimation enjoined by election rituals in liberal democracy.

The last two articles in the collection afford an inspiring look at history, mythical or otherwise, as a rich source of symbols for political rituals. These are the articles by B. Schnepel on the Hindu "Jungle" Kingdom and A. Boholm on Medieval Rome. While these articles reaffirm all the major theoretical developments regarding the study of rituals, they are also inspiring in other ways. The articles demonstrate the extent of fluidity of cultural imageries and the power of the actors in recreating a relevant present from the past. Both of these articles handle the elusive relationships between rituals, religion and politics.

In general, the collection is yet more evidence of the futility of the alleged distinction between traditional and modern societies and an affirmation of the similarities, if not sameness and unity of humankind. The breadth of the collection is worthy of praise making it a rare addition to various branches of anthropology and of equal appeal to many disciplines across the social sciences.

Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

**Jeremy MacClancy (ed.), *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity*, Oxford: Berg, 1996, 203pp, £14.95.**

Jeremy MacClancy is Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology in Oxford Brookes University. In this volume, he brings together recent ethnographic studies of sport and identity, inspired by his own studies in Northern Spain where Basque national pride can find expression either through traditional sports such as pelota or by adapting imported ones such as following the football fortunes of Athletic Bilbao. Everywhere, sport is now a major industry, and of increasing importance in defining more sharply already established political and moral boundaries or in helping to create new ones. However, until now it has received little attention from anthropologists. MacClancy sets out to remedy this situation.

It is clear from this collection of papers that one can learn a great deal about a society by observing the sport it glorifies: about the Spanish from bullfighting, about the Turks from wrestling, about the Pakistanis from polo and cricket, about Venice from its annual regatta. By looking at sport one can gain a perspective on places, people, and popular culture, and not just into national and communal identities but also about social class and gender difference, about ritual and style, about conflict and antagonism.

Apart from the insights gained from chapters by individual writers on Spain, Turkey, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, and an intriguing chapter on the political correctness of angling in England, there is an excellent opening chapter by MacClancy on all dimensions of sport, identity and ethnicity. Sport everywhere has contributed to a sense of identity but, like nationalism, it can divide as much as it may unite. Sports may be used as a means by which the powerful attempt to

dominate and manipulate others; the forgers of the Soviet Union were well aware of its potential. On the other hand, in Africa, sport has been important in assisting newly emerging states to transcend traditional ethnic and tribal affiliations. Sport has been a major player in world politics as when the superpowers treated the Olympic Games as yet another stage for the Cold War conflict, in competing for medals or simply refusing to attend Games hosted by their rivals.

MacClancy also points to the fact that sports feminists have argued that many sports are constructed in order to suit and benefit men. For example, men run the marathon faster than women, but if its length were doubled, it is women, thanks to reserves of fat, who come first. In a chapter on female bullfighting, MacClancy points out that involvement of women in traditionally male dominated sports is treated in one of two ways, firstly by almost total neglect or, secondly, by not taking it too seriously, where the participants, despite great skill, are usually seen as women first and not as bullfighters. He goes on to question why it is that through much of history sport appears as intrinsically and naturally male.

This is a valuable and intriguing book in which the contributors look at how different sports are used by a wide variety of people to express, manipulate and negotiate their identities, and to challenge the way they are identified by others.

*Liam Ryan, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth*

**Dr. Vincent Tucker, died 17th February 1997, age 51.**

### **A Personal Note**

Dirka Griesshaber, University College, Cork

Vincent Tucker's death has left a deep wound among students and staff of the Sociology of Department, UCC. For me and my fellow students, it is still hard to believe that Vincent would not be there for us any longer. We all miss him terribly and are overcome by sadness, particularly when we pass his office and see the light on inside. The light used to be recognised as a sign that Vincent was in, that you could knock and that he would give you time to talk.

Anybody who met Vincent would agree that he had an outstandingly warm and compassionate personality. For students, he was a great source of support. Only a few days before he left us, I was waiting outside his office while he was in a meeting. When his colleague came out, he commented: "your therapist is waiting." That was a joke but equally laden with truth. Vincent did take time to listen, heal and had an amazing capacity to make you feel better.

I worked with Vincent first on my MA and later on my Ph.D. For me, he was a great source of inspiration, and an admirable role model. Vincent had a great passion for his scholarship, but at the same time, he was vigorously involved in the "real world." He had a keen interest in issues of justice, both locally and globally.

Vincent, who spent many years developing an alternative approach to the study of development and health, was both academic and activist. He skilfully divided his time between teaching and research, political activism and personal development. Vincent's interest in Buddhism is a reflection of his search for personal growth, and a commitment to developing himself as a human resource and a source of wisdom.

I always felt that Vincent, although at 51 at the time of his death, displayed youthfulness, hope and optimism of a 25 year old, at least: still searching, still open for new ideals and always ready for good fun. He transformed many events into a party, playing the drums and singing the songs of revolution. He was a revolutionary, personally and academically. His work on the myth of development which he was to complete as a book, asserts the need for a paradigm in which people have the right to be different and the right to live in the cultures they create. Cultural diversity rather than modern homogeneity for Vincent meant liberation, emancipation and a sense of freedom.

I admired Vincent most for his courage to be a free spirit and for making this a priority for dealing with the people around him.

## Ladislav Holy

Roy Dilley, University of St. Andrews

Capturing the life and the person of someone like Ladislav Holy is always going to be problematic and partial. Cut short before the enjoyment of pleasures and new works he had planned for retirement, his life was nonetheless rich in experience, in its variety and in its intensity. His early childhood years saw the prosperity of pre-war Prague, his early adult life was spent under a post-war Czechoslovak communist regime. He later researched extensively in the Sudan, and subsequently lived and worked in Zambia for 5 years. He then took up a lecturing post in Belfast in 1973 before moving to St Andrews 6 years later to establish social anthropology as a discipline at the University.

The social anthropology unit, as it was then known, quickly acquired a reputation for intellectual excellence, as well as being viewed as a tight and friendly ship run without pretence or artifice. The unit was cast in the image of its founder. Its organization was based upon the values of personal loyalty, integrity and trust, each one a quality Ladislav held dear within a close circle of friends and colleagues. He created an atmosphere in which amity and intellectual rigour could live side by side, a genuine community of scholars in which open discussion and debate could take place without fear or favour. He was always generous in his support of young scholars, encouraging intellectual curiosity and dialogue in which both his colleagues' as well as his own work might be discussed, no matter how provisional it might be.

Like many anthropologists, his research interests speak as much about him as a person as they do about his intellect. In this respect his last period of research is highly pertinent when, in 1989, he returned to Czechoslovakia - with some misgivings - for the first time in over 20 years. This research resulted in his last monograph which was on Czech nationalism and cultural identity, entitled *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*. He had originally wanted to call it *The Little Czech Man and the Great Czech Nation*, but his publisher in Cambridge had insisted on dropping the "man" from the title on the grounds of political correctness and of American sensibilities. This he found highly amusing.

The idea of the "little Czech man," however, could be seen to have much more of a personal significance for Ladislav. It stood for all those people, of no matter what nationality, who were petty-minded and rule-governed: the unimaginative hidebound bureaucrat or administrator. An incident can illustrate what I mean:

Staying with Ladislav in Prague in 1992, I accompanied him on a car trip into southern Bohemia. En route we found one of the few petrol stations open and joined the queue stretching hundreds of yards down the road. Half-an-hour later we pulled onto the forecourt, where a collection of Skodas and Warburg cars were drawing up along only one side of the petrol pumps. Ladislav in his British registered car, with its filler cap on the opposite side, saw his chance and passed the other waiting vehicles to get to the unoccupied side of the pumps. At this point, an irate driver emerged from his car and, with a captive audience of bored motorists,

proceeded to berate this presumed foreigner for ignoring local practices and rules. Ladislav rose to the challenge and, to the astonishment of his accuser and to amusement of the spectators, he unleashed a response in Czech, the meaning of which I can only guess. He returned beaming broadly to explain that I had witnessed the mindless complaints of the archetypal little Czech man.

Ladislav, by contrast, was always served up in large portions - his physical presence, his booming voice, his big and generous heart. Had he been born in Papua New Guinea, he would have made an admirable Big Man - someone of character and charisma, a leader who did not require the trappings or regalia of office to gain authority.

He was, in both senses of the word, a Bohemian. He had a healthy disrespect for petty social conventions, particularly those of an overbearing or bureaucratic nature. He was an individualist who would adopt all manner of subversive strategies when faced with what appeared to be the overarching constraints of a system or its agents.

Beneath his sometimes gruff and intimidating public manner (at least for those who did not know him), there was a person of private sensitivity, of passion and refined sensibilities. He had an eye for colour and form, a fine appreciation of art, of landscape and gardens. He was a prodigious collector of cultural artifacts from Africa and elsewhere. With rural British life and its country pursuits, he was at ease. As a young man in Prague he had been a fluent clarinetist playing Slavonic folk tunes with friends in clubs and bars. In the months before his death, he started to produce, having had no previous experience or training, watercolour paintings of some sophistication and striking delicacy. Ladislav had many dimensions to his character and possessed many talents. In short, he was a remarkable man.

After the death in 1990 of his first wife, Alice, his childhood sweetheart, school-friend and fellow anthropologist, his grief and despair appeared to be inconsolable. Later he met Kate, who became his second wife, with whom he found again hope, love and a new life. He also found a new family into whose heart he was drawn.

Were he to witness these proceedings, one could quite imagine what his reaction might be: a smile would touch the corners of his mouth, his eyebrows would rise in an air of contrived bemusement, his gaze would fix you as though to say - Why all the fuss? The fuss is in appreciation of a life and of a man who has touched us all, touched each one of us in a particular way.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS:**

FOR THE AUTUMN MEETINGS OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND, 12-13 DECEMBER 1997 ST. PATRICK'S COLLEGE, MAYNOOTH, COUNTY KILDARE, IRELAND.

## **THEME: CULTURE, SPACE, AND REPRESENTATION**

Scholarly analyses of the lived environment and ethnographic studies of culture and society have developed an increasingly sophisticated dialogue with one another over the course of the past two decades. Researchers investigating local community life and those interested in the structural production of space and time have become very receptive to one another's research, models, and conceptual paradigms. It is now practically a commonplace to insist in the social sciences that culture and society are in crucial respects spatialized. Similarly, most scholars acknowledge that such phenomena as the development and representation of both the landscape and the built environment are incomprehensible without understanding the meaningful frames in which these phenomena exist.

These meetings are intended to move forward this conversation between Anthropologists, Sociologists, Geographers, Historians, and scholars from related disciplines interested in the inseparability of space and culture through papers presenting of original research and innovative theoretical thinking.

### **Contact Persons:**

A. Jamie Saris, Department of Anthropology, Maynooth.  
+353-1-708-3983; (fax) +353-1-708-3570.  
e-mail: ajsaris@may.ie

Steve Coleman, Department of Anthropology, Maynooth.  
+353-1-708-3932; (fax) +353-1-708-3570.  
e-mail: scoleman@may.ie