Special Section: Health, Care, and Death

Winning Essay: AAI Annual Postgraduate Essay Prize

‘Genocide site and memorial, Ntarama church, Rwanda
(Photo: Eadaoin O’Brien)
The Irish Journal of Anthropology is the organ of the Anthropological Association of Ireland. As such, it aims to promote the discipline of anthropology on the island of Ireland, north and south. It seeks to provide coverage of Irish-related matters and of issues in general anthropology and to be of interest to anthropologists inside and outside academia, as well as to colleagues in a range of other disciplines, such as Archaeology, Cultural Studies, Development Studies, Ethnology and Folk Studies, Gaelge, Irish Studies, and Sociology.

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Editorial Note (Séamas Ó Síocháin)
This number of IJA brings a five-year period as editor to an end. Before taking up editorial duties, I gave a commitment to the Executive Committee of the Anthropological Association of Ireland to produce two numbers per year and to improve the appearance of the journal. We have succeeded in both aims, although, as a strictly amateur endeavour from a publishing perspective, it has been a learning experience throughout. The broad pattern we have followed was to produce one general number per year (including news and book reviews) and one special number, devoted to particular theme and with a guest editor or editors. The more regular appearance of the IJA has helped give the AAI a better profile and has provided a publication outlet for members and others.

I take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the publishing process, both to those who have contributed to the content (writers and peer reviewers) and to the editorial team in the broadest sense, whose contribution has been vital in the sometimes onerous task of seeing journal numbers through the production process. A very special word of thanks must go to Francisco Arqueros for his graphic artist’s expertise, freely given, which helped transform the physical appearance of the journal.

I wish my successor, Fiona Larkan, a very fruitful incumbency in her period as editor (e-mail address: larkanf@tcd.ie).

For this number I am particularly indebted to Cormac Sheehan for his role in helping provide the three articles in the opening special section. They are based on papers presented at the AAI May 2010 Conference in a panel which he organized. Also appearing in this number is the winning essay in the first AAI Annual Postgraduate Essay Prize (Svenja Gosen) and articles based on the two 2010 prize undergraduate theses from QUB (Suzanne Smyth) and NUIM (Renate Stark).

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Cathy Bailey PhD has a ten year post-doctoral research background in human geography and health with past clinical experience in hospital, community and terminal-care nursing. Her research experience includes working on a number of public-health funded community studies. Recently, Cathy was involved in a multidisciplinary Irish research programme, Technology Research for Independent Living (TRIL www.trilcentre.org), and worked from within a falls and older adults research strand. She developed and is publishing a research portfolio on the social aspects of falling. Contact: Catherine.Bailey@northumbria.ac.uk

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Katherine Froggatt is a Senior Lecturer in the International Observatory on End of Life Care in the School of Health and Medicine at Lancaster University. She has a background in geography and nursing, and researches into end of life care for older people in care homes and people with dementia.

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**Renate Stark** completed her BA Double Honours, Anthropology and Spanish, at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, in May 2010. The article here is based on her BA thesis for which she was awarded the William Wilde Award 2010. Her research interests include identity and belonging, mental health and medical anthropology, development and sociolinguistics. Contact: Renate.Stark@nuim.ie

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Reflections on Ageing from within different Cultural Contexts

Cathy Bailey and Martha Chinouya

Abstract: This paper focuses on cultural meanings of ageing. We draw on our ethnographies amongst older women in rural Zimbabwe and with older people in the Republic of Ireland (RoI). From within the context of global ageing, both studies broadly focused on meanings of ageing, independent living and well-being from the perspectives of older people. We reflect on three themes that are relevant to our different contexts: the meaning of chronological age, notions of risk and managing changing expectations of ageing. Further research is needed both to consider how local and changing set of circumstances influence experiences and expectations of becoming and being an older person and to offer rich cross-cultural comparisons of ageing.

Keywords: Cultural meanings of ageing; Zimbabwe; Republic of Ireland; HIV/AIDS; chronological age; risk.

Introduction

Within different cultural and developmental contexts, there are varied debates about ageing.1 The literature on global demographics tends to problematize older age, particularly in relation to future lack of economic resources to secure equitable social protection, social welfare and health-care provision (Byass 2008; Capretta 2007; Kapteyn 2010). These debates, central to the global North, are also played out in developing countries. Different rates of increased fertility and life expectancy have resulted in relative and absolute increases in older populations within Africa, Asia and Latin America. There are also established global ageing projections and patterns. For example, by 2025, the United Nations has estimated a global population of 1.2 billion people aged over 60 (with 72% living in developing countries) and, further, that those aged over 85 years are the most rapidly-increasing age group (Heilig et al 2009; Lutz et al 2008).

Zimbabwe and the Republic of Ireland (RoI) mirror such trends. Over the next 25 years the population of Zimbabwe aged 60 and above is projected to increase from 600,000 to 745,000 (United States Census Bureau 2000). However, there has also been sharp decline in life expectancy in Zimbabwe, due to a multiplicity of structural factors including ‘HIV/AIDS’. The probability of dying between the ages of 15 and 60 is now 82.1% in Zimbabwe (Marmot 2005). Within Ireland, 11.4% of the population is aged over 65 years (Central Statistics Office [CSO] 2007). Ireland has the highest life expectancy at the age of 65 among the 27 member states of the European Union. Projections show an upward trend, with the ‘old dependency ratio’ increasing from 16.4% in 2006 to a projected figure of 25.1% in 2026 (CSO 2007).

Dein and Huline-Dickens (1997) in their early reflections on cultural aspects of ageing, assert that, from within anthropology, there have been a number of cross-cultural texts on ageing, these focusing on status, roles, positioning of and relations with, older persons. They cite the very early work of Simmons’s 1945 monograph on The role of the aged in primitive society and the growing collection of literature from the 1960s onwards (see for example Amos and Harrell 1981; Fry 1980; Hazan 1994). There has also been emphasis on generating culturally relevant, theoretical frameworks for understanding ageing. Examples are Torres’s (1999) theoretical unpacking of the meanings of ‘successful’ ageing and Aboderin’s (2004) critique of the then-current explanations of the global decline in material family support for older people. That said, and from within westernized social gerontology, it could also be argued that there is some slippage in uncritical presentations of aspects of ageing as universal givens (Cruikshank 2003; Sokolovsky 2009). This, both from within a culture (e.g. a research focus on one sector of the population) or through the absence of cross-cultural comparisons (e.g. failing to delineate findings from within a particular context) (Pollit 1996).

There is a plethora of research on self perception, expressing a sense of self that is ageless, identity that maintains continuity despite the physical and social changes that come with ageing (Cohen 1998; Hashmi 2009; Helman 2005; Kaufman, 1986). There is also evidence to suggest disjuncture between a personal sense of continuity and an ageing body that may be more likely to slow down and wear out (Biggs 1993). From within the developed North, for example, a critical ‘oldest old’ (80 years and older) policy driver is to promote and maintain ‘independent living’ and ‘autonomy’. Whilst for many this may fit with their lifelong notion of personhood, there are also conflicting messages about ‘need to take greater care’ and avoiding undue ‘risk’ because older bodies will ‘fail’. They stumble, trip and fall. Eyesight, hearing, reaction time and indeed recovery are more likely to be impaired. So, well-meaning friends, family and carers may be sanguine and cautious about ‘risky’, independent living. That said, Hashmi (2009), who explored how dementia is constructed and treated across a range of cultures, and echoing the earlier work of Cohen (1998), asserts that a focus on a bounded, physically
defined and autonomous self is a late seventeenth-century Euro-American social construction. There are cultures that appear to have a much more relational, sociocentric sense of self, defined from within social relations (Chinouya and O’Keefe 2005; Ndebele et al 2008).

Alongside the clamour for workable solutions to the projected ‘burden’ of older age – a clamour that focuses on demographic, policy and economic issues – there needs to be continued recognition of and inquiry into cultural meanings of old age. In African contexts, for example, growing older brings with it expectations of respect and status, provision of care by one’s (grand) children (Weisner et al 1997). However, the HIV epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa has redefined expectations, in particular as the disease has resulted in the decimation of people of reproductive and economic working age, leaving older generations to negotiate getting older with responsibilities of caring for their grandchildren’s generation, who in turn may be affected by HIV.

Our paper draws on our individual experiences of conducting ethnographic research amongst older women in rural Zimbabwe and with other people in RoI. Our knowledge is partial and situated, arising from our understanding of what we heard, saw, spoke of and participated in with a group of 60 women in rural Zimbabwe and fourteen older people living in Irish households in the early years of the twenty-first century. We explore the notion of ageing and wellbeing for older people affected by HIV in Zimbabwe and for older people in RoI, negotiating meaningful, independent living. We take a reflective approach to explore the situated knowledge we produced as linked to our own selves and the contexts of our practice.

Ageing: Different Cultural Contexts
Cathy: Ireland and Independent Living

In 2007, and in response to an ageing demographic profile as outlined above, a large multidisciplinary national research programme was set up in Ireland: Technology Research for Independent Living (TRIL, www.trilcentre.org). This was to explore the role of technology in supporting older people to remain at home and enjoy a good quality of life. There were three research strands: falls, social connection and cognitive health. I was attached to the falls strand. A key aspect of the TRIL research was to understand older persons’ experiences of growing older in Ireland.

Between 2007 and 2009, I was one of three ethnographers carrying out ethnographic fieldwork in the homes and communities of some of the TRIL participants, living mainly in Dublin city but also within counties Kilkenny, Cork, Roscommon and Galway. I have co-written elsewhere on the detail of this work (Bailey and Sheehan 2009). I am English by birth, Irish by kith, kin and early upbringing with Irish Catholic sensibilities and an understanding of older people traditionally respected as heads of large families.

Many of my family are not devout or practising Catholics but sense of kinship, belonging and ‘looking after your own’ remains strong. As is further discussed below, there is also a sense of change.

Martha: HIV and Older Women

I was born in Zimbabwe and my family roots are from the East of Zimbabwe, the location of the study site. The study reflected on here was conducted within a Church where I returned to conduct the ethnography, positioning the Church as the ethnography, the site for observing, talking, participating and interviewing. Why the Church? The Church, by virtue of its role in education about family values, morality and respect for others, offered a particular site for understanding what it meant to be a Christian woman, older, grandmother and caring for children whose parents had died of AIDS. Against a background of economic recession and hyperinflation, isolation from international policy and funding bodies and a general collapse in the health and economic sectors, the HIV epidemic has changed the landscape of ageing and getting older in Zimbabwe. At the time of the ethnography, in 2006, Zimbabwe had a population of 13 million people, with an estimated 1.3–1.4 million living with HIV, 60% of them women (UNAIDS 2008). AIDS had reversed most of the developmental goals, and this was marked by increased illnesses and early deaths. At the time of the study, HIV medicines were in short supply. Despite the need for HIV prophylactic drugs in sub-Saharan Africa, anti-retrovirals’ supplies (ARVs) had only achieved 28% coverage in this area (United Nations General Assembly Special Session 2007). The lack of HIV medicines, doctors and general decline of the health facilities increased the burden of HIV deaths and illnesses, as well as the burden of care for the sick, orphaned children and the bereaved.

It is within this context that the Church became a fundamental partner in the provision of health and social care. The study was funded by the UK Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) exploring the role of religion in mitigating the impact of AIDS in this rural setting. Participants named this project ‘Taurai’ (‘communicate’) in this instance about HIV within the Church. How then did the HIV/AIDS epidemic, economic, social and political challenges impact on how the Taurai participants understood and experienced getting older in this rural setting?

Shared Methods – Different Contexts
Cathy

Through their contact with the TRIL Research Centre and with permissions, during the first two years of TRIL, I spent time with 14 households where at least one member was a TRIL participant. Participants were men and women, aged from late sixties to late eighties, all but one living in an urban setting. Within the previous year, most had experienced a fall or a fear of falling. On average I made monthly visits to each...
of the households and these fitted around the lives of the participants. This included taking part in their routines, such as: attending a church service or visiting and meeting with family, friends and neighbours; going shopping; having a pub lunch or meeting in a Day Care Centre. With each household, visits ranged from one to many; this was very much participant led and dependent on forming comfortable relationships.

A broad research question (‘what does it mean to be an older person in Ireland today?’) shaped ongoing talk and reflection on such topics as: childhood, education, family, belief systems, activities and interests, challenges and coping strategies, experience with technology, dealing with change, hopes and fears, health, illness, future planning including preparation for death and the social status of older persons. Conversation happened from within everyday social milieu. At times, these were partly structured by interview questions. Talk, setting and gesture were captured through field notes, filtered and shaped by researcher memory and understanding of spoken words, action, interaction, interludes and pauses.

Narrative and individual life events touched on ‘familiar’ and wider political events and institutions including: colonial rule, civil war, stagnation of the 1950s–80s, lack of work and mass emigration and the role of religion in education (particularly but not in every case, Roman Catholicism). Whilst, since 1994, Ireland had experienced rapid economic and social change with rising employment, return migration and a boom in the construction industry leading to an explosion of new building and more prosperous living for some, this has been tempered by the recent global recession.

Although participants’ ages ranged from 60s to late 80s, there were common stories of thrift, ‘making do’ and ‘getting on’, of perhaps being content with ‘what is’, rather than ‘what might be’. There was also expressed amazement at the relative ‘wealth and comfort’ that adult children in their 40s and 50s and grandchildren seemed to be experiencing, compared to their own material wealth at that stage in their lives. However, it was felt that this had come at a price: ‘We lived on top of each other [extended family sharing a house] but now they’ve all got these big houses and all that debt’. There were also counter-tales of growing up in bigger houses, smaller families, of acquiring a very different education, of seeking professional careers and of moving into and out of different social groups.

### Martha

Data presented in this paper was conducted over a period of three months amongst HIV-positive women, members of a Church support group. The support group was located in a Church House, a detached property on two acres of land that was walled and gated. This space was popularly referred by the women as the ‘Taurai House’, bounding the ethnography to the place. Women frequented this space on a day-to-day basis and used the space as a site for cooking, sharing food and medicines, conversing, gossiping and sharing information. It is within this context that various methods were used including audio-taped interviews, conversations, observations, focus groups and participating, particularly as we ate together food prepared by the women. With the passage of time, the space began to mirror a household as we ate together, and in some cases the women used to bath in the Taurai house as water and electricity were ‘cut off’ from their homes. To gain ethical approval, it was stressed in England that, because of the sensitive nature of the research topic, all interviews had to be conducted in ‘confidential’ space such as an office. We had an ‘office’, but the women resisted being interviewed in the spare bedroom that doubled as the ‘Taurai office’ and hence most interviews and conversations were conducted outside, in most cases under the ‘Taurai tree of talking’. The topic of chiwere (the illness), the popular term for HIV or indeed chikosoro chemazuva ano (tuberculosis triggered by AIDS) became devices for talking about ageing, caring for grandchildren, working informally to support the family and getting on with life as women ‘lived’ the epidemic in this rural setting.

Importantly, the women referred to each other using terms drawn from kinship such as ambuya (grandmother), tete (paternal aunt), mainini (younger mother) maigura (older mother). The use of kinship terms also reflected generations/age as older women were often referred to as ambuya. These kinship terms brought care responsibilities amongst the women. This experience brought some childhood memories, growing up in Zimbabwe, as I never referred to anyone older than me by their first name, but using kinship terms. All interactions with the women were in Shona although the women did remark that my intonation had a different accent.

Sixty women frequented the Taurai house and they had a mean age of 42 years. Over half of them reported no or only primary education, whilst the other half reported some encounter with secondary school education. None had been to the university. They were all unemployed and all reported informal work (kukorokoza) and this involved selling food, clothes etc in the streets or market, maricho (food for work) and very few (N=2) mentioned ‘selling’ sex, and brewing ‘7 days’ (an alcoholic beverage for selling). Most reported that they had experienced the death of a male partner through what the women suspected as chiwere.

### Reflections

**Cathy: Independent Living**

I had many conversations about social, physical and psychological challenges attributed to ageing: *My hearing is not what it used to be* (Liam aged 82 years who still liked a drink with his ‘pals’ in the local pub but who was finding it increasingly difficult to follow conversations in social gatherings); *I’m not a flyer any more* (Marian aged 70 years who had been suffering
unexplained falls for at least a year); ‘I find I enjoy being at home now, good this because I’m here a good deal’ (Breda aged 84 who lives alone and has difficulty walking). Whilst such reflections seem to echo the literature cited earlier, emphasizing a struggle to continue with a lifelong sense of self from within an ageing body that is not performing well (Biggs 1993), there were also strong assertions to the contrary. Eamon at 82 years and living alone is very security conscious. When I tentatively asked if this had come with age: ‘I have the bolts on the door and the chain but aren’t I telling you that’s the way it’s always been for me, like how many years have I been swinging along with that clump of a brolly?’ (the umbrella [brolly] is a large stout, black model with a metal tip, carried, Eamon says, to ward off would-be muggers). Despite appreciating well-meaning and ‘caring’ relations, particularly within families, some talk also subtly suggested a struggle to maintain social roles in the face of ageist assumptions. Following a series of falls, Terry a widower, spoke of the social embarrassment of falling in public: ‘I across the road, having to lift me up because I fell out of my standing, right there in the street and I knew him as a kiddie!’ In Ireland ‘losing one’s standing’, has a literal meaning of physically losing one’s balance and falling, but perhaps there are also social and cultural connotations. As Terry said, following his falls, he needed to ‘settle the family’.

... and then after the falls [pause] and the youngest and B [son and daughter-in-law] moving in here and the changes [to the home], ah it was grand, they were kind but [long pause] I know they talk [amongst themselves], they worry.

Terry says he doesn’t want his adult children ‘fussing’. He comments: ‘they still come to me with their problems, as they should’. He tells them ‘everything is grand’, ‘he’s getting out with the dog’, but during three home visits he tells me: ‘it’s too cold’, ‘it’s a bit of a bother’ ‘to go out with the dogs, he will ‘next time’.

Other participants welcomed family support; ‘sure they help you decide what next, just like I did when my father took the stroke and the two of them came here’ (Irene who at 87 and living with increasingly debilitating arthritis, wants to plan her future with due consideration for ‘what’s best for the family, all of us’). Others appreciated help but on their terms such as accepting a stair lift but not a downstairs toilet (“a lot of disruption at my age”) or having the ‘front room’ painted but not the rest of the house (“too much expense”).

Others still expressed ambivalence about ‘independent living’, a sense perhaps that their continued independence created worries for others. For example, Donal who had passed on the family farm to his eldest son still enjoys daily work routines: ‘I’ve been driving [on a tractor] to top field [furthest point of small farm] for over 50 year and I know every dip and dell’. However, now living with Parkinson’s disease and reaching almost 80 years, ‘the tablets fair work, mind’ [to reduce the shakes], Donal suggests that ‘they’re on to me, “Daddy, just have the mobile phone, Mammy worries about you”. He doesn’t want his adult children ‘clacking at me’ [using the phone]. However, he also says: ‘I get to think, sure I’m a fair worry to them.’

Some participants also related to an ‘ageless self’ and this despite significant physical changes. When we met, Eamon, introduced above, was being investigated following a ‘frightening’ fall in his back garden and, in spite of failing eyesight due to macular degeneration, he was struggling to maintain daily routines. At 82, Eamon described himself as a ‘bit of a loner, always have been’. He had lived in the same Dublin house for over 75 years, marrying in his mid-50s and widowed and childless by his late 60s. His home was spare with little modernization since the 1970s.

Eamon suggested that his needs were simple: ‘I have the pensions, I get the travel pass [free public transport], I have to pay to see the eye specialist, the Doctor sorts that’. He wanted to continue going to a local pub that, up to his fall, he had visited almost daily for his ‘half plate’ (a smaller serving of a meat-and-vegetables meal) and despite irreversibly failing eyesight, Eamon wished to continue to ‘walk along streets that have been rubbed shiny by my comings and goings this past 75 year or so’.

**Martha: Ageing with AIDS**

Women’s reflections on ageing were centred on high responsibilities, a result of losses in their lives: loss, not only of their own health and through illnesses but also deaths of family members and social kin. I spoke to a grandmother who narrated her journeys of loss. When asked how far she had gone with her education she reflected on the patriarchal history of educating boys in the family and whispered that she had gone as far as standard two, or rather had spent two years in primary school. She mentioned how in her history, her father had viewed educating daughters:

My father said, ‘What is the point of sending her to school? It’s like watering someone’s garden as the owner of that garden will gather your crops when she gets married’. So he educated my brothers and I only went as standard two. I then got a job as a house-girl, working for a white family.

These memories were embedded in the patriarchal and colonial history of Zimbabwe where she experienced her childhood. She then went on to narrate other losses, ‘the death of her husband’ in the early 1990s from what she believed, like most women, was AIDS, as the men often did not disclose that they were HIV-positive or accessed HIV testing facilities. She recalled how the history of the HIV epidemic had taken everyone by surprise, killing people who often relied on traditional
healers for diagnosis. She then narrated the death of her own son, born 1968, from again what she believed was the illness, commenting ‘it is this illness of today’. I further asked: Where is his wife? A bit surprised by my question, she answered:

She is no longer with us. I have got their family. I am their grandmother. Their oldest child is doing form four (16 years) and the younger one is doing grade six (11 years) in primary school. Their parents died a year apart. First my son and then Muroora (daughter-in-law). I also buried their other child as they had three. My other daughter again died this December, last year. I also buried her. She left me two kids, one doing grade zero (4 years) and the other in grade one (6 years). So I have to work. I order bananas and sometimes they are taken by the police as they say we have no documents. I have got a wish to go out if I could, go to Mozambique to order things to sell. There is no money. I have to buy soap for the children, sugar, make sure there is porridge for them in the morning. There is no one to help or cry out to. My other children are not working. The other one did not even attend the last funeral as he had no bus fare.

Discussion
This paper arose from our joint discussions about our individual research and what ageing means from within different cultural contexts. Although in both settings chronological age is a marker for receipt of a state pension, in Zimbabwe such provision is extremely limited. Cathy’s participants were in receipt of a state pension and in some cases also an occupational pension, although often small. Eamon welcomes this financial security, speaking of simple needs such as walking in his neighbourhood and going out to his local pub for his ‘half plate’. His experience of ageing contrasts sharply with that of the Zimbabwean grandmother who, because of the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS, now has sole social and economic responsibility for her grandchildren.

Within RoI as in other countries within this region, the role of older people as grandparents and heads of families may also play a significant social and economic role, particularly during recession. Younger grandparents may become unpaid carers, enabling the working generation to pursue paid work and perhaps also challenge the ‘dependency ratio’, a statistic that assumes that those not in paid work are dependent on those who are. Also, as with Terry and well into older age, some of Cathy’s participants, men and women, assumed continued support for adult children in different ways. With escalating house prices for example, modifying a parental home in order to cohabit has reciprocal benefits (and challenges) across the generations. Others wished for adult children to continue to seek practical and moral guidance although, as with Terry, there were expressions of ageist assumptions, sometimes triggered by a critical incident such as a fall, impeding or threatening this role.

From Zimbabwe, prior to the HIV/AIDS disaster, perhaps greater status recognition for grandparenting roles means that, for some older women, HIV/AIDS has denied them their ‘traditional’ identity. They are now older women who bury their children, become mothers to their grandchildren, and have so few resources that life becomes a daily struggle to secure food. Moreover, and within the space of a decade or so, older age now has to be considered from within a much shorter life expectancy. The grandmother reported that she was 58 years which is well above the life expectancy within the context of AIDS. She had achieved older age status as a grandmother and a mother. On the other hand, Eamon had no children and had achieved older age status because of his chronological age.

‘Risks’ were evident but played out very differently. Yet perhaps there were similar cultural drivers in relation to retaining one’s social standing, dignity and an ‘ageless’ sense of identity. In rural Zimbabwe, where communities live with AIDS and abject poverty, risk is shared and taken to benefit others. Note the grandmother who risks trying to sell bananas in the street without a street-vendor licence and her goods are then confiscated by the police. She repeatedly takes this risk for the survival of her grandchildren.

For Terry, Donal, Eamon and other participants in the Irish study, it seems that risk has to be traded with ‘independent living’. Whilst the action appears to be an individual experience, for example, living with the risk of falling, potential consequences reveal relational and social consequences. Donal suggests that he is happy to take perceived risks associated with his ageing body and living with Parkinson’s disease but he expresses concerns that this ‘causes worry’ amongst family members. In subtle ways Terry speaks of falling in public leading to loss of ‘social standing’ and in turn maybe he worries that his adult children may no longer refer to him for guidance, as head of the family, but rather feel that they must now make decisions on his behalf.

Finally, and even with the stark chronological differences, in RoI and Zimbabwe, our participants drew on similar, lifecourse, common events and institutions, a cohort’s stock of cultural knowledge. In Ireland growing up in the 1920s, 30s and 40s and in Zimbabwe growing up in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, such knowledge included: the impacts of Christianity, particularly on education; a colonial history and war; the prominence of a family identity and the status of older people as repositories of local knowledge. Changing expectations of ageing happened and is happening at different rates, through HIV/AIDS and enormous social and political change, dramatically so in Zimbabwe. In RoI, the beginning of the research was framed with participant reflections on ‘a sense of
change’ brought about by unprecedented prosperity, albeit not for everyone. Such change was not always welcome and talk was about ‘too big’ (homes), ‘too few’ (children) and ‘too much debt’. However, towards the end of the research, the global recession was becoming a reality and talk was of generational, interdependent support with recognition that wider ageist assumptions might challenge this relational sense of independent living.

Conclusion
Global populations are ageing at an unprecedented rate and there are urgent calls for workable solutions to the projected ‘burden’ of older age. It is said that solutions need to focus on demographic, policy and economic issues. We suggest however that there is equally urgent need for continued recognition of and inquiry into cultural meanings of old age – this to understand and respond accordingly to culturally contextualized and locally contingent challenges and opportunities of ageing. Our reflections illustrate how socio-economic and cultural settings may define and shape experiences and expectations of ageing. Within cultures there is diversity but cohort-common stocks of knowledge: for example, experiencing civil war or the influences of a ‘church education’ may impact on expectations of ageing. Such expectations are influenced by change. This may be unprecedented as with the case of the dramatic drop in life expectancy in Zimbabwe, or played out over a lifetime, as with the Irish economic dips and rises and their impacts on notions of ‘independent living’. Within our studies, the meaning of chronological age, notions of risk and managing changing expectations of ageing are contingent on localized and continually changing sets of circumstances. Yet across the two cultures, perhaps there were similar cultural drivers in relation to retaining one’s social standing, dignity and maintaining an ‘ageless’ sense of identity. Against a backdrop of global ageing, further research is needed to consider how local and changing sets of circumstances influence experiences and expectations of becoming and being an older person. In turn global cross-cultural comparisons may help shape culturally appropriate and perhaps more hopeful future expectations of ageing. Martha would like to thank the ESRC for providing the funds for this study (RES-000-22-1919) and to all the people who were involved in the study.

References
Exploring the Impact of Nursing Home Life: Routines, Dependency and Measurement

Kieran Walsh and Thomas Waldmann

Abstract: This paper marks an initial exploratory effort to explore the impact of nursing home institutionalization on older low-dependency residents. It draws on previous findings of a live-on-site observational analysis of six nursing-home residents and a subsequent comparative analysis of the fundamental abilities of 50 nursing-home residents and 50 community-dwelling older adults. The findings are used to highlight issues surrounding life-course context and continuity extraction within structured care environments, the role of routines and dependency in constructing that extraction, and challenges in inductive and deductive measurement when focusing on individual, organizational and environmental perspectives.

Introduction

Nursing homes in Ireland are an important component of our care infrastructure, with approximately 22,000 older people receiving care in such facilities (DoHC 2009). The structured nature of the institutional environment and the extraction of a group from the social community have inspired questions around disassociation, identity reduction and dependency in anthropology and gerontology literatures (Gubrium 1975; Baltes et al. 1983; Shield 1988; Henderson and Vesperi 1995). In perhaps one of the first seminal works in this area, using participant observation, Goffman’s (1961) concept of the ‘total institution’ described how residents experience societal segregation; a set schedule of activities (batch living); institutional control (binary management) and a stripping of their self-identity (identity stripping). While Goffman’s observations might have emphasized the penal and custodial elements of more traditional asylum institutions, the appropriateness of contemporary residential care has also been questioned (NESF 2005).

It is important to recognize from the outset that nursing homes provide a valuable source of care for older people in society (Moody 2002; Murphy et al. 2006). Unlike many other developed countries, however, it is typical to find a wide range of older adults, varying in their abilities, in a single facility in Ireland (Walsh and Waldmann 2008). On average low-dependency residents constitute just 10% of a nursing home’s population with the remaining 90% comprising medium (20%), high (35%), and maximum dependency (35%) residents. Given that the nature of the environment is likely to be dictated by the nature of the largest resident group, healthier low-dependency older adults may suffer.

On one side, having to leave one’s home can mean that a source of emotional and experiential meaning is lost (Kontos 1998). The memories, attachment, status and associations that come from living and aging in a place can reinforce a sense of personal identity (Rowles 1983; 1993). An older person’s continued presence in the home can also signify an important marker of independence (Kontos 1998). On the other side, the regulated environment of a care facility presents a new, and sometimes uncomfortable, set of place associations. Increased need for care, loss of functional independence and routine-driven activities can be perceived to be intertwined with institutional life (Starck 1992; Nay 1995). The move to a care facility can serve as a disconnect between people and their previous contexts, threatening their social and psychological continuity. The relevance of individuals’ life-courses, and their accumulated material possessions, social roles and community relations can seem lost within the new and perhaps more confining boundaries of the care institution (Groger 1995; Wilson 1997). Indeed, in ‘Living and Dying at Murray Manor’, Gubrium (1975) observed that for many residents the transition into institutionalisation is a painful one and fundamentally disrupts and breaks-up the nature of home. Shield (1988), who conducted an ethnography of life in one nursing home, found that while residents attempted to create feelings of home, the core elements of community and reciprocity were rarely replicated.

The implications of a controlled environment feature both in the theoretical and empirical literatures. Research on nursing homes has found that institutional routines and norms and reduced interpersonal relationships influence psychological well-being, autonomy and feelings of purposelessness (Qassis and Hayden 1990; Nay 1995; Gilbart and Hirdes 2000; Carpenter 2002; Patel 2003; Clarke and Bowling 1990; Sidenvall 1999; Fivesh 1998; Cohen-Mansfield et al. 1995). Learned helplessness (Seligman et al. 1967; Peterson et al. 1993) – feelings of loss of control that result in dependency and stem from a specific experience of uncontrollability – has also been found to occur in these facilities. This is primarily due to the disempowering institutional practices and to residents being treated as passive parties (Barder et al. 1994; Faulkner 2001a and 2001b). Baltes (1995; 1996) suggested a more complex co-construction, termed learned dependency. The theory describes how dependent behaviours of older care recipients are attended to immediately, while autonomous behaviours (such as self-care activities) are ignored. This pattern, or script, of interaction reinforces dependent behaviour...
by rewarding older people with social contact in a care situation (Baltes and Carstensen, 1999).

These forms of environmentally-induced behavioural dependency illustrate what Parmalee and Lawton (1990) described as the autonomy-security dialectic. Achieving a balance between autonomy and security, that is appropriate to a person's abilities and preferences, is considered crucial within a nursing home (Martiasson and Andersson 1997). Too much autonomy introduces hazardous conditions for residents, whereas excessive security will result in an un-stimulating controlled environment (Parmalee and Lawton 1990). This dynamic underlies the principles of many of the theoretical constructs in environmental gerontology, including Lawton’s (1975; 1982) environmental docility hypothesis, Kahana’s (1975) congruence model and Carp and Carp’s (1984) model of person-environment fit. In each case, the fit or congruence between persons’ preferences, or competences, and their environments, determines their actions and well-being. There is also evidence to suggest that environmental-induced behaviour, whether dependency, batch living, or inactivity, is associated with functional ability capacity. Glass et al. (1999) and Menec (2003) found that there was a positive relationship between social, physical and everyday activity and independent functionality. Moreover, researchers have documented the importance of intellectual engagement and practice in preventing cognitive decline (Zec 1995; Holland and Rabbitt 1991; Hultsch et al. 1997). A small number of studies has also suggested that the disuse of cognitive capacities can even lead to cognitive degradation (Morrow et al. 1991).

Considering that the gerontological and ethnographic literature indicates a complex and layered relationship between persons and their institutional environments, the impact of nursing home life on low-dependency residents needs to be understood; particularly given broader concerns around quality of care, inappropriate admissions, low-levels of exchequer spending and lack of prioritization of older adult care in Ireland (O’Shea 2002; Murphy et al. 2006; NESF 2005; Walsh and O’Shea 2009). This paper aims to contextualise nursing home life for low-dependency older people and to explore its impact on the wellbeing and fundamental capacities of these residents.

The research is not intended to determine causal relationships or to be an in-depth ethnographic study. Instead the paper functions as an overview of some initial exploratory work. We begin by presenting a set of observations of the daily routines and the behavioural interactions of six nursing-home residents. Next, we draw on the findings of a comparative analysis between community-dwelling and nursing-home residents to investigate the relationship between institutionalization and ability performance. Finally, a discussion of both the findings and the challenges surrounding the measurement of institutional effects is presented.

Life in Cedarwood Nursing Home
To gather insight into the daily lives of older nursing-home residents, an observational analysis, focusing on six individuals, was undertaken in Cedarwood Nursing Home (pseudo name). Cedarwood was a one-hundred-bed voluntary long-stay facility, with a small number of independent living units, located just outside a rural town. In an effort to become immersed in the daily routines, structures and atmosphere of the home, the research involved living on-site in an independent living unit for a three-week period. Participant observation was augmented with semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with the residents. The participants were all low-dependency and included two men and four women, aged from 81 to 93 years.

The majority of Cedarwood’s residents were high to maximum dependency. Consequently, the environment of the nursing home was structured around the processes of care delivery. The nursing home was not based on a medical model of care, but the person-centred principles that underpinned the care approach echoed the resident composition. Therefore, institutional norms with respect to the type of care provided, the interactions between staff and residents, and the completion of activities of daily living tended to reflect the nature of higher dependency.

For the most part, residents lived their lives around a routine of services based on staffing schedules and intuitive norms. Getting up in the morning, eating breakfast, lunch and dinner, and going to bed were the core daily activities. While the schedule was flexible and allowed for individual choice, the majority of the residents, the majority of the time, moved in unison through the course of the day. In this manner, and as documented previously by Clarke and Bowling (1990), a degree of batch living characterized the operations of the home. Unlike Goffman’s conception, the schedule of activities was not enforced. Nevertheless, there was an expectation that certain activities needed to be completed by certain times.

It was within this routine-driven and care-orientated environment that the participants lived their lives. Although personal activities of daily living, such as getting dressed and eating, were performed individually without assistance, other instrumental activities, such as food preparation, cleaning, bed making and medication dosage, were completed by care workers and ancillary staff. In this way the daily lives of the low-dependency participants were intertwined with the dependent behaviours of the higher-dependency residents. However, it was not a case of the Cedarwood administration attempting to control the decisions of the occupants. Instead, it was a function of multiple factors, including: normative and dependency driven service provision; recommendations of the Code of Practice for Nursing Homes; apathy towards performing daily activities; and learned behaviours from...
more tenured residents. These findings are supported in the literature by studies on learned dependency (Baltes 1995; 1996) and research on staff–resident interactions (Nussbaum 1993; Stabell et al. 2004).

Outside of external visitors, opportunities for social engagement for low-dependency residents were limited. Peer-group communication was constrained because of the resident composition. Therefore, social contact was primarily garnered from interactions with a small number of lucid residents and from brief and cursory exchanges with staff. Recreational classes, such as art and music, were organized. However, again these classes were tailored for higher-dependency needs, functioning in some cases as a form of reminiscence. This was apparent when childhood songs were heard emanating from the music room.

Some of the low-dependency residents did make an effort to preserve their life interests and life-course continuity, as described by continuity theory (Atchley 1989). One of the male participants (aged 93 years), a gregarious character, still drove and occasionally visited people in the locality. On a daily basis he would visit several friends and neighbours within the institution who were less able than he, and to whom he jokingly referred as ‘fellow inmates’. Another participant, who was an eighty-four-year-old woman and who had studied music, attended the music therapy classes for the enjoyment of listening and participating. However, those individuals, who were engaged in the planned events, were only occupied for one hour. More often, time was spent in residents’ own bedrooms, praying in the nursing-home chapel or sitting in the common area. Ice (2002) found that even in a nursing home with a creative activities department, residents did nothing 67% of their time.

The six nursing-home participants did not appear distressed or upset by living in Cedarwood. Yet, this exploratory study pointed to questions around the suitability of high-dependency secure environments for the more probable sources of differences between the two groups in a statistical analysis. Fifty community residents, aged between 65 and 80 years (mean age 71 years), participated and included 16 males and 34 females. Nursing-home residents comprised 50 people aged between 65 and 95 years (mean age 80 years), including 15 men and 35 women. The participants were recruited from 17 private nursing homes and were all of low-dependency.

Using a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), the groups were compared on their performances across a battery of ability tests, which included vision (acuity and contrast sensitivity), hearing (air-conduction audiometry), dexterity (accuracy and movement time), memory (visual and verbal recognition memory – accuracy and reaction time) and attention/reaction (visual and auditory discrimination – accuracy and reaction time) – see Walsh and Waldmann (2008) for a detailed description. The analysis controlled for biographical variables (i.e. age, marital status, illnesses, education, occupation, reason for admission and length of institutionalization) and data collected through screening procedures on mental functioning (Mini-Mental State Exam; Clifton Assessment Procedures for the Elderly), self-esteem (Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale), depression (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale) and functionality (instrumental activities of daily living – IADL – Lawton and Brody 1969).

The IADL scale asked what people did on a daily basis across telephone use, shopping, food preparation, housekeeping, laundry, transport, medication-use and handling finances. Given institutional practices regarding daily activities in Cedarwood, residents were also asked what they felt they could do on a daily basis, if they wanted to, or if they were given the opportunity to perform the activities. This variation of the scale was an indicator of actual functionality, and when compared with what people did on a daily basis was a proxy indicator of institutional behaviours and norms with respect to IADLs. The statistical comparison between the two groups was then repeated with what people did on a daily basis (IADL1) substituted with what they felt they could do (IADL2).

A semi-structured interview was completed with all participants to inform the interpretation of the analysis. In addition to collecting the biographical information, the interview was allowed to follow the life-course narrative of the participants, based on their past experiences and their daily lives. Finally, an institutional questionnaire on the participating institutions contextualized participants residential circumstances. Key points of interest stemmed from the research in Cedarwood Nursing Home, and included data on institution size, staffing, resident dependency, routines and services provided.

What was found
The purpose of this section is to provide an overview only of the key findings and their relationship to the influence of institutionalization. Table 1 presents the details of the participating nursing homes.
The nursing home environment also played a role. The case is strengthened when we consider the environmental factors. In the analysis, the community residents performed significantly (p<.05) better than the nursing home residents in each of the ability assessment domains, in particular vision, audition, dexterity, memory and attention/reaction. However, when IADL1 was included, the majority (48%) of the ability performances. Further, when this information was controlled for, 60% of the ability variables (15 out of 25) still showed a significant difference (p<.05) between the groups. This would suggest that the differences between community and nursing home residents were not attributable to individual variables (e.g. age, illnesses and mental functioning), but may have been a product, in part at least, of nursing home environmental factors.

The findings concerning IADL2 (what people felt they *could* do on a daily basis) offer some insight here. When IADL2 was substituted for IADL1 (what people *did* do on a daily basis) in the analysis, there were differences between the groups in 72% (18 out of 25) of the ability performances – as opposed to 60% when IADL1 was included. This indicates that the actual functional capacity of participants, self-reported at least, does not explain the differences between the nursing-home and community residents as well as IADL1 and its component measures of functionality and institutional behaviours and norms.

The practices with respect to IADLs in the participating nursing homes also suggest that environmental norms and policies were in operation. This is evident to some degree across each of the domains of the IADL scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Participating nursing homes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Home</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17</td>
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<tr>
<td>47  62  45  24  25  32  45  57  28  26  46  39  38  22  37  23  25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Segregated by</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dependency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Single rooms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Twin rooms</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No. of staff</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low-dependency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>residents as a proportion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>of total occupancy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36  2  21  13  8  12  13  73  14  0  -  10  16  23  23  17  20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No. of residents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>participating in study</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  1  2  3  2  3  3  3  6  4  4  2  1  3  3  1  2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schedule flexibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>= Room type provided by nursing home</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= Set schedule with no flexibility;</strong></td>
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<td><strong>= Schedule with some flexibility;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= Very flexible schedule</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= These figures include temporary convalescent residents</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= Services (recreational and rehabilitative) offered include:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= massage therapy; music; painting; physiotherapy; reflexology; reminiscence therapy; social outings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Services provided</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>= Very flexible schedule</strong></td>
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<td><strong>= These figures include temporary convalescent residents</strong></td>
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<td><strong>= Services (recreational and rehabilitative) offered include:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>= massage therapy; music; painting; physiotherapy; reflexology; reminiscence therapy; social outings</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When biographical, well-being and mental health information (e.g. age, illnesses and mental functioning) was not controlled for in the analysis, the community residents performed significantly (p<.05) better than the nursing home residents in each of the ability assessments (i.e. vision, audition, dexterity, memory and attention/reaction). However, when this information was controlled for, 60% of the ability variables (15 out of 25) still showed a significant difference (p<.05) between the groups. This would suggest that the differences between community and nursing home residents were not attributable to individual variables (e.g. age, illnesses and mental functioning), but may have been a product, in part at least, of nursing home environmental factors.

The case is strengthened when we consider the instrumental activities of daily living measure. IADL1 (what people *did* do on a daily basis) was shown to have the strongest influence on the ability tests out of the control variables. IADL1 was significantly related to almost half (48%) of the ability performances. Further, when IADL1 was extracted from the analysis, the majority of the ability variables (80% or 20 out of 25) showed significant differences (p<.05) between the groups. This implies that the nursing home residents’ functional impairment was one of the primary reasons for the differences in the ability tests. However, accepting that the IADL1 scale also reflected the behaviours and norms within the institutions, then it seems likely that the nursing home environment also played a role.
although five of the institutions did provide tea making facilities for low-dependency residents.

**Housekeeping:** While seven residents made their own beds, the staff of the nursing homes prepared and maintained the majority of the bedrooms.

**Laundry:** Even though five of the residents washed small personal items, the nursing homes took responsibility for completing residents’ laundry.

**Mode of transport:** Transport was typically organized by the residents or their family. If this was not possible, then the nursing homes made arrangements for the individual.

**Responsibility for own medication:** In all cases the dosage and time of medication was arranged by the nursing homes.

**Ability to handle finances:** Financial matters were either handled by the residents or the residents’ families.

In terms of other environmental characteristics, the provision of recreational and rehabilitative services varied substantially across the nursing homes. While in some cases services reflected a commitment to a person-centred philosophy of care, for the most part it was a function of residents’ level of interest and, in terms of professional activities, their financial resources. The cost of rehabilitative activities and access to public service provisions for paramedical therapies (e.g. physiotherapy) were highlighted by a number of participants (see Case 1). Previous research on the Irish context has shown that this is a particular issue for private long-term care (O’Shea 2002; Murphy et al. 2006) and is likely to be a reflection of low-levels of spending and a lack of prioritization in the sector in Ireland (NESF 2005; Walsh and O’Shea, 2009).

With respect to recreational activities, nursing-home representatives spoke anecdotally about the difficulty in encouraging residents, particularly men, to participate in an activities programme; 58% of nursing home participants (as opposed to 12% of community participants) decreased their activities since retirement. A third of the nursing-home representatives highlighted that many residents did not partake in activities because of disinterest. Researchers have documented similar difficulties in motivating programme participation (Voelkl 1986; Ice 2002). Ice (2002) stated that weekly or even daily recreational and rehabilitative activities are not sufficient to engage older residents. Additionally, Ice (2002) highlighted that a mismatch often exists between residents’ backgrounds and the activities. A similar finding was apparent in this research, where a carer in a rural nursing home spoke about the disinterest shown by an older male farmer towards still-life painting. Regardless of the reason for non-participation, many residents in this study did not seem to have a lot to do (again reflecting observations in Cedarwood).

Some participants also appeared lonely, with a number of individuals explicitly expressing a desire for additional social contact. Given that low-dependency residents were mostly in the minority, opportunities for peer-group communication were very much restricted. This was even evident during the course of the interviews, when some participants would engage in casual conversation, often doubling the interview length. Conversely, a number of individuals spoke about their sense of contentment and belonging with respect to nursing-home life. This referred to a relative appreciation based on previous life experiences (see Case 2), or reflected a continued engagement with life interests and the wider community (see Case 3). Individual personalities appeared to be a significant factor and have been shown previously to motivate participation in IADLs and activity programmes within a nursing home (Resnick 1999). To an extent these findings reflect Lawton’s (1975; 1982) *environmental docility hypothesis*, where a high personal competence equates to relative independence from environmental factors, whereas low competence implies increased susceptibility to such factors.

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**Case 1**

David (pseudo name) was a sixty-five-year old man who had not married and who lived in nursing home 7 in the rural countryside. David, who originally lived in a city suburb and worked as a labourer and gardener, had suffered a stroke ten months previously.

David’s mobility was constrained. Physiotherapy had helped substantially. However, because he had used his allocation of publicly-funded physiotherapy, and was not in a position to pay for it himself, David could not continue his treatment.

With no immediate family located nearby, David did not feel he had a lot of support. David still liked to garden and when he had the opportunity he would sit on a bench, or in a wheel chair, and tend flowers in the nursing home garden.
and formal nursing home policy. While a conclusive individual preferences, informal institutional norms, extent are the IADL behaviours derived from perceived health status (Gama et al. 2000). Proficiency in IADLs was also found to be integral to (2003) stated that inactivity is related to increased al. 1999). Similarly, Bryant et al. (2002) and Timiras for older adult well-being and functioning (Glass et beneficial as purposeful exercise and social activities. It has been documented that routine daily tasks are as our fundamental abilities as we age in a care institution. Aside from the control variables not explaining the differences in the majority of the ability tests, findings with respect to IADLs suggest that not performing such activities negatively influences our capacity to maintain our fundamental abilities as we age in a care institution. It has been documented that routine daily tasks are as beneficial as purposeful exercise and social activities for older adult well-being and functioning (Glass et al. 1999). Similarly, Bryant et al. (2002) and Timiras (2003) stated that inactivity is related to increased incidents of functional disability and age-related decline. Proficiency in IADLs was also found to be integral to perceived health status (Gama et al. 2000).

The question then may be asked, to what extent are the IADL behaviours derived from individual preferences, informal institutional norms, and formal nursing home policy. While a conclusive answer is outside the scope of the research, it was evident that each of these factors could have been in operation. Firstly, residents may simply not have wanted to perform IADLs – particularly considering they were paying for the service. Alternatively, IADL behaviours may have been a function of environmental constructions. Not performing IADLs may reflect the routine service provision provided by the institutions. Even though half of the participating nursing homes reported schedules with some flexibility, a degree of batch living was evident in all homes. In other cases, and depending on the activities (e.g. medication use and food preparation), the nursing homes were operating in accordance with national guidelines and health-and-safety procedures. It is also possible that low-dependency residents adapted the behaviours of more tenured dependent residents – as documented by Nussbaum (1993) and Stabell et al. (2004).

The likelihood is that these factors are interconnected in how they influence the completion of IADLs. This would suggest an environmentally-induced behavioural dependence, akin to learned dependency. While it was not apparent that the care staff consciously rewarded dependent behaviours or ignored self-care/ independent behaviours (as described by Baltes et al. 1983; Baltes 1995; 1996), it appears that the high-dependency nature of the nursing-home environments fostered similar forms of interaction. Understandably, and given staffing ratios, care staff seemed to focus on dependent individuals. As a result, low-dependency residents, who had more social orientated requirements, only interacted with staff during core service delivery (e.g. medication and meals) or when they expressed a need for assistance. Although it is not possible to determine the extent that such interaction patterns encourage dependency, these care scripts are likely to combine with the other environmental factors (i.e. behaviours of tenured residents and institutional routines) to nurture such behaviour.

The research presented in this paper is exploratory in nature and thus the findings are tentative with several limitations. This in turn points to more significant issues around attempting to measure the impact of nursing-home life. In terms of the use of the IADL scale in the comparative analysis, there is a difficulty in discerning where the measurement of functionality ends and where the indicator of behaviours, norms and institutional practices begins. The likelihood is that a dialectic dynamic exists between the two conceptions of the IADL measurement. That is, it is probable that there is a circular relationship between the influence of not performing IADLs on functionality, and the influence of functionality on performing IADLs.

On the same basis, understanding the full effects of institutionalization is problematic. While the research indicated that there was a relationship between nursing-home life and the behaviour and fundamental abilities of low-dependency older people, it is not possible to ascertain if institutionalization was

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**Case 2**

Mary (pseudo name) was a seventy-five-year-old woman who was widowed with six children and who resided in nursing home 1 in an urban town. Although Mary had some mobility difficulty, she was reasonably independent within the nursing home complex. Mary felt that there was more than adequate support from her family with respect to assistance and social contact. Mary had moved into the nursing home two-and-a-half years previously after attempting suicide when her husband died.

In the community, Mary had sometimes felt isolated, whereas in nursing home 1 she had a strong sense of belonging, did not feel isolated, and described the nursing home as her ‘… safe haven’.

**Case 3**

James (pseudo name) lived in nursing home 8 in a rural village and was an eighty-eight-year-old man who was widowed with no family. James served as a community welfare officer up to retirement. Even though he suffered from heart problems, he still drove a car on a daily basis and visited friends and neighbours in the local area and participated in community activities.

James did not feel isolated and felt that he had sufficient support. He moved into the nursing home three and a half years previously because he no longer wanted to live alone. At the time of interview, he had recently published his autobiography and was compiling a CD of his poems.

**Routines, Dependency and Measurement**

As with the research in Cedarwood Nursing Home, the comparative analysis showed that low-dependency residents in the 17 nursing homes were primarily in the minority and were living in environments that typically managed more dependent needs. The analysis also suggests that these higher dependency structures help to explain the differences between nursing home and community residents in their ability performances. Aside from the control variables not explaining the differences in the majority of the ability tests, findings with respect to IADLs suggest that not performing such activities negatively influences our capacity to maintain our fundamental abilities as we age in a care institution. It has been documented that routine daily tasks are as beneficial as purposeful exercise and social activities for older adult well-being and functioning (Glass et al. 1999). Similarly, Bryant et al. (2002) and Timiras (2003) stated that inactivity is related to increased incidents of functional disability and age-related decline. Proficiency in IADLs was also found to be integral to perceived health status (Gama et al. 2000).

The question then may be asked, to what extent are the IADL behaviours derived from individual preferences, informal institutional norms, and formal nursing home policy.
the primary determinant. It therefore may be suggested that participants already suffered from significant ability declines before admission. Controlling for the individual variables would have helped to account for this possibility. Nevertheless, to fully isolate institutional effects, a longitudinal experimental design would be more appropriate. This would help to identify the rate, the pattern and the implications of the decline. It is, however, in this context not without its own problems. Returning to Cedarwood Nursing Home after a two-year period illustrated the challenges around attrition in this sample: three of the six participants had died and one person was incapable of being interviewed. In combination with other issues around history effects and costs (Schaie and Hofer, 2001), the necessary sample size to appropriately account for attrition meant a longitudinal study would not have been feasible.

The influence of living in different nursing homes was also difficult to assess given the small samples in each institution. Similarly, despite the fact that participants were all categorized as low-dependency, the residents were still a diverse group of people varying in their abilities and life-course histories. Again, the sample size meant that completing an analysis of within-group differences would not have been feasible. The qualitative element of this research, however, did provide insight into the diversity of the group, pointing to both cumulative disadvantage and individual personalities. This illustrates the merit of a mixed methodology approach. That said, a stronger ethnographic and life-course component is needed akin to the work of Gubrium (1975) and Shield (1988). Setting aside the likely issues of consent and access, such a strategy would help to develop a greater understanding of these dimensions and how they intersect to inform the experiences of low-dependency residents.

Epistemological debates on the competing worth of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are still evident (Bryman 2004); as are questions around the appropriateness of combining mixed methods for data collection (Sale et al. 2002). However, the value of integrating complementary qualitative and quantitative information at the level of analysis and interpretation is increasingly recognized (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006; Woolley 2009; Bazeley 2009). To obtain a comprehensive understanding of nursing-home life, and to unravel the complexity of individual, organizational and environmental interdependencies, this is an approach that will need to be more readily used in the future.

Concluding Remarks
The research documented in this paper is exploratory and has several limitations as a result. Nevertheless, the findings have offered valuable insight into the impact of institutionalization on a group of older people that often fall between the gaps in our care system. The paper also points to intriguing questions and concepts for future anthropological study. The research suggests a disconnect between the social care needs and life-course histories of low-dependency older people and the environmental structures of care provision that they live within. Thus, the extraction of these individuals from their communities may provide additional care but may also occur at the cost of life context and life-course continuity. These findings do not suggest that the participating institutions equate to Goffman’s (1961) total institution; instead they reflect the case of a minority within a higher-dependency majority. It must also be recognized that a number of participants experienced both contentment and belonging within their nursing homes. This challenges orthodox views of our conceptions of both institutions and home. Ultimately, further research is required to fully understand nursing home life: its problems, opportunities and consequences. It is only then that we can make informed policy recommendations and practice interventions. This paper also points to the value of integrated mixed methodologies. Future work needs to focus on developing these methodologies and how we conceptualize measurement and conceptualisation in the context of long-term care for older people.

References

The Code of Practice for Nursing Homes preceded the National Standards for Residential Facilities introduced in 2009. The impact of the new standards on the sector has yet to be assessed (DoHC, 1995).
2 Univariate analysis of covariance analyses the effects of an independent variable, in this case residence type, on a dependent variable (ability test performance), while controlling for continuous variables that would increase the error and decrease the power of the analysis.
3 In IADL1 all 50 nursing home residents were functionally disabled in two or more activities; in IADL2 29 residents were functionally disabled. While the two measures were correlated, there was a significant difference between what people did and what they felt they could do.
4 Competence in this context does not only refer to Lawton’s original conception, which included biological health, sensory-perceptual capacity, motor skills, cognitive capacity and ego, but also encompasses financial resource that facilitate the execution of competence.
5 Using pattern analysis techniques, previous work on the same data illustrated the benefits of living in certain nursing homes – particularly with respect to peer communication and care programme flexibility (see Walsh and Waldmann, 2008).


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End-of-life care in acute and long-stay care settings in Ireland: communication, quality of care and ‘a good death’

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Abstract: This paper explores how barriers to effective communication may affect the quality of end-of-life care of older people in acute and long-stay care settings in Ireland. It draws primarily on the qualitative findings from a national study conducted with direct care staff and older residents. Whilst open awareness around death was identified and sensitive care was provided in some care settings, there were some barriers to achieving a high quality of care and open communication at end-of-life including poor physical resources, inadequate staffing ratios, lack of training in communication and cultural awareness. Some research and policy implications are outlined.

Key-words: Quality of care; end-of-life; a good death; older people; communication; awareness contexts.

Introduction
The majority of older Irish people die either in hospitals or in nursing homes. Two-thirds of older Irish people wish to die at home, while only 20% actually do so (Weafer et al. 2004). The remaining 80% typically die in private nursing homes, public extended care units, acute care hospitals and voluntary hospitals – the care settings where this study took place. The relationship between end-of-life care and ‘a good death’ have been increasingly debated in recent years (Bryant 2003, Ling and O’Siorain 2005, Sandman 2005, Seymour et al. 2005, O’Shea et al. 2008, The Irish Hospice Foundation 2009). There has been, however, very little research previously into end-of-life care for older people in Ireland and the study on which this paper was based was commissioned by the National Council for Ageing and Older People and the Irish Hospice Foundation to address this gap (O’Shea et al. 2008). The paper investigates the ways in which the quality of end-of-life care may be strongly affected by barriers to communication between care staff and older people, by the way communication can be undermined by the absence of certain basic conditions (such as adequate space and staffing levels) and by the ethos of awareness of death and dying that exists in different care facilities. Issues specific to older people such as difficulties in predicting when death may occur are also discussed. This allows us to critically assess the usefulness of previous definitions of ‘a good death’ and suggests that such concepts vary culturally and historically (Age Concern 1999, Hayslip 2003). Finally, the findings of the study are used to assess whether barriers to communication impede the realisation of ‘a good death’ in the Irish context.

The study on which this paper is based used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the experiences of older people receiving end-of-life care and the attitudes and ethos of staff and management delivering that care (O’Shea et al. 2008). Thirty-three interviews were conducted with care staff and 30 with patients/residents across six study sites: an acute hospital, two private nursing homes, two public extended care units and a long-stay unit attached to a palliative care centre. Care staff included care assistants, nurses, GPs and allied professionals. Staff members were asked about their experiences and the practice of providing end-of-life care, while the residents and patients were asked about the quality of care they were receiving and whether they had any concerns about the future, which allowed them to articulate, if they wished, concerns about death and dying. A questionnaire which investigated levels of staffing, practices and procedures relating to end-of-life care was also sent to 592 care facilities and 327 completed questionnaires were received. This paper is, however, based mainly on the qualitative data generated by the study.

Framework for quality of care at the end-of-life for older people
An important benchmark for ‘the good death’ has been produced by Age Concern in the UK in 1999. It identifies the following principles for ensuring a ‘good death’ is achieved:

- To know when death is coming and to understand what can be expected
- To be able to retain control of what happens
- To be afforded dignity and privacy
- To have control over pain relief and other symptom control
- To have choice and control, over where death occurs (at home or elsewhere)
- To have access to information and expertise of whatever kind is necessary
- To have control over who else is present and shares the end
- To be able to issue advance directives which ensure that wishes are respected
- To have time to say goodbye and control over other aspects of timing
- To be able to leave when it is time to go and not to have life prolonged pointlessly
It should be noted that the whole question of what constitutes ‘a good death’ has been extensively debated and contested (for a discussion see Sandman 2005). Due to space constraints, it is not proposed to rehearse these arguments here apart from noting that the concept is historically and culturally specific. As has been previously pointed out, the framework developed by Age Concern is heavily influenced by the palliative care movement (Seymour et al. 2005). Of particular interest is the prominence given to a high degree of choice and control in this definition of ‘a good death’. It has been argued that this is a particularly secular rational concept that may be relevant in western countries such as the UK and the US but may not apply universally (McConville and McQuillan 2009). For example, in certain cultures, people may be more inclined to accept that they do not have a great deal of control over death and may be content to leave the manner of death in ‘the hands of God’ or some divine power or ‘let nature take its course’ as a recent Chinese end-of-life study found (Lo et al. 2002). It is likely that at least some older Irish Catholic people may have a similar way of accepting and assigning meaning to their death (Donnelly 2005). However, given the declining influence of the Catholic Church and the economic and social changes which have been widely perceived to increase the level of consumerism, individualism and secularism in Irish society, it is likely that a variety of attitudes to death co-exist among older people in Ireland with some wanting to have a high degree of choice and control and others not (Irish Hospice Foundation 2009, McConville and McQuillan 2009).

Arguably a more fluid definition of ‘good death’ is one provided by the US Institute of Medicine Committee on End-of-Life Care:

‘one that is free from avoidable distress and suffering for patients, families and caregivers; in general accord with patients and families wishes; and reasonably consistent with clinical, cultural and ethical standards. (Field and Cassel 1997)"

Barriers to communication that affect end-of-life care

Several barriers to good end-of-life care have been identified in the literature. The first of these is that it is notoriously difficult to predict with any accuracy when death may occur in older people since they often have multiple frailties. They may have co-existing conditions including, for example, heart disease, arthritis and Parkinson’s disease (Seymour et al. 2005). Where diseases do not follow a predictable trajectory, medical staff often do not identify that the person is nearing death, until it is too late to discuss their wishes with them (Addington-Hall and McCarthy 1995, Ellershaw and Ward 2003). Even when staff do accurately assess that people are dying, they may not communicate this to them in an attempt to shield them from the impact of the news or because they find the subject difficult to broach themselves (Vallis and Boyd 2002).

Another barrier to communication around death is the inadequacy or lack of physical and environmental resources – such as single rooms where older people and their families and friends may be afforded dignity and privacy at the time of death (Keegan et al. 1999). Lack of private space also makes it difficult for medical staff to communicate with families regarding the resident’s treatment and prognosis – this has found to be a problem especially in acute hospitals (Keegan et al. 1999, Irish Hospice Foundation 2009). Sometimes, for example, the only space for families to talk to consultants is in a hospital corridor or a multi-bedded ward with only a curtain for privacy.

Inadequate staffing levels and the resulting time constraints can affect the ability of the staff to attend adequately to the emotional needs of older people and their families (Costello 2001, Parker and McLeod 2002, Irish Hospice Foundation 2009). Lack of training of care staff in how to communicate with and listen in a sensitive manner to older people at the end of life may make it impossible for mutual concerns to be raised (Davies and Seymour 2002, Irish Hospice Foundation 2009).

As well as the barriers outlined above, the level of communication about death and dying varies from place to place, depending partly on the ethos of awareness in the facility. Research shows that in some care homes there is a practice of ‘closed awareness’. This means that although both staff and residents are implicitly aware that most residents who come to stay in the facility will die there, this is not explicitly acknowledged (Reed and Payton 1996). A practice of not referring to death and of concealing the overt signs that fellow residents have died is adopted. This means that the grief and sense of loss felt by many of the surviving residents is not openly acknowledged and implies a lack of respect for the person who died (Reed, Cook and Burridge 2002).

The alternative is where mortality is acknowledged and mourning is facilitated – thereby creating an ‘open awareness’ of death and dying. These concepts of closed and open awareness are drawn from the seminal study ‘Awareness of Dying’ conducted in 1965 which distinguished between different contexts of awareness (Glaser and Strauss 1965). It has been suggested that ‘closed awareness’ demonstrates a paternalistic attitude towards patients or residents, making it difficult for them to come to terms with death in an autonomous way or to make plans for their treatment and for how, where and in whose presence it takes place (Seale, Addington-Hall and McCarthy 1997, Tuckett 2004). There is relatively little evidence available in relation to the preferences of older Irish people regarding open discussion of their death. Some people may prefer to talk about death in an open manner, while others may not. However, one study conducted with 120 older Irish patients in an acute geriatric ward in 2000 found that
a high percentage (83%) of older respondents said they would like to be told the truth about their condition if they were diagnosed with a life-threatening illness such as cancer; interestingly only 55% of their relatives wanted their older relatives to be informed (O’Keefe, Noone and Pillay 2000).

**Older people’s perception of death**

For ethical reasons, older people were not asked directly about their own experiences of death in this study. Instead they were asked if they had any concerns for their future and what factors they believed were generally important for a good death. So most didn’t speak directly of their own death – instead they focussed on their concern for their families, the deaths of others or on how they would manage when they would leave the hospital. They did speak of the sense of loss they experienced due to the death of other members of their families and of other residents in their care settings. Indeed their accounts were permeated with this sense of loss.

Some older patients made sense of their death in terms of their Catholic faith and some accepted it as a natural process or as part of God’s will. For example, one resident said:

‘Oh yes, yes. God has his own wise ways. We go the way he wants us to go.’ (Patient, Extended Care Unit)

Previous research indicates that this way of ‘meaning-making’ in relation to death is a very common pattern among older people in Irish society (Donnelly 2005). Other studies show that, even where religion is not used to make sense of death, older people often tend to see death as something natural and inevitable rather than as something to be managed (Hockley 2002). Some of the participants in this study even looked forward to it as an opportunity to meet again with their deceased loved ones. One resident said:

‘No, no, God, no. I’m looking forward to it. Because I know I’m going to meet those who died before me.’ (Patient, Voluntary Hospital)

They also tended to be accepting of the treatment they were receiving and didn’t appear to want to exert control over it. However, it is not possible to be definitive about this, because patients were interviewed in their places of care and it is possible that they may have felt inhibited about expressing negative views.

**Awareness context**

The study’s findings regarding communication vary according to whether there was an ethos of closed or open awareness in different settings. Staff in some settings clearly had a policy of ‘closed awareness’ and actively closed down attempts by residents/patients to discuss their own death. Strategies such as urging the patient to stay positive, reassurance that the resident will be fine, and actual distraction were used to steer staff-patient exchanges away from death. The following quotes illustrate this:

‘No, you might say “you’re not so well today, Mary, but you’ll be feeling better tomorrow” even if you know the person might not last very long. You just try to make them feel better.’ (Staff member, Voluntary hospital)

‘I say “Oh sure you’ll be okay” but I know and he knows he is on his last legs …’ (Staff member, Extended Care Unit)

Clearly, this is an approach that does not enable the resident to prepare for death or even to discuss any worries or concerns they may have with care staff and thus does not fulfil the culturally and historically specific principles of good end-of-life care set out above. This attitude is discernible in both private nursing homes and public facilities.

Closed awareness has been attributed to lack of ease on the part of care staff in discussing death perhaps due to lack of confidence or simply discomfort with their own mortality. They may also experience difficulties in reconciling caring for those who are living their day-to-day lives while at the same time dealing with the dying. Their way of dealing with this may be by sequestration of the dying and hiding the evidence of death (Vallis and Boyd 2002).

In those settings where death is not openly acknowledged, residents were nevertheless usually able to recognise certain signals that meant another resident was dying. For example, one man said:

‘If you go upstairs, anyone that went upstairs they died … A lot of men went upstairs in a wheelchair and you are gone the next morning.’ (Patient, Extended Care Unit)

By contrast, in some other facilities, the staff attempt to follow the lead of the resident and to be open to discussing their concerns with them. Indeed, a small number of staff regarded it as an integral part of the patient’s human rights to be informed of their prognosis:

‘I think, if the person asks you, you have to be honest. They have a human right to know, you know: it’s their body, it’s their fears, their anxieties that they’re actually having to deal with.’ (Staff member, Private Nursing Home)

This viewpoint tended to be expressed in facilities where there was an ethos of open awareness in the facility. This ethos would have been communicated to all members of the care team by management and other staff at induction. This ethos was more prevalent...
when individual staff had experience of being trained in palliative care and strongly believed in the right of the person to have choice and control over the manner of their dying.

In some facilities, the death of fellow residents (who had in many cases become friends) was discussed in a sensitive manner with the surviving residents, rather than being glossed over or unacknowledged as the following quote illustrates:

One of the nurses called me and she said, she caught me by the hand and she took me into the office and she said ‘sit down there now. I have something to tell you…. your little pal passed away last night’. I could cry this minute, that’s how I feel about her, I miss her so much’. (Patient, Extended Care Unit)

This acknowledgement enabled the resident to grieve for her loss, by contrast to the situation in settings where there was ‘closed awareness’ and residents were not openly facilitated to speak of their bereavement.

Connecting and communication

The physical environment in which care is provided affects the level and quality of communication that is possible between staff, residents and families. For example in many care settings, particularly acute hospitals, people are in multi-bedded wards which means that privacy is not afforded to people at the time of death itself. The best that can be done is to screen off the bed in a corner of the ward with a curtain. Many of the staff interviewed felt that this was upsetting for residents, families and other patients and tried to find a single room if at all possible. The lack of single rooms also meant that it was difficult to find a private space to inform family and friends if their relative was dying.

Staffing levels also affect the quality of care and the level of communication that may be provided. Traditionally, in Ireland, it has been regarded as important that somebody is there in the presence of the person around the time of death – whether a family member, a neighbour or a carer and this was discernible in the attitudes of nurses and care staff in the study (Donnelly 2005, Irish Hospice Foundation 2009). There was a tension between what staff regarded as the appropriate levels of time and attention that should be given to residents in the hours leading up to death and what they could actually provide, given low staff numbers. Most of the staff interviewed felt that when older people were dying, a staff member should be available to sit with them. Staffing levels also affect the availability of staff to talk to family and friends. The following quote illustrates the desire for presence:

‘Somebody dying needs more like one-to-one care … and here they have … something like 10 nurses for 70 beds … That means at night you might have only one nurse to 24 beds. With that kind of staffing, you just can't have the kind of care you need when somebody is dying’. (Staff, Voluntary Hospital)

In all types of care setting, there was a good deal of emphasis on facilitating family and friends of the dying person – a recognition that in Ireland, the inclusion of the family at the time of death is very important (Donnelly 2005). This ranged from contacting them in time, to providing food and drink to relatives of the dying person, to ensuring that they have time to spend with the dead person. In most settings, the remains are left in situ in the room for several hours or even longer if relatives have to come from abroad. The degree to which this is possible varied according to the physical facilities available, but even where there was no separate room available, staff made efforts to support relatives.

A theme that arose in the findings was the importance of ‘knowing the person’ in providing good care. Staff felt that creating a close relationship with the patient and getting to know their preferences makes it possible to provide a good quality of care later if and when the person is no longer able to communicate their wishes verbally. Staff took great care to ensure that the person was well groomed in death and where they knew the person, they sometimes took care to ensure that items that were important to the resident in life were kept with them in death. One care assistant made sure that a doll given to a woman by her granddaughter and treasured by her was with her when she died. This represents an attempt by the carer to ensure that something that was significant to this woman while she was alive was kept close to her after death. This was enabled by the fact that there was a strong ethos in the facility where this care assistant worked of person-centred care and staff made an effort to find out what was important to the resident.

A further and related issue that can affect communication is cultural understanding and awareness among staff providing end-of-life care. Care staff in Ireland are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse – in 2004, nurses from 76 different countries were working in Ireland (O’Shea et al. 2008). There is evidence from the current study that some of the care staff from other cultures took time to be familiar with Irish rituals at the time of death. Typically, in most of the care settings in this study, prayers such as the rosary were recited; candles were lit and windows were left open and staff members from other cultural backgrounds were initially unfamiliar with these rituals. One nurse said:

‘When I first came to this country, I didn’t know what the rules were … but I find out what needs to be done so I know if they are Catholics, I would put beads in their hands and I wouldn’t know to say the rosary or anything, but if I know someone who knows I would tell that person’. (Staff member, Private Nursing Home)
There was evidence also that Irish staff felt that they needed education around multicultural care since increasing numbers of older people from diverse cultures are in need of care at end-of-life (Tracey and Ling 2005). One Irish staff member said:

‘We need cultural education around cultural issues … we’re a totally multicultural community around here and so the issues are beginning to come up’. (Staff member, Extended Care Unit)

It seems clear that there is a need for training in cultural awareness for all care staff, both for Irish staff and those from other cultural traditions.

**Discussion**

The definition of what constitutes ‘a good death’ (and conversely, therefore, ‘a bad death’) is complex, varying culturally and historically. People have different attitudes to death and dying, their own and others, as well as having different views about appropriate end-of-life care. For example, most residents in this study believed that death is natural and did not not to have a strong desire for control over their care management. However, further research is needed before coming to any strong conclusions, and changing social and institutional norms including increased individualism and economic conditions in Irish society suggest that older people in the future may wish to be more involved in shaping their care at end-of-life.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that in some care settings, there is evidence of a good quality of care at the end of life and open, but respectful, communication between staff, residents and families. However, practical issues such as poor physical resources, low levels of staffing, high staff turnover and lack of training in communication act as barriers to the facilitation of ‘a good death’ as defined earlier. It may not always be practical to have open communication between staff and residents if there are time and space constraints that prevent real dialogue on this very sensitive issue.

In general, there was a high degree of respect and consideration shown to older people at the end of life in most types of care setting. However, in some facilities, there was evidence of ‘closed awareness’ where any possibility of discussing their imminent death is closed off to residents because staff steer them away from talking about death without knowing their preferences in this regard. This is really important because of the necessity to separate the opinions on ‘good death’ from residents’ point-of-view from that of staff. Closing off discussion from those who want to talk about death, means that there is a very limited opportunity for residents to make plans of any kind for treatment or to inform their family and friends.

While it appears to be accepted that there is a growing preference for ‘open awareness’ in terminal care settings in many western countries, such as the UK and the US, this is not universally the case as research in countries such as Japan, Italy and Spain shows that some professionals and some members of the public may favour ‘closed awareness’ (Scale, Addington-Hall and McCarthy 1997, Field and Copp 1999). More research is needed to establish the preferences of older Irish people as the current study is based on a relatively small sample.

The process of public consultation started by the Irish Hospice Foundation should be continued and specific research conducted to establish the needs and desires of older people (Irish Hospice Foundation 2009). The Irish Hospice Foundation report found that there are mixed views in Ireland as to whether people should be informed about their prognosis with some people suggesting that those who are dying have ‘a right not to know’ on the basis that this enables them to preserve hope while others felt that those who are dying have a right to know (Irish Hospice Foundation 2009).

Given the variety of views, a possible approach is for staff to have a clear and agreed policy in their care facility that residents or patients are given time and opportunity to discuss their concerns, should they wish to do so. Staff need to be trained in listening and communicating in a sensitive and hope-preserving manner, rather than diverting discussion and thus not allowing the person any opportunity to plan for their treatment and experience of dying. This training should be provided for all members of care teams – care assistants, nurses, doctors and specialist staff and should be provided in-house as well as in the form of training courses. Giving people choices about end-of-life care and allowing time for individual preferences to be formulated and expressed about death and dying should be the essence of good end-of-life care.

**Conclusion**

Since this paper is based on interviews with a relatively small sample, there is a need for greater consultation with older people to establish their preferences in relation to end-of-life care. More research needs to be conducted with older patients and residents and families to uncover their views on appropriate levels of consultation and communication as death approaches. Staff training is certainly necessary to ensure high quality care at end of life that respects and reflects the preferences of patients and their families for knowledge and information about death and dying. Training in multi-cultural awareness of diverse practices and rituals at end of life also needs to be provided for all staff. Staffing levels at end-of-life should be high enough to allow sufficient time for being present with and communicating with older people at the end of life. Private rooms should also be available at end of life for older people to allow for effective communication away from busy multi-bedded wards.

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Differently buried: children’s burial grounds and popular beliefs in Ireland

Chiara Garattini

Abstract: This paper explores the practice, common in Ireland until the mid-twentieth century, of burying differently babies who died around the time of birth, that is, in different spaces and with different rituals. The reasons for this exclusion are complex and rooted in the very cultural fabric of the Irish system of belief at the time. In this paper I will discuss this practice through spatial and narrative analysis, with particular attention to the deep meanings contained in ghosts’ stories and beliefs related to these infants.

Keywords: children’s burial grounds, ghosts, stories, Ireland.

Introduction

British folklorist Robin Flower, during one of his visits to the Blasket Islands off Ireland’s west coast, described an unusual funerary procession, that of a stillborn (Flower 1978). There are many aspects of his account that may strike the contemporary reader as familiar while others do not. One of the less familiar relates to something that is not there: the mother is missing from the procession and funeral; only the father is mentioned. Another absence strikes the reader, no priest or clergyman is present, and the prayer is ‘muttered’ by the assembly. Also, the destination of the procession is not the churchyard, but a promontory described by Flower as an ‘unkempt space of dank, clinging grass, with stones scattered over it here and there’ (Flower 1978: 85–86). It is an unconsecrated burial ground, with stones scattered over it here and there.

The time of the procession seems also unusual: everything is over early, by ‘the turn of the day’ (ibid.). The conclusion of the passage is quite famous, with Flower reporting one villager’s answer to his curiosity regarding the unconsecrated graveyard: ‘There, he said, the islanders had been accustomed to bury suicides and unbaptized children; a sad association, I thought, of those who had known nothing and those who had known too much of life’ (ibid.).

Flower’s account, from sometime between the 1920s and 1930s, is of a local custom not particular to people living at the very edge of Europe. Separated burial grounds for the dead were, in fact, common throughout Ireland and across Europe from early Christian times until quite recently. The exclusion of unbaptized babies, in particular, from the main space of burial created problems all around Europe from medieval times in locating an appropriate space in which to bury these babies (see for example Di Nola 2001: 172–192). People did not know where to bury them, and sometimes did so in the fields, sometimes at the bottom of their gardens. The expression ‘children at the bottom of the garden’ was made famous in 1997 by a forty-minutes RTÉ radio programme and is sometimes used in Ireland to talk about babies who could not be buried in the cemetery and were buried in the gardens and fields instead.

The garden and the fields were not the only or the most common places where these babies were buried. Other solutions were unconsecrated corners in main cemeteries and separated burial grounds. In this paper I explore the practices and beliefs around these particular spaces of burial and the stories they originated.

Children’s Burial Grounds in Ireland

In Ireland separated burial grounds for children are known by several names, cillín, ceallúnach, caltragh (caltrach), lisín, and others, depending on the region. They are present all over the country, but they are especially common in the West of Ireland. It is not certain when this practice began in Ireland, but the custom of setting apart a separate burial place for children appears to have been common until the nineteenth century. Their use started to decline from the beginning of the twentieth century, but they are known in some cases to have been used up until the 1960s. The Christian religious notion that infants without baptism could not be buried in consecrated ground has its roots in the idea that they could not enter Heaven because of being still ‘tainted’ by original sin. They were, therefore, fated to spend their eternity in some other place. Most often this was Limbo, in Irish sometimes referred as Dorchas gan Phian, a place characterized by ‘darkness without pain’ where unbaptized infants were not suffering the tortures of Hell but where they were deprived of the light of God (O’Connor 1991: 67). Baptism cannot be performed on dead people in the Catholic doctrine; however it is considered a rite necessary in order to become a Catholic and to become part of the community of the living as much as that of the dead. The burial of unbaptized babies was therefore always problematic because of the absence of clergy (whose presence was otherwise generally expected at funerals) and the absence of the appropriate space. Although this practice reflects in part...
the refusal by Church authorities to allow unbaptized children to be buried in consecrated ground, it is also the result of the idea that ‘unnamed children had not attained full membership of the communities into which they were born’ (O’Sullivan and Sheehan 1996: 323).8

These individuals were buried ‘differently’ not only spatially but also with regard to rituals and practices associated with their disposal. A study of the Iveragh peninsula has reported some information on the rites associated with infants: ‘The burial of infants usually took place very shortly after death, sometimes at night, and was carried out by male members of the family. The dead infant was not mourned or waked in any of the traditional ways’ (Sugrue 1993, quoted in O’Sullivan and Sheehan 1996: 323). By the 1960s infants were mostly buried in a corner of the churchyard (Sugrue 1993: 27) and, later on, in their family plot.9 The time of this change seems to vary according to location, but in general it seems that infants started to be buried during the day (sometimes with a wake and a coffin) some time before the 1960s but, in the case of illegitimate infants or miscarriages, the older practice continued until later ‘at the church’s insistence’ (Sugrue 1993: 40). So it is around the 1960s that the cillín stopped being for children (and adults) who needed to be buried ‘differently’ for one or the other reason, and became the place where illegitimate infants and pregnancy interruptions were placed.10

It seems to be especially between the 1940s and 1960s that the practice of burying these infants in separated burial grounds started to be opposed by the Church, in favour of letting them into the main cemetery albeit in a separated area: ‘You see the different religions had different sections in the graveyard. In Achnory now, the Church of Ireland had their own division, and there was this corner that was a small little corner, it was reserved for the un baptised babies … a corner along the wall. They had three areas within the graveyard.’ (Conversations with Brendan, in Moore 1998: 40). The rural churchyard became divided into three parts: the only consecrated one was for Catholics, the second one was for Protestants, and the third one for ‘pagan’, meaning everybody else non-Catholic and non-Protestant, in which unbaptized infants were buried. The Catholic Church, in the person of the parish priest, stood against the cillín, seen as ‘pagan’ sites, and wanted these individuals to be buried in a special corner of the cemetery, but the ‘cealla na eoghaigh’ continued to be used after this, but in secret, in order to keep it from the parish priest’ (Sugrue 1993: 40). There were therefore always multi-layered reasons for these babies to be buried in the cillín, and the different sets of interests of community and Church sometimes worked harmoniously and sometimes not. At some point around the 1960s, it seems that it was the community, and not necessarily the Church authorities, that still felt the need to bury some infants in these burial spaces. These spaces for the ‘differently buried’ were meaningful places within the life of the communities to which they were connected, and an easy explanation of why some individuals were placed in them is not possible. People seemed quite aware of the sad fate that this treatment implied but nevertheless felt it appropriate to act in this manner. This absence/presence provoked many stories, in folklore and in literature; these stories raise the suspicion that the underlying reasons for the community to bury babies here against the Catholic Church directives had to do with issues of illegitimacy and, possibly, infanticide.

**Pregnancy, Childbirth and ‘Polluting Magical Forces’ of Life**

In traditional rural Ireland pregnant women were perceived as vulnerable and in a liminal stage, from both physical and religious points of view. Pregnancy and birth were private matters, and pregnancy in particular was something ‘kept secret by women from their relatives and neighbours for as long as possible’ (Schep-Hughes 2001: 231). Childbirth was a woman’s event and men were deliberately excluded from it. Pregnant women were discouraged from having contacts with the supernatural, in particular with the worlds of death and birth, because of the mysterious forces associated with them. They could not attend wakes or funerals, go to graveyards, have contact with newborn children, be godmothers for someone else’s child, and so forth (Schep-Hughes 2001: 232–233, Ó Crualaoich 1999: 179).

Even though baptism was believed to be the strongest and greatest protection of all it was by no means the only ritual performed to purify individuals after childbirth. Women who gave birth were supposed to remain for a certain period of time in confinement, with restrictions on diet and behaviour, after which they would be _churched_ (Nic Suibhne 1992: 21).11 Nobody was supposed to touch her during this period, ‘not even her own man’ as she was believed to carry great misfortune and to be in great danger herself (ibid.). The ritual itself, though, was not always understood by mothers, who sometimes thought of it as a ‘blessing’ while at other times they were aware of its ‘cleansing’ connotations.

Besides these supernatural forces associated with birth, another problem in the context of childbirth and pregnancy in the past was connected with illegitimacy and infanticide. Infanticide was relatively common in Ireland, at least until the first half of the twentieth century, especially in conjunction with issues of poverty and illegitimacy (Connell 1996; Guilbride 2004: 172–173; see also McGoff-McCann 2003; Prior 2008; and Inglis 2003). Child murderers and women who died in childbirth haunt traditional Irish imagination in the form of ghostly and supernatural creatures. The _bean nighe_ for example, the Scottish and Gaelic ‘night washerwoman’, was mostly believed to be the revenant of a child murderer and was also
believed to be ‘washing the dead bodies of unbaptised or newly born infants’ (O’Connor 1991: 63). In her connotation as murderess, she embodies the figure of the ‘witch midwife’, the powerful person controlling life (and death) at the moment of birth. Newborn and foetus parts and organs are believed in many traditions to carry great magic and are used to perform witchcraft. This is true also in European tradition, as evident in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the witches’ ritual recipes book used in the sixteenth-century Inquisition. Witch-hunts, an idea that Shakespeare did not neglect when writing his *Macbeth*. Midwives were the ones with easiest access to these ‘ingredients’ in medieval times and even in nineteenth century infanticide trials midwives were perceived to be the only other possible ‘murderer’ if the baby was illegitimate (the mother being the main suspect), and the main suspect if the baby was of ‘legitimate’ birth. The conflicting aura of respect and dangerousness that the figure of the midwife had in popular tradition might come as a logical consequence of the power that these women had in people’s lives on an everyday basis (O’Connor 1991: 64).

In the context of the descriptions above, it is easy to imagine that women who died under certain circumstances were part of the segregated dead and were buried ‘differently’ from the rest of the community: women who died in childbirth (especially if they died in a field far away from their communities), women who committed infanticide, women who had an illegitimate birth, or who died without last rites, are reported in the Irish tradition to have been buried in unconsecrated ground, in a reserved part of the graveyard, at road sides, or at cross roads, in *cillíní* or in disused graveyards, and occasionally in the northern part of a consecrated graveyard (Ballard 1981: 24).

**Bad Death, Ghosts and the Power of Stories**

In folklore, the newborn was impossible to dissociate from the mother in her vulnerability, pollution, superstitious aura, and marginality (Scheper-Hughes 2001: 231). The aura of magical ‘pollution’ around new-borns was aggravated if they were unbaptized, illegitimate and understandably even more so if they were murdered by their mother.

One of the reasons suggested for these babies’ exclusion from main burial practices was connected with the ‘place’ they were to be imagined to ‘go’. In fact, in so far as these babies ‘remain’ and something has to be done with their corpses, their exclusion from ecclesiastical burial needs to be understood in the context of their exclusion from the afterlife and their destination in a theologically ambiguous place: Limbo. The geography of the afterlife is as fundamental an aspect of the landscapes of death as the geography of the living, and Limbo played a role at least until the 1980s as an explanation of what happened to these babies.15

Because they lacked the ‘cleansing of baptism’, because they lacked a name (even more so if illegitimate) and because they died an ‘un-timely’ death, babies who died around birth suffered what was perceived as a ‘bad death’ and therefore were at risk of becoming a ghost. They appeared at night on ‘boundaries’ of the land or in the places in which they died or had been buried. In much European tradition unbaptized infants, murdered infants and aborted infants were believed to be harmful to the safety of the social group (Di Nola 2001: 179), and sometimes believed to become part of the Wild Hunt (O’Connor 1991: 45–46).

Not only their ghosts, but also the place of their burial was perceived as dangerous, as a place of misfortune. In Ireland the spaces for burial of unbaptized babies were in some cases believed to have special healing and fertility powers but with ambiguities, and, when talking about children’s burial grounds in 1998, people still said they would not interfere with those places (Moore 1998: 34). In Co. Donegal, Nic Sibhne reported that a piece of land where children were buried was believed to be always fertile and green throughout the year while the land around was arid (1992: 20). In Donegal it was said that people with epilepsy (a stigmatized illness) should bury their clothes in a place where an unbaptized child was buried. After a while these clothes were believed to provide a cure (ibid.). Walking on unbaptized burial grounds could cause supernatural events, such as producing on the walker a consuming hunger (the so-called ‘hungry grass’), a belief that might be associated with the presence of famine victims in the ground or with the perceived hunger that babies have at an early stage of life (O’Connor 1991: 71–73).

The most common reason for these kinds of ghosts to appear to the living was to ask for baptism or some blessing that could somehow substitute for it, to ask for a *name* or a godparent, to ask for their bodies to be found and buried (if abandoned) or to ask for their murderesses to be punished. Their asking for baptism, of course, emphasized the importance of that sacrament, but stories about infants’ ghosts in Ireland also seem to underline the need for the last rites, especially for their mothers (O’Connor 1991: 102). The lack of the name, on the other hand, underlined once again that there was more than baptism needed to become a member of a community (Pentikäinen 1968: 217; O’Connor 1991: 47).

The biggest difference of the Irish ‘dead child’ tradition from the rest of Europe is that here in most stories the ghosts of infants appear to be more restless and unlucky than harmful (O’Connor 1991). It seems that in the Irish folk tradition revenant-dead-child legends had some moral lessons to teach. Babies’ ghosts come for a purpose, in a certain place, and they wished for something to be done; they are not ‘scary’ but they are not beyond causing fear either. In the Irish language, there are a few words used to describe a ghost’s activity; in English the word ‘to
haunt' suggests an activity which is bounded to a place; it means, firstly, ‘(of a ghost) [to] appear regularly (in a place)’ and, secondly, ‘(of a person) [to] visit (a place) regularly’ (Oxford English Dictionary). This seems to be the opposite in the Irish language where the primary sense of the words gníthaigh and taitbhígh is ‘to use a place’ habitually; they are used secondarily with an ‘otherworldly’ connotation as metaphorical extension. Another word used in Irish in a similar context is saígneach, which literally means ‘loneliness’ and ‘solitude’, but it also has a secondary meaning with definite ‘otherworldly’ feeling, especially when it refers to a place being saígneach (Steve Coleman, personal communication). Therefore, in Irish, the activity of a ghost seems to be defined by habitual use of a certain place (similar to its English counterpart) and strongly connected with sadness, loneliness and melancholy. This sad and melancholic ‘type’ of haunting connected to the use of places perfectly fits with the ‘texture’ of the stories surrounding these little ghosts and the place of their burial.17

Many of the stories about apparitions of the unbaptized involve a member of the clergy who preaches strongly against a woman in the parish who has several illegitimate children.18 As the story evolves, the woman is dying (possibly while giving birth to another illegitimate child) and calls for a priest for the last rites; the priest (in some variations there are two, one refusing to go and give the sacraments to the mother, the other one going against his superior’s orders) refuses to go at first but then he encounters some lights on the road, some strong and some weak ones, who talk to him: they are the ghosts of that woman’s children (the strong lights are of the baptized ones, the weak light of the unbaptized ones, but nevertheless all ghosts) and ask him to go to their mother. The priest realizes his mistake, goes to the woman and gives her the last rites while baptizing her dying baby too (even though sometimes he arrives too late as he is tricked and delayed by the devil himself on the road). The priest without compassion is punished in these tales.19

These stories often show different levels of conflict and great ambivalence. On the one hand it seems that the community wants to help the woman: it is often someone passing by (mostly men or young boys) who is asked to call for a priest and who decides to help, going against the orders that the priest gave from the altar at Sunday mass. There is also another level of conflict, that of the priest within himself, sometimes more explicitly represented by a young priest who gives the sacraments to the woman against the orders of a senior priest. In some versions, being buried in a cillín becomes a reason for the light to be even weaker than the other unbaptized children’s ghosts, showing a conflictual attitude toward the places of burial too and the status of these babies.20 Was it the burials of the ‘unwanted’ that made these places (cillíni, crossroads, the north side of churches) ‘bad and dangerous’, or was it these places that made the dead dangerous and, therefore, likely to come back? The process of place formation is one rooted in personal experience as expressed through spatial and narrative encounters. That means that stories make places as much as places make stories (see Taylor 1997). It is in the actual practices of personal encounters that both stories and places are created (see also Basso 1996).

In the Irish tradition unbaptized and illegitimate babies’ ghosts are not close to demonic forces, coming from Hell playing tricks and stealing alms as in other Europeans traditions; they are melancholic and sad figures craving for light, water, guidance, and salvation. They are often of illegitimate birth and intercede for their mother who is ‘carrying a great cross’ (see O’Connor 1991: 170–171).

**Conclusion: the Dead Speaking to us**

The reasons for the exclusion of babies who die around the time of birth from mainstream burial rites are complex and have roots in the process of gradual attribution of ‘personhood’ (as moral membership in a community) through rituals such as baptism, and through moral parameters, such as being of ‘legitimate’ birth. When individuals were not part of the community they were buried differently, and sometimes they became ghosts.

In recent years ghosts have attracted a lot of sociological attention. Since Derrida’s provocative account of the effects that the absence/presence of the spectre of Marx has on the discipline of sociology (1994) the idea of ‘spectrality’ has haunted the sociological imagination. One of the best applications of this innovative Derridean idea, of looking at what is not there rather than at what is there in order to discover something meaningful and unspeakable about society, is *Ghostly Matters* by Avery Gordon. In this book the ghost ‘is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life’; in this sense understanding the way the ghost is haunting a society is ‘a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening’ (Gordon 1997: 8 and passim). This is what writing about ghosts is all about: to write about ghosts’ stories and their visibility (or lack of) is to write about ‘permissions and prohibitions, presence and absence’, about ‘apparitions and hysterical blindness’ (Gordon 1997: 15).

The ‘not so hidden’ message of Irish ‘unbaptized ghosts’ and the folkloric imagination around infantile death and childbirth was one of marginalization and ‘pollution’. It created and reinforced a great deal of magical understanding around the events of birth and pregnancy, recognizing reproduction as being as great a mystery as death. The legends, the marginalized spaces of burial, and rituals surrounding these individuals in the Irish tradition seemed to carry a strong moral judgement and to express a message of great stigma against illegitimacy. In expressing this stigma they reinforced the great symbolic power that the sacraments
(and the priest) held against them. Legends in particular embody a story of struggles between the community and the authority of the Church’s preaching and orders, where the values of the Catholic Church and of the community work once again harmoniously and disharmoniously at the same time. People seemed to have had a hard time in being harsh against women pregnant with illegitimate children and against their children, even though they did not seem to have done much to change things.

Ghost stories are part of our relationship with our past and with our present at an individual, intellectual and collective level, and ghosts change the space around us through their presence (or present absence one might say) leaving us with the feeling described as ‘uncanny’ (Gordon 1997: 50). It is when something is silenced, marginalized, treated with injustice that, in Gordon’s terms, it becomes a ‘ghost’, and many of the legends and folk-beliefs around babies who died around the time of birth in the past can be understood in this context. The ghost is primarily a symptom of what is missing, and ‘what goes unsaid, that which is implied and omitted and censured and suggested, acquires the importance of a scream’ (Gordon 1997: 86).

In one of the stories reported by Anne O’Connor the ghost of a baby in the form of a voice guides a brother to the field where he is buried; when the brother hears the ghost’s sad story of exclusion and marginalization he cries, and the voice says: ‘Oh, I am baptized, by the tears of repentance which fell from your eyes now and I am ready to go to heaven now’ (1991: 145–146). When I first read this story I could not understand what the guilt of this ‘brother’ was, since he did not seem to know the ghost or the place to which he was heading. I could understand him being sad and crying at the touching story of this ghost’s efforts to be found, but why were they tears of repentance? It was only after following this ghost through many incarnations that I realized not only the role played by the priest in the way certain babies and their mothers were buried, but also the one played by the community in this marginalization. Stories about ghosts became a way of speaking of the unspeakable as well as a medium through which certain topics left unsaid, that which is implied and omitted and censured and suggested, acquires the importance of a scream (Gordon 1997: 86).

1 The topic for this paper originates from my doctoral research, where I explore the changes that occurred in the last few decades around the ritualization and memorialization of babies who die around the time of birth in Ireland. Until a few decades ago, these individuals were characterized by marginality and were among those categories of people excluded from the ‘community of the dead’. Babies who die around the time of birth are nowadays greatly acknowledged and memorialized at both public and private levels. My research is therefore an attempt to investigate this great change through the interactions that people have with these babies as mediated through spatial, narrative, material and emotional ‘encounters’.

2 During this programme, writer John McKenna (1997) created a literary monologue to talk about his mother’s story of when one of her child died and was buried at the end of the garden. His mother never told her children this story, and John McKenna discovered it only after she died, by asking about some sentences spoken by her on her deathbed. The programme had a great impact on the public, with great feedback in the form of letters and calls.

3 When I talk about ‘space’ of burial I often mean both physical and metaphysical space (the location where someone is buried as much as their location in their community and in the afterlife), while when I say ‘place’ I mean a space made particular, individual through personal experience (which can be filtered by stories, visitations, material culture, emotions, etc.).

4 The –ín ending in Irish is a diminutive, thus cill is a church or churchyard, and cillín is a little church or churchyard (plural cillíní). The word cill is sometimes used in Irish phrases as a synonym for death or burial. Thus, ag dul chun na cille (which translates directly as going to the churchyard) means to die or to be laid to rest. Lisín is a diminutive of the word lios (meaning fort or fairy mound); lios leannbh is sometimes used to indicate a cemetery for unbaptized children (leannbh meaning ‘child’). In this paper I use the term cillín with the meaning of ‘children’s burial ground’.

5 See Archaeological Inventories of Ireland (by Dúchas, The Heritage Service) for different regions (e.g. Dennehy 1997; Gosling et al. 1993; O’Sullivan and Sheehan 1996). It is quite difficult to define these sites, as ‘[l]isín cannot physically be defined in a rigid fashion. Each site is subject to various factors such as burial practice and site location which may make each unique’ (Lynch 1998: vi).

6 Archaeological evidence seems to indicate that some of these spaces were already in use in pre-Christian times (Finlay 2000).

7 Sugrue reports a case of twin burial in 1939 in a cealláinach in Doiré West near Sneem in Co. Kerry (Sugrue 1993: 35), and it is recorded as recently as 1964 by Aldridge in Co. Mayo (Aldridge 1969: 83–87).

8 In this paper I focus on Catholicism because of the role it played in the Irish cultural context; however, babies who died around the time of birth were buried differently at different times also in other religious and cultural contexts. It is worth noticing here that the Church of Ireland and

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other Protestant Churches do not distinguish between consecrated and unconsecrated ground and that this is therefore a more poignant issue for Catholic disposal of remains.

In Glasnevin National Cemetery in Dublin there are large areas dedicated to the burial of these individuals. Nowadays they are highly memorialized and cherished; they are known as Angels' Plots.

Linda Lynch reported that children, whether baptized or not, ‘may have been excluded from consecrated ground because they had never been fully initiated into society’ (Lynch 1998: 17). Her thesis revolved around archaeological physical analysis, which demonstrated that cillini contain not only children but also a conspicuous number of adults.

‘Churching’ was common in Ireland up until quite recently (people I spoke with reported it occurring until the 1960s and 1970s) and was a ritual of ‘purification’ of women after childbirth; this tradition comes from the Old Testament and it became common within Christianity because the Virgin Mary received it herself (see Leviticus 12: 2–8 King James Version and Luke 2: 22–24 King James Version; http://www.biblegateway.com). According to The Catholic Encyclopedia the churching of a woman is ‘[a] blessing given by the Church to mothers after recovery from childbirth. Only a Catholic woman who has given birth to a child in legitimate wedlock, provided she has not allowed the child to be baptized outside the Catholic Church, is entitled to it. It is not a precept, but a pious and praiseworthy custom (Rituale Romanum), dating from the early Christian ages …’ (http://www.newadvent.org/cathan/03761a.htm).

Other traditional symbolic figures of the ‘mythical feminine’ and ‘imbued with a sense of the mysterious’ in Irish folklore (Ó Cruchoila 2005: xi) are the human bean feasa, ‘wise woman healer’, and her supernatural counterpart, the caillcheach (see Ó Cruchoila 2003 and 2005). Also, some of the explanatory origins for the banshee is connected to childbirth, infanticide and being unbaptized (Lyasghat 1986: 73, 130–133).

In the nineteenth century ‘[t]he term “infanticide”, which is sometimes used as a generic way to describe the killing of a child under the age of one year, in its strictest meaning, refers to the killing of a baby by its mother in the early months of its life’ (Prior 2008: 9).

For more details on the history of early modern midwifery and the role played by male-centred medical knowledge from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in discrediting popular (and female) practices around pregnancy and childbirth see Marland 1993.

For an historical account of the geography of the Christian afterlife see for example Le Goff 1996.

As mentioned earlier on, in Ireland special places for ‘excluded’ dead are mainly known to be the burial place for the unbaptized but also for people who committed suicide, women who died in childbirth, even baptized children up to six months of age, and famine victims. McLean suggested that these segregated dead had the common trait of lacking ‘the prospect of reintegration’ (2004: 74).

‘Haunting’ in English is a word inextricably connected with ghosts and their stories in contemporary imagination, but ‘to haunt’ is a modern word and says a lot about how the activity of ghosts was imagined to be since Victorian times; according to Bowyer ‘there is no medieval word which means the same as the modern English ‘haunt’, and, indeed, the concept is strikingly absent from our medieval ghost-stories: the medieval ghosts almost invariably appear for a specific purpose, and having achieved their end, go, or are sent, away – they do not hang about for centuries, rattling chains and worrying the visitors. An interesting corollary of this is that, unlike modern ghost-stories, medieval ghost-stories are rarely associated with particular places’ (Bowyer 1981: 191).

I use O’Connor 1991 as a source for these stories.

These stories can be seen in the context of the genre of ‘priest stories’ as well, where a standard opposition of ‘drunken’ priest with a traditional one has a moral lesson to teach (see Taylor 1997).

[The priest] asked why one of the lights was so dim, and the child himself answered and said that he had a Private Baptism, but that was not the chief reason, but that he had been buried in a Cillineach’ (O’Connor 1991: 150).

References


Spoken, not written: Story-telling, lament and gossip as performance events

Svenja Gosen

Abstract: With the relatively recent shift towards analysing traditional Irish texts not just as written texts but as constituents of oral performance events, the relevance of performance studies has emerged clearer than ever before. Audience expectations, markers of performance, and the keying of an event all play an important role in defining the context and adding to the meaning of an oral text. This paper compares three separate performance types – Irish storytelling, Irish lament poetry, and gossip poetry in St. Vincent – in order to fit them into existing theories of performance and understand how they operate on an individual level.

Introduction

Performance, as Richard Schechner states, is ‘an inclusive term’. It takes many different forms, from rituals to ‘everyday’ performances (such as greetings), to ‘play, sports, theater, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude’ (Schechner 1988: xvii). As such, performance studies are relevant to almost any area of cultural analysis and study. This paper looks at examples of performance as both an intentionally framed event and an interaction that isn’t necessarily identified as performance by the people involved. I will draw on both my own and others’ ethnographic material, and then identify the performative aspects of those events and compare them with respect to existing theories of performance.

My ethnographic material comes from a story-telling event by Deirdre Wadding, a self-described seanchaí (traditional Irish storyteller) who has made storytelling into a career, as well as being involved in shamanistic rituals and healing. Her Halloween-themed story-telling event was held in Wexford’s library in October 2008. Deirdre was supported by a local band called The Troubadours, who provided theme-music for her stories, accompaniments for her songs, and musical intermissions. The audience totalled thirty to forty people – adults, since the event took place quite late. Story-telling is not a major mode of entertainment nowadays, especially since the advent of cinema, but Deirdre’s events are quite popular. Some of the audience seemed unsure of what to expect, but they were interested and prepared to listen nonetheless. I think it’s interesting to look at this type of event in a modern context, with cinema and high-budget plays and musicals on offer, and to see why it is still relevant and interesting to people.

Another ethnography this paper draws on is the study of gossip on the island of St. Vincent, by Roger Abrahams. This study struck me both for its emphasis on performative aspects of gossiping, and also for the parallels with Irish gossiping – which in turn tie into aspects of Deirdre’s performance. Abrahams outlines the various types of gossip that Vincentians engage in along with their cultural perception and reception (Abrahams 1970). Gossip (termed ’cömness’, a French creole term from the French ‘commère’; see Abrahams 1970: 291) is seen as bad, in principle, since it harms people’s reputations and might divide the community, and betrays the trust of the person about whom one is gossiping. However, it also reinforces the community, as individuals are encouraged to behave according to social norms, for fear of being the subject of cömness. Despite the ideal, which implies that a person who does not gossip is a ‘good’ person, such a person in reality is usually mistrusted or resented. Also, as Abrahams says, ‘the same motives embodied in gossip and arguing, when they are channelled into appropriate ceremonial (“play”) performances, are encouraged by the community’ (ibid.: 292). I think that analysing the Vincentian phenomenon of gossip alongside Deirdre’s performance can yield some interesting comparisons and insights, especially given the parallels to Irish gossip performances.

Finally, I will also draw on Angela Bourke’s critique of the misrepresentation of Irish women’s oral poetry as ‘only’ literature. Bourke uses the example of Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill’s laments (called ‘caoineadh’, Irish for ‘keening’) to show how oral poetry ought to be studied as a type of performance rather than analysed as a purely literary genre. Studying it as written poetry, Bourke argues, leads to misunderstandings of the genre as well as of the originality of individual pieces (Bourke 1992). It also encourages focus on individual authors or poems, rather than on the genre and its conventions, which leads to an ignorance of the role of cultural context and genre in shaping each poem. This contrast of text vs. performance again resonates with Deirdre’s story-telling, and I think comparing the two will be useful in understanding both.

The question of context is also important: the marking of a performance as such through framing and keying, and the extent to which the events outlined above qualify as performances. I will also look at the audience members’ role in performances, their expectations and demands, and also their influence on a given performance, if any. This is closely related to a performer’s responsibility, so I will also examine the question of skill or technique on the part of each performer.
performer, and the efficacy of a given performance along with how this is measured.

Tradition, especially oral tradition, also plays a big role in my analysis; the transition from text to performance and vice versa is an important aspect of Deirdre’s performance as well as a central focus in Bourke’s critique. Finally, I will look at issues of genre and try to determine under which category each of these performances falls. This paper aims to analyse the performances outlined above in terms of these theoretical concepts, in order to understand how they fit into the study of performance more generally, and how they operate and make sense on an individual level.

**Performance contexts**

The context of a performance is more than ‘a set of discourse-external conditions that exist prior to and independently of the performers’ (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 68) – it also involves the participants’ own interpretations and actions, as well as the role of speech in shaping the setting. Speech is an important part of all of the performances I look at in this paper, and plays a role in creating the contexts in which they happen.

According to Schechner, with any performance that comes under the categories of games, sports, or theatre (what he calls ‘middle terms’), rules governing the performance in question take the form of frames. Frames are essentially sets of rules that influence and determine the form that a performance takes; these rules are often unwritten and may even be intangible – cultural norms or conventions are a good example of this. Between the frames, Schechner states, there is freedom for performers to interpret, improvise, and react, essentially making the performance ‘their own’. For an actress, there are four frames: physical space, cultural conventions, the drama itself, and the instructions from a director (Schechner 1988: 15). Not all of these frames are present in each of the performances that this paper focuses on, but they are all framed to an extent.

Deirdre’s performance was marked quite clearly; it was advertised as one from the beginning. There was no clearly marked stage in the library, but the performance was set up as a semi-circle, facing one wall, a stage space was created. In the centre of this stood a table which was draped with cloths; on it stood several candles – to simulate a camp fire – and a few other objects that symbolized the four elements (fire, water, earth, and air) which is a staple of Deirdre’s performances, whether as seanchaí or as shaman. The table also held Deirdre’s rattle and her ‘medicine drum’, which she used at different points throughout the performance. Deirdre herself was dressed in a long, embroidered red dress and a glittering shawl, along with beaded necklaces and glitter on her cheeks. The band members sat behind her with their instruments – banjo, guitar, tin whistle, and bodhrán (Irish frame drum). The candlelight along with Deirdre’s outfit and the traditional band offered plenty of visual cues meant to evoke a sense of tradition, of a past when storytellers were a main source of entertainment. Deirdre was the only person in the room who moved during the performance, walking around the table as she talked, and this set her apart from her audience – and from her backup performers, the band.

Audience expectations feed into the context of a performance, since it affects how the performance is viewed and, if the performer is conscious of expectations, also how it is set up. In Deirdre’s case, the evoking of tradition helped the performance to meet expectations, since storytelling is closely associated with tradition in Ireland. The fact that the performers were marked apart from the audience also met expectations, since that is what a modern Irish audience is accustomed to – in the cinema, theatre, opera, at sports events, etc., the audience is always seated apart from the performers. There were less expectations about the actual content of the performance, since many of the audience had not been at a storytelling event before.

Frames work slightly differently in the St. Vincent example, since gossip sessions are not so clearly marked as performances. However, there are physical markers, since cómness takes place out in the streets, as opposed to at home. The streets are the area of friendship and gossip, which stand in opposition to the home, or yard, which is the area of family. Interaction follows certain unwritten rules – these are not positively affirmed, but negatively. Failure to ‘get it right’ – calling out someone’s name across the street, for example, which implies a close friendship that may not exist – or gossiping about the wrong person or to the wrong people, even a lack of participation, meet with negative reactions and thus norms are reinforced.

Cómness has to take specific forms and follow specific rules, all of them unwritten, that people must adhere to lest they be labelled as rude. In principle, engaging in cómness at all is regarded as rude, but in practice, people are actually expected to take part in it. If someone does not meet this expectation, he or she is resented for not showing the trust inherent in gossiping with someone. However, there are also expectations that cómness will not overstep certain boundaries – leading potentially to fights, or rifts in the community. All of these expectations feature in the interaction itself, the conversation – the ‘drama’, in Schechner’s terms.

Bourke’s account of the lament tradition in Ireland is mainly a critique of the literary approach taken to lament poetry. However, it is still possible to infer that these lament performances were also framed: the woman who led the caoineadh was both poet and performer: she took charge of the community’s grief and expressed it in all its complexity through her appearance, her behaviour, her voice, and her poetry’ (Bourke 1992: 30). The onus was thus on the woman to act and dress in specific ways, which were culturally defined. The behaviour was not spatially contained in the way that Deirdre’s performance was, but it
did have a place – at a funeral. In addition, part of the duty of a woman leading the caoineadh was ‘to experience and perform strong emotion and to behave in a way that suggested abandonment. In this way she marked funerals as time outside time’ (ibid.: 30). These behaviours and dress codes were also marked by cultural conventions, which these women learned gradually as they witnessed more funerals and gathered experience. The audience was much more involved in the event than Deirdre’s audience, because they were personally affected participants in the performance. They had specific expectations of the lament poet, from their experience of previous funerals. Lament poems were composed individually, but had to adhere to specific forms and themes. The caoineadh itself was a performance with a set of conventions and practices attached to it, and within this context or frame, the women created and performed oral lament poems.

**Oral tradition, text, and script**

Ireland has a long and rich oral tradition, and, as in St. Vincent, there is a great emphasis on talking. The stories that Deirdre told came from several countries – Ireland, Wales, England, Romania, and Morocco – but they were all ‘folk tales’, presumably originating in an oral tradition and transcribed at some point. Nowadays, they are accessed through the medium of text, and Deirdre herself learned them that way, so there is a dual ‘translation’ involved. The process of ‘entextualisation’ as outlined by Bauman and Briggs (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 73) takes discourse out of its context, and through speech in performance it is made ‘decontextualizable’ because speech is objectified and to an extent lifted out of its setting. But, through performance, it is also recontextualized, brought back into a performance context and ceasing to be just a written text. In recent years, folklorists have started to stress the importance of the performative aspect of folk tales and fairy tales, and Bourke’s article also argues for an understanding of lament poems as oral as opposed to written. The performative aspects – Deirdre’s tone of voice, the band’s music, the keening woman’s behaviour and attire, etc. – are an essential part of the ‘text’ being performed, and transforming such a performance into a written text means losing a lot of its meaning along the way. Instead, folklore is perhaps better understood as ‘a mode of communicative action’ (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 79), where ‘action’ is an important part of the message being communicated. Reduced down to text, a fairy tale or a gossip session loses a lot of its meaning and also its vibrancy.

Bourke suggests that publication of oral narratives as texts ‘at the end of the nineteenth century’ betrayed nostalgia for older ways’ (Bourke 1995: 564). Some of this nostalgia still exists today and seems to be evidenced by the popularity of Deirdre’s storytelling events as well as a general persistent interest in folk tales and myths. These are usually perceived as ‘traditional’, originating in the past and surviving today in the same form they took centuries ago (an interpretation important to their meaning), though this is not the case. Orally transmitted stories were written down and preserved, but not even the texts survive in their entirely original form, and Deirdre’s re-transforming them from text to oral form does not restore them to any ‘original’ state. Rather, these stories are continually re-invented and re-interpreted, and their meanings change. The way in which they are told changes too, as Deirdre frequently uses contemporary phrases and words, especially when recounting characters’ speech. The same story thus takes many different forms throughout its ‘life’. Tradition, Barba claims, ‘does not exist’ (Barba 2002: 28). There is no story or action which is handed down, unchanged, from one generation to another – a performer is a ‘tradition-in-life’ that transcends his/her own experience and that of his/her predecessors, and may be taken up and changed again by another performer. This is a useful model to apply to folk tales and oral poetry, with every author or performer having his/her own style and interpretations within the frames of convention, cultural viewpoints, ideology, etc.

Performances in a contemporary setting differ from those conducted a century ago, simply because the setting is different and the audience will view and interpret them differently. Every part of a performance ‘brings some of its former meanings into its new context’ (Schechner 1988: 324) and this meaning then meshes with the new context to produce new meaning. All performances draw on the performer’s and the audience’s cultural knowledge in order to make sense; taken out of its context, a performance will no longer be understood in the same way. Deirdre uses phrases that are typical of everyday Irish conversation and makes references and jokes that Irish people have no problem understanding; St. Vincent caoineadh depends on the participants’ ability to understand references and to judge and perhaps condemn behaviour according to the prevalent norms. Were the contexts of these two performances swapped, they would no longer be understood in the way the performer intends them to be understood. Likewise, the practice of caoineadh was culturally specific to time and place, and understood in this context by the people familiar with it. The audience’s interpretation comes partially from its members’ cultural capital, to borrow Bourdieu’s term (Bourdieu 1973) – their knowledge of cultural information which they bring to bear on the performance, rendering it understandable. A performance cannot be taken directly and unchanged from its original context and placed into a contemporary one – the change of context itself would change the meaning of the performance no matter how true to the original the text stayed.

Tradition, however, remains important. The idea that ‘it has always been this way’ offers justification for modes of behaviour and social norms. Deirdre’s storytelling events are seen as traditional and this perception is reinforced and shared by Deirdre herself. This is part of their appeal; when compared with
cinema or even theatre, storytelling seems outdated, but the fact that it’s traditional appeals to what Bourke terms the ‘nostalgia for older ways’. The stories have changed – prior to being written down, folk tales probably changed as well, reflected in the fact that different written versions may differ from each other. This is at odds with the Western obsession with finding the origin or original version of everything – what is seen as authentic – but the same story may change and take on different meanings and interpretations over the course of centuries. However, the role of tradition in justifying and making attractive performances like Deirdre’s remains important.

**Genre**

Genre is a somewhat problematic concept when applied to the performances I have described so far. Beeman’s analysis of theatrical genre identifies media, performers, content, and audience as the four variables, each of which subdivides into three or four categories (Beeman 1993). All of these may interact in different ways according to the performance in question. Another genre is what Schechner terms ‘actuals’, that is, ‘art as event’ or a mode of action; a performance which is watched purely for the action, where performers do not engage in representation of a symbolic reality – athletic events, for example. Play is another performance category, which is unique because it doesn’t require an audience.

Deirdre’s performance does not fit neatly into any of Beeman’s modes, nor does it qualify as an actual since it involved the representation of a symbolic reality, constructed by words and music. Her storytelling is not theatre in the conventional sense; she is herself on-stage (and there seemed little difference between her on-stage persona and the woman I talked to afterwards). She acted out the dialogue between characters much like any Irish person recounting an exchange between two people, by ‘playing’ each part in turn and adopting the relevant facial expression, tone of voice, and phrases used, but this is different to actually playing a specific character on-stage. A given performance can ‘index a broad range of discourse types, some of which are not framed as performance’ (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 61) – Deirdre was every character along with the narrator, sound effects person, and singer. She used dialogue very effectively to bring stories and characters to life and to draw the audience closer – ‘reported speech enables performers to increase stylistic and ideological heterogeneity by drawing on multiple speech events, voices, and points of view’ (ibid.: 70). Thus her performance, while not a play in the theatrical sense, does not seem to qualify as Beeman’s ‘textual theatre’ either, since it involved more than simply ‘the spoken word’ (Beeman 1993: 382). The performance was scripted in the sense that it followed a structure – story, musical interlude, another story, then a song – but Deirdre was not reciting a script. Rather, she was telling stories that she knew so well that she did not need a strict script telling her what to say. There was an element of improvisation as she threw in occasional spontaneous remarks, as with all scripted forms of theatre (ibid.: 382). St. Vincent’s *cóinmeas* does not qualify as theatre, but it is nonetheless a performance. It is scripted to some extent, in that the participants both have an idea and an expectation of the form that the exchange ought to take, and one will react negatively if the other strays too far from the accepted norm. Specific phrases are used to index certain meanings, which are culturally understood (Abrahams 1970). Speaking about gossip in general, Abrahams refers to Gosson, who “indicates that gossip is not only regarded as a form of play or performance among the people of St. Vincent, and for gossipers in Ireland as well. Deirdre’s performance, although she recounts stories that are not from her own experience, takes a very similar form to the performance of gossip stories. There is, Abrahams argues, ‘a felt continuity between speech acts, such as *cóinmeas*, and speech events, such as riddling or story-telling sessions’ (ibid.: 299) – which holds true for the Irish context as well as for the Vincentian one.

Lament poetry is essentially a fusion of two genres, but it constitutes a performance genre that does not quite qualify as theatre. It is an oral performance as opposed to a piece of writing, as Bourke emphasizes, but it involves more than simply reciting a poem. Analysis of this form is difficult nowadays since it is an older form of performance, and most of the analysis so far has focused on the literary aspect. However, the poem itself was not the only important part. The woman’s dress and behaviour were also part of her performance, as were the emotions she expressed. It was a scripted performance and happened as part of a funeral, so it was clearly framed in time and space and constituted part of a death ritual. It was an event, but it was not an actual, since conscious representation of grief and the dead person was an important aspect. Even though the woman seemed to act out of grief – and literary analysis of women’s oral poetry claims a lack of control on the woman’s part (Bourke 1992: 30) – this was carefully controlled and expressed in very specific ways, thus constituting a performance even if the emotion expressed was not ‘played’ or pretended. As Schechner points out, even played emotion ends up becoming real to the actor who is playing it, at least to an extent (Schechner 1988: 322) – here, the emotion may have been real already, but was controlled and possibly exaggerated during the *cóinmeas*. A lot of discipline was involved in the composition of a lament poem and also performing a *cóinmeas*, and in making sure that the performance conformed to the norms associated with it. Oral lament poetry was both part of a death ritual and also a performance in its own right, a speech event with very specific demands and conventions and a predetermined script.
Conclusion
The performative aspects of folklore, lament poetry, and gossip are undeniably important in understanding their meanings. What is said can only be understood with attention to how it is said, and the contexts of these performances have a great impact on their interpretation and perception. The performances I have described in this paper all share an emphasis on the spoken word, but this cannot be reduced down to text without losing some of its meaning.

Beeman points out that ‘no single experience of theater or spectacle is ever like any other’ (Beeman 1993: 386). Recording an event like Deirdre’s would mean a loss of atmosphere and meaning, since much of the effect of her performance depends on her physical presence, and even watching a recording at home would mean placing the performance in a different context. Likewise, no instance of Vincentian cōmmes is ever going to be like another, even though they all fall into this mode of performance. Bourke criticizes literary analysts for claiming that Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill’s poem was written against convention and was overly individual. Rather, she argues, Eibhlín worked within the tradition of oral poetry and abided by its conventions and rules. Because these were oral rather than literary conventions, a literary analysis misses these and ends up misrepresenting the poem.

Bauman and Briggs, meanwhile, argue against ‘notions that presuppose the encompassment of each performance by a single, bounded social interaction’ (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 61). A performance is not just a single event. It may be talked about, recorded, analysed – as in this paper, for example – recounted to people who were not present, etc. When this happens, the performance is automatically transformed again and its meaning may change once more. All performances are thus continually in flux, their meanings changed and transformed, subject to re-interpretation and re-invention according to new contexts and cultural knowledge.

References
When Todd was born his mother rejected him and I was put in charge of his bottle feeding. Todd is a little bull calf and I was to spend many hours in the moist heat of the dark, warm byre persuading him that an old lemonade bottle was an acceptable alternative to his mother's teat. This morning Todd was strong enough to return to pasture and this evening when I went to check the cattle I was delighted when it was me he approached and nuzzled gently rather than the friends I was with. As I crossed the field, Todd followed alongside, like two companions enjoying a country stroll (excerpt from fieldnotes, August 2009).

Anthropological literature on the subject of human–animal relations describes little of an emotional connection between animals and people. Writers may acknowledge that in some distant past, respect or understanding between the species existed but now the only relationships which remain are those based on the steely domination of man over beast, whether in livestock breeding or modern pet-keeping. Since I believe there is an emotional dimension to these relationships and would maintain that I have had personal experience of it, I chose to explore the dynamics of modern human–animal relationships. I chose the setting of modern Northern Irish dairy farms not just because I had access to potential informants but also because this is a particularly interesting form of modern farming, in which animals are cared for over a number of years while they produce their potential milk yield, rather than being prepared for slaughter once they reach their sale weight. Between June and September 2009 I carried out research with seven key informants, all of whom were male and aged between 30 and 65. My intention was to examine the routines of these men in an attempt to understand their connection to their animals. In addition to working alongside these dairy farmers and observing their daily practice, I conducted semi-structured interviews, most of which took place in the dairy parlour as milking proceeded.

Tim Ingold (2004) suggests that when man ceases to hunt and becomes a pastoralist he also ceases to engage with animals in a dynamic way. The relationship, even if it could be perceived as such, is ‘founded on a principle not of trust but of domination’ (Ingold 2004: 77). In this essay I argue against Ingold’s claim that the perceptions of hunters and pastoralists concerning animals are diametrically opposed. I also take issue with his suggestion that there is no trust to be found in the relationship between pastoralists and domesticates in modern farming. My data do not support Ingold’s position that pastoralists view their animals simply as units of production.

Understanding domestication

Tim Ingold’s description of the relationship which allegedly exists only between the hunter and his quarry could easily describe what I witnessed on the dairy farm. For a hunter, ‘animals are not regarded as the strange alien beings from another world, but as participants in the same world to which the people also belong’ (Ingold 2004: 69). I argue that this is also how the dairy farmers view their cattle. The farmers say that the birth of a new calf elicits a similar response to the birth of a child. One man told me that cows are ‘just like people’, they have similar desires and often seem to be as sentient as humans and in some ways more ‘crafty’.

The farmers used language to describe the cattle which one would expect to be reserved for humans. One farmer described a cow who was his particular favourite as being not only ‘friendly’ but also as ‘good natured’ and even ‘smiley’. The needs of the cows, as seen by the farmers, are very similar to the requirements they see themselves as having; farmers consequently view the cattle as ‘participants in the same world to which people also belong’ (Ingold 1994: 69).

It is a myth that the dairy cow is a prisoner on the farm, forced to exist in a concrete environment which is not suitable for her. As one farmer explained, during colder periods of the summer, he could not persuade the cows to leave the comfort of their quarters where food and mattress beds were always available. The cows each have a personal cubicle in their shed which is approximately five feet by ten feet and is fitted with a padded mattress, which is blanketed in sawdust. This is to ensure that their hours spent ruminating are as comfortable as possible.

During the milking process itself, when the farmer and the cattle have their closest contact, I observed the affinity and close connection that exist between the two. The dairy farmer talks to the cattle as they come into the parlour, he says ‘hello’ and coaxes in the reluctant cow with a ‘come on girl’ or ‘come on dear’. The cows respond to his voice (a sign that they trust him) by walking into position in the parlour and most were very relaxed about having the cluster of suckers attached to their udders. The care that is provided for the cattle, I suggest, is a manifestation of the trust that exists between the cow and her guardian. Ingold
presents the relationship between hunter and quarry as being one of respect and reciprocity. This interpretation could as easily be applied to the relationship between a dairy farmer and cattle. The farmer gains the trust of his herd by acting benignly towards them and they in turn allow themselves to be used in his enterprise without protest. The relationship that is based on trust can also be seen in how the animals are moved from pasture to parlour and back. The animals are not chased or stirred to move by threats of physical violence but follow behind the farmer who may use food as an extra incentive if necessary.

Of course, the cows are controlled to a certain extent, just as Ingold suggests. For example, if a certain cow kicks off her cluster she will be reprimanded with a stern word. If she tries to kick the cluster off repeatedly she will be physically punished, by being hit with a stick. I have been told that, if this kind of punishment is inflicted too frequently, the cow will reinforce the fact that she is an agentic being by again kicking off the cluster. Ingold describes a situation that in broad terms is quite similar. He suggests that the prey of the hunter ‘have the power to withhold if any attempt is made to coerce what they are not of their own volition prepared to provide’ (1994: 71). If this statement had been made to any of the dairy farmers with whom I worked, they would have agreed that this is true about their cattle. The cattle have the ability to withhold milk. As Amoroso and Jewel (1963: 127) note, ‘emotional stress seems to block the ejection of milk’ (1963: 127), and in this way the cow exerts a certain amount of control.

The robotic milking parlour represents a slightly different situation, in that the cows are not milked in a parlour with the farmer in close contact. The robot is an automated machine which is situated in the living quarters of the cattle. Although only one of the farmers had a robot parlour in operation at the time of fieldwork, I talked to all of the farmers about this further mechanization of the process. The cows are milked at a time of their choosing by a stationary unit which applies a cluster of suckers to their udders while the cow stands and is provided with food. When the cow stands in position and the machine brushes clean her udders, a laser beam is cast across her stomack to identify the location of each individual teat. A robotic arm then places the suction cups on to the cow. The cows, who are quick to learn how to use this system, come to be milked three or four times a day, which reflects the natural feeding pattern of the calf. This style of milking not only increases milk production, it makes for an easier life for the cow who suffers lameness and is in pain by the time she has been led from the pasture to the dairy, or for the cow who finds being in the narrow and cramped parlour a frightening experience.

Due to the fact that the cows come to be milked by the robot at the time they choose, the farmer can become aware of each cow’s milking preferences. This would seem to challenge the popular claim that on modern intensive farms animals are ‘controlled’ and that the use of machines creates distance (see Serpell 1986). In the case of the robotic system, the cows are given more agency and the information that the farmer can access due to the use of modern technology means that he has a more intimate knowledge of his cattle. Far from suffering because of the use of the robot, the relationship between cattle and farmer appears to be enhanced. The farmer, no longer forced to spend a minimum of four hours a day in the parlour, can use his time more effectively for the benefit of the cows. He spends more time feeding and socializing the new-born calves and observing his cattle for signs of ill-health. Among my informants, it was those who had had experience of the robotic system who seemed to know their cattle most personally.

‘Trust’ is not only a feeling that the farmer has towards the herd as a whole; he also has a relationship of trust with each individual cow. During fieldwork, I observed several instances of what appeared to be a desire to connect with the farmer initiated by a cow. As one old Friesian cow was walking out of the milking parlour she stood on a sharp stone. This may not seem like a serious incident, but the feet of a cow are very sensitive and this stone caused her at least momentary pain and shock. She quickly raised her foot off the floor and immediately looked towards the farmer as if to alert him to her discomfort. He quite casually reassured her saying, ‘It was only a stone dear, you’ll be all right’ and in reply she put her foot back down and slowly walked out of the parlour. At least once a day the farmer visits the non-milking cattle who are turned out to pasture (this includes young heifers who are not yet mature and also cows who are soon to give birth). I often accompanied farmers on this task. Sometimes the farmer would walk through the field and within moments of closing the gate he would find himself quickly surrounded, each cow attempting to nuzzle him. On other occasions he would simply stand at the gate and call ‘Come on! Come on!’ to which the cows would respond, not just by running to the gate, but by calling back at him. This illustrates what Serpell (1986: 151) suggests will happen when an animal is in close contact with its custodian – that it will ‘learn to recognise him and treat him as a social partner’. While Serpell is correct in most of what he proposes about the relationship between domestic livestock and their guardians, there are elements of his thesis which do not correspond to modern dairy farming. For example, while he acknowledges that the traditional stockman had a ‘detailed understanding of his charges’ (Serpell 1986: 150), he insists that due to the cruel nature of modern farming practices the farmer must detach himself from them and their plight. In contrast, my material suggests that like the more traditional stockman, the dairy farmer’s objective is to know each cow as the ‘warm blooded sentient life-form’ (Serpell 1986: 158) that she is. A dairy farmer does not see his cattle as ‘intractable objects which are hell-bent on escape’ (Serpell 1986: 154) but he understands
them as individuals with particular personalities and requirements.

**Emotional dimensions of cattle care**

Serpell (1986: 155) claims that in modern western farming practices the animals are treated only as members of a herd with no attempt made to connect with them as individuals and that ‘detachment and unnecessary brutality seem to be universal components of intensive animal husbandry’. This is simply not confirmed by my fieldwork. I spoke to all of my informants about the obvious economic element to their involvement with the cattle, and about how knowing the individual animal and meeting her particular needs will result in higher profit for him, but what I discovered was that the relationship between farmer and cow runs much deeper than this. Not only did I observe what appeared to be communication, mutual understanding and bonds based on trust between the farmer and his herd, the farmers also explicitly expressed to me that this was the case. One man proclaimed most ardently that ‘you have to love them. You couldn’t commit so much time to them if you didn’t love them’. The farmers talked about how events concerning the cattle had emotional effects on them. Each one declared that they felt depressed at having to put animals down, when calves die or when an animal has to be sold. They admitted that this feeling was because of the economic loss entailed, but were quick to add that it was only partly due to this. Their sadness was also a reaction to the lost potential that the animal had represented. One of my participants even confided that he purposefully avoids becoming attached to his animals because he cannot bear the emotional upset caused by the misfortune that will inevitably befall some of the members of his herd. He also told me that he has noticed he often has the same attitude towards forming relationships with people. One could modify the framework built by Ingold and argue that perhaps what these men do is gain the trust of the animal in order to dominate it. The informants in this study, representing the local dairy industry, invest much time, energy and even emotion in these animals but they do have ulterior yet perfectly rational and functional motives.

Not all aspects of the cattle industry are the same and I have witnessed occasions when Serpell’s arguments seem to be confirmed. For example, when visiting a cattle market with one of my informants I saw cattle destined for the table being treated with excessive force and violence. Nonetheless, I hope I have presented a case study where there are different circumstances.

When I embarked on my fieldwork, I first asked the farmers if they had the ability to identify each of the herd as an individual. They each affirmed that they could distinguish each animal, not only at close quarters but that ‘from half a field away’ it was still obvious to them ‘who was who’. Of course, the animals are freeze-branded with a number and have numbered identification ear tags as dictated by government statutes. However, this is only a signal to the fact that each animal is an individual within the herd. For the farmer, the number serves as a name which represents the cow’s personality and individuality. The farmer recognizes each cow by her idiosyncratic facial features, her gait and head and ear position and also by the pattern on her silken coat. The farmer is so well acquainted with his charges that he can distinguish between two cows just as easily as he can distinguish between two humans. The farmer is constantly watching the cattle to ensure that they are contented and healthy and he will recognize the smallest alteration in their behaviour as signalling a problem. The cow will alert her guardian to her discomfort in what seems to be the outsider the most subtle of ways. She will hold her head lower than usual or swish her tail more frequently. These small signs are easily detected by the farmer who is in tune with his cattle. Of course, there is a very rational reason for becoming well acquainted with the animals, the farmer depends on them in order that he may provide for himself and his family. The fact that he supplies the needs of the cattle not only causes them to thrive but also reinforces to the animals that the farmer is benevolent towards them and therefore trustworthy.

On some of the dairy farms the cattle wear identity collars which are fitted with a microchip that corresponds to a computer in the dairy parlour and that records a particular cow’s milk production at each milking. This collar is also fitted with a pedometer that records the amount of time the cow spends actively. These collars allow the farmer to further individualize his cattle. He is able to add to the physical knowledge of a particular cow, her activity level and also her milking productivity. The robotic milking system may enhance a cow’s individuality still further by enabling her to exhibit idiosyncratic behaviour that makes her even more distinctive. The cows within these systems have their weight recorded each time they are milked, the computer records how much food each eats as well as the details of her activity i.e. how many hours she spends sedately chewing her cud in her stall compared to the hours she is moving around or grazing. On one occasion when the farmer was explaining to me that he was very knowledgeable about all of his ‘girls’, a particular cow entered the robotic milking area. We were situated on the other side of the wall from the cattle enclosure and most of the cow was concealed except for one of her legs which was visible because of the shape of the robot. He said that he knew that she was No. 48, not only because of the pattern of black and white on her leg, but also because of how she had walked into the robot area. I was incredulous of this because he could only have seen that one leg take one step but nevertheless, when I looked over the wall, there she was, No. 48 chewing nonchalantly as the robotic arm cleaned her teats. The farmers also have much knowledge about the cow which could not be revealed through the use of technology. This
information relates to the cows as individuals with personalities. The farmers all spoke about cows which were particularly clever; some were described as being particularly docile or placid while others were referred to as nervous and others, stubborn. I often helped with the milking in non-robotic parlours and at the beginning the farmers would carefully choose which cows I could gain experience with, selecting the ones they knew would not be upset by clumsy hands like mine. The individualization of the cattle, which begins with bestowing each one with its own particular number and ends with the farmer having an intimate knowledge of behaviour and personalities, surely contradicts the assumptions of those like Serpell who believe that farmers do not allow themselves to become acquainted with their conspecifics on the farm and consequently remain detached from them. The farmers identify with their cattle and see much more than their outer images in the reflection of the dark and expressive eyes of the dairy cow.

**Conclusion**

I have argued here that, in the dairy parlours of Northern Ireland, we find respect, reciprocity, attachment and the acknowledgement of individual personalities between herds of dairy cattle and those who tend them. Of course, as I have acknowledged, the farmers who exhibit such care and attention to their animals do not do so purely from a desire to treat cattle with kindness. Yet, all of these men expressed their passion for providing the best possible environment for their herds and admitted to having feelings of love towards them, treating the birth of a new individual with the same excitement as a new baby born in their family and mourning the unexpected death of a member of the working herd. However, one cannot forget that at the core, dairy farming is a business. The farmer must not only provide for his cattle, but also for his family who rely on him to earn an income. To view this world objectively one cannot ignore the fact that the dairyman must make decisions which do not reflect his feelings of love towards his cattle. Until recently, excess male calves would be slaughtered at birth and the male dairy cow, unless destined to be the primogenitor of future pedigree generations, would be regarded as economically useless and therefore destroyed as soon as possible. This lack of regard for the lives of these beings is also seen in how the cows who are no longer able to produce the appropriate yield of milk are discarded. The cow who has provided years of service to the farmer is sent to the noisy and frighteningly unfamiliar market where she is chased around a ring by creatures she had believed to be trustworthy only to be rescued from it when someone decides she has enough meat left on her old bones to be turned into dog food.

Obviously within this realm there is a combination of sentimentality and economic rationality which insists that efficiency has priority and, while generally a relationship based on trust, it is also highly functional. There is only selective favour shown to the cattle by their custodian, as only those which have the potential to be economically valuable will have the opportunity to bond with him. The love the farmers claim they have for their cattle appears to be highly conditional, despite the obvious moral obligation that the farmer has towards his charges. Once an animal has become defective, it must be removed. The farmers are not comfortable with having to make such decisions and one man in particular explained that he felt terribly guilty when he had to send an old cow ‘who had never put a foot wrong’ to the abattoir. He described how he felt that he was ‘playing God’ and this made him very uneasy.

Even the intimacy and attachment that the farmer has with his cattle might be seen as calculated. The farmer gains the trust of the animal from birth in order that he may exploit her when she becomes useful to him. In other words, he only wins her trust in order to dominate her. Richard Tapper (1994: 53), when explaining human animal relations from a Marxian perspective, states that ‘familiarity with animals is a function ...of aspects of the economic system’. Regardless of any guilt that the farmers feel, they must continue to make such judgements. This is because, as I have said, the farm is a business which must make profit if the farmer is to fulfil his responsibilities to his human dependents and, for the farm to make money, it must run efficiently. With this in mind the farmer is able to reconcile himself to the difficult decisions that he must make, and may rationalize that the loss of a particularly economically useless animal is for the benefit of the rest of his herd. By refusing to waste money on an animal that cannot reciprocate and by sacrificing it, the farmer will be able to use this capital to continue caring for his economically valuable livestock. This aspect of the industry is unpleasant for many to accept, and farmers do their best to balance it against the care, consideration and appreciation they show each cow as an individual.

Tim Ingold (2004) has suggested that the modern pastoralist has a completely converse relationship with animals to that of his counterpart the hunter. By contrast, I have argued that there is trust in the relationship between the farmer and his cattle, just as there is between the hunter and his prey. He respects her and even gives her much of her autonomy and in return she lets herself be used by him. So, while cattle are undeniably subject to economic forces, they are not straightforwardly objectified and treated as commodities as Serpell (1986) has suggested; rather, they are given many rights other species and even other cows do not enjoy. Despite the fact that the farmer must be selectively loving, those animals which can enter the relationship of mutual reciprocity with him are honoured and respected, having their physical and mental needs provided for.
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References
Abstract: In West Germany, the end of World War II ushered in a period of national coming-to-terms with the Nazi past and German ‘collective guilt’ over the atrocities of the Holocaust. But East Germany followed a different discursive trajectory, celebrating instead a history of national antifascist resistance and interpreting Buchenwald as a monument to the heroes of that struggle. This article explores the construction of a divided German memory and the varying shades of cultural and communicative memory in eastern Germany as they are expressed by residents of the small East German town of Torgau.

Keywords: Memory, Germany, Nazi past, collective guilt, Buchenwald

Introduction

Most discussions in the area of the Nazi past and its negative effect on a German national identity and sense of belonging, in both the scholarly and popular literature, seem to focus on the people of the former West Germany, or on the wholeness of the German population after German reunification. But how did the people living under socialism in the GDR come to terms with the happenings of WWII and the legacy of the Nazi atrocities? These issues certainly concern the whole of Germany, as they happened before its division by the victorious Allied Forces. Thus, it must have been an issue for the people living east of the Iron Curtain just as much as for those in the West.

During my research and review of literature concerning the GDR, it became apparent that under socialist doctrine the question of responsibility for the atrocities carried out in Nazi Germany was regarded as an issue concerning only the Western capitalists. National identity and pride in the East were mainly linked – at least officially – with socialist ideology. However, I did not find a clear answer as to how the legacy of the Nazi crimes, WWII and the Holocaust had been dealt with in the GDR under socialist ideology. Furthermore, I wanted to understand how – or if – this memory of the past affected the way people felt about their German national identity, if it influenced their personal sense of self as German, their German national self-esteem.

While people in West Germany since the end of World War II were concentrating on coming to terms with their past and their ‘collective guilt’ over the twelve years of Nazi dictatorship and the legacy of the Holocaust, the eastern part of Germany, under Soviet occupation, was directly transferred into another state system and had to deal with a very different set
of political and economic ideologies. With German reunification, East Germans found themselves rather unpreparedly confronted with this issue, while at the same time having to go through their own personal struggle to redefine themselves as part of a united German nation. They had to readjust to a competitive capitalist market economy in a liberal, more democratic order (Borneman 1993: 289), in which everything they had learned to define themselves through seemed to be devalued and discredited (Bendahl 2005). Although economic and political factors should not be discounted, the realm of cultural and historical memory is an essential factor for the construction, narration and representation of national and cultural identity.

What are the Different Shades of Memory

Jan Assmann (1995) defines collective memory as ‘a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice’ (Assmann 1995: 126). He differentiates between cultural memory and communicative memory, describing the former as the collectively perceived or constructed cultural heritage of a nation as a whole, while the latter is short-term memory ‘bound to the existence of living bearers of memory and to the communicators of experience’ (Welzer 2008: 285), referencing a period no longer than three to four generations.

Harald Welzer adds the concepts social and autobiographical memory (ibid.: 286), emphasizing the importance of ‘the historical and social relation to others’ (ibid.: 291) for the true development of the individual, and he describes the autobiographical memory as a dynamic process in constant transformation (ibid.: 293). He regards the stories of collectives and individuals as ‘continuously re-written in the light of new experiences and needs of the present’ (Welzer 2008: 295) and therefore, in the sense of short-term memory, ‘each present, each generation, each epoch creates for itself that past which has the highest functional value for its future orientations and options’ (ibid.).

Thus, the production of cultural difference in the two German states during the forty years of division – equivalent to two generations – can be treated as the beginning of the creation of two distinctive communicative memories, closely linked to the different ideologies and their particular functional and socio-cultural values for the future. In the GDR this entailed belonging to communist or socialist ideology with the idea of constructing an egalitarian community of peasants and workers. In contrast, for the FRG the focus was on the rights of the individual and self-fulfilment in a democratic, capitalist society. After German reunification, therefore, ‘[t]he German people face an unprecedented experiment in the integration of two engineered and mutually opposed sets of cultural values, albeit with a shared historical heritage’ (Hogwood 2001: 69).

I concentrate specifically on the different ways of dealing with the German history of National Socialism, the memory of WWII and the Holocaust, and the construction of a divided communicative memory in relation to the Nazi past, with a focus on the former East Germany (on divided memory, see Herf 1997). To research this, I spent two months in East Germany investigating the different shades of communicative memory and the diversity of personal memory and identity. While the individuals I spoke to were very different in their social backgrounds as well as their ages, on many points they indicated a very similar collective memory, one that they experienced or understood differently depending on their own personal backgrounds. Thus, I discovered a variety of different shades of memory regarding the Nazi era and the Holocaust, shaped both by the influence of government doctrine through education and institutionalized activities and by personal background.

‘We might not have had bananas, but we all had a job’

Torgau is a small town in North Saxony with just over 20,000 inhabitants. The Renaissance and Reformation play a central role in its history, as Martin Luther was a frequent visitor to town, and the glamorous Renaissance gabled houses of the upper-middle-class still dominate the townscape. In 1945, during the last days of the Second World War, the ‘historic handshake’ between American and Russian troops took place near Torgau at the Elbe shortly before the complete occupation and defeat of Germany was sealed. Following the partition of Germany, Torgau became part of the Soviet zone of occupation, which in 1949 became the GDR. What followed was the construction of a distinctive collective memory of the recent past in East Germany – the communicative memory as per Assmann (1995) and Welzer (2008) – that became a framework for my research interest.

It was fascinating to wander along the cobbled streets and narrow alleys of this town that miraculously escaped severe bombing or destruction, even the air raids during the Second World War. In the Torgau of the present, however, many buildings were in a pitiful state of utter decay, and unemployment had become a huge problem. As I learnt from a young shop owner, this is something that was unimaginable during socialism. ‘Don’t get me wrong now, I was never in the party, but in socialism at least we all had work’, she said. ‘We might not have had bananas, we might have had oranges only at Christmas time, but we all had a job and there were enough crèches for the kids and no rowdies in the streets.’ Bit by bit I got to know the story of Torgau’s thriving industries during GDR times, and its rapid economic decline after East Germany’s reunification with the West, or, as many people here saw it, its annexation or appropriation to the FRG. It was a story of loss of livelihood in a much too fast, and for many almost elusive, transition from the socialist
planned economy to the capitalist market economy. Among the Torgauer there was certainly nostalgia for the element of security that had been lost with the Wende, but as time went on I also witnessed an ever-increasing positive fighting spirit towards the future in many of the people I met.

**Shades and Shadows of a Divided Memory in Torgau**

In considering the historically divided cultural memory of West and East Germany, I argue that the generalized and almost cliché-like representation of a dichotomy between a ‘bad Capitalist West’ and a ‘brave Antifascist East’ misses the huge diversity of memory constructions derived from the people involved. This rigid construct also misses the dynamic that is inherent in communicative memory, which continually changes as its temporal horizon shifts (Assmann 1995: 127). Working with communicative memory as a cultural-theoretical framework provides indeed a much more dynamic matrix to examine the effect the past has on individual identity formation and consciousness. Modifying Harald Welzer’s concept, I subdivide communicative memory into social memory and autobiographical memory, and add a third category that I call institutional memory. In the following, I demonstrate and analyse the diversity and complexity of the narrations and experiences from my Torgauer interlocutors in the frame of these subdivisions of communicative memory, I focus in particular on institutional memory, which comprises the official version and view of the Nazi time, WWII events and the Holocaust, constructed and promoted by the SED officials and the GDR State.

Institutional memory, thus labelled because it was deployed mainly by the state institutions, was woven in particular into the educational system, where those recent historical events were fashioned into the national antifascist history of resistance. Socialist children’s and youth organisations in the GDR, such as the Junge Pioniere (Young Pioneers) and the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ, Free German Youth), further emphasized the importance of the victorious socialist and antifascist mindset. Other areas of institutional memory included public holidays and national commemoration days, parades, vigils and the installation of national memorial sites. Of particular importance seemed the Buchenwald Memorial, which was repeatedly mentioned by the people I spoke to, especially in connection with the Jugendweihe. As a matter of fact, it was my interlocutors’ firm and emphatic mention of Buchenwald in our conversations that first directed my attention to the fact that this did not really belong to German cultural memory in the way Jan Assmann had defined it, but rather to this quite influential sub-category of communicative memory that I have defined as institutional memory.

Assmann described cultural memory as ‘characterized by its distance from the everyday,’ having fixed points, such as ‘fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)’ (Assmann 1995: 129). While my interlocutors in Torgau talked about events that seemed to fit Assmann’s ‘cultural formations’, like rites and monuments, those cultural formations were part of the newly-constructed historiography under socialist ideology after the foundation of the GDR in 1949. I argue that
these events belong to the communicative memory of socialism, rather than being part of a longstanding pan-German cultural and historical memory. Furthermore, many of these events, dates and memorial sites have already been revised; thus, the younger generations of the former East Germany, born only shortly before or even after the Wende, know many of those ritualistic celebrations only through stories passed on by their parents, or through popular culture. However, the position of the Buchenwald Memorial in the socialist educational system and its almost ritualized visit as part of the Jugendweihe really warranted more attention.

The Buchenwald Concentration Camp was the largest of the Nazi concentration camps on German soil. Converted into the ‘National Buchenwald Memorial’, which was inaugurated in 1958, it became one of the most significant and monumental memorial facilities for the ‘heroes of the antifascist resistance struggle’, incorporating the hero cult of Socialist Realism. What was missed or underrepresented in this memorial site, however, was the ordeal of the Jewish inmates and other prisoners, such as homosexuals, Sinti and Roma. As such, the SED exploited and instrumentalized the National Buchenwald Memorial in its own way for the purpose of state propaganda.

Walter, 60 years of age, was the first to tell me about it, when I mentioned the legacy of WWII in our conversation. In his time, he told me, they surely had dealt properly with the Second World War, certainly better than the West; they had even gone to see the concentration camps, Auschwitz and Buchenwald, to see and remember what had happened to the Communists under the horrendous Fascist dictatorship, so that such atrocities would never be repeated. When I asked him how he, as a German, felt about this dreadful legacy, he reacted almost incensed, irritated: Why, what should he feel? He hadn’t even been born when all this happened, he had nothing to do with it, and he shouldn’t bear the blame for this.

A more moderate response came from Gisa, aged 47, as she told me about the books they had read and discussed in school. Bruno Apitz’s Naked amongst Wolves in particular had really made an impression on her, with its depiction of the heroic deeds of the antifascist and communist resistance, set in Buchenwald and based on a real story. However, regarding the persecution of the Jews or even the existence of a Jewish community in Germany, she was totally unaware and so far as she was concerned there were no Jews in the GDR, they had all gone to Israel. In looking back, however, she recognized that the ideas disseminated about them in the GDR had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people went to Israel. In looking back, however, she recognized that the ideas disseminated about them in the GDR had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people went to Israel. In looking back, however, she recognized that the ideas disseminated about them in the GDR had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people had actually been quite anti-Semitic: the Nazi-image of the Jews as double-minded, deceitful business people.

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Paul, aged 35 years, was probably one of the last generations who would have experienced the FDJ-organized tour to Buchenwald, shortly before the fall of the Iron Curtain. Aside from that, he mentioned memorial vigils and parades where he had participated, first as a Young Pioneer, later as part of the FDJ, and also as a member of the local brass band. However, he also recalled the confusion he had felt during his teenage years, when he had become aware of the documentary films about the Hitler youth, shown at school or on television, depicting the marches, parades and vigils they had performed during the Third Reich, which didn’t look that much different from those he was performing with his socialist youth organization. It was then that he realized that something was not quite right and hestarted to question if he really wanted to belong to a Germany like that. In fact, he felt there were quite a lot of similarities between this socialism and the Nazi ideology. Regarding the persecution of the Jews, Paul reasoned that there weren’t any Jews in the GDR anyway, so this subject had only really come into discussions after the Wende. At the same time, though, he didn’t really feel that all this had an influence on his own German national identity or self-esteem as such. In fact, he thought that it was important for Germans to be allowed to feel pride in their nationality. Germany did not only consist of those twelve years of the Third Reich, which was really only a fraction of German history; it simply couldn’t be that this was going to overshadow all those other hundreds of years of fascinating humanist history and culture. Paul argued that it really was about time for the Germans to stop living with their heads turned backwards, to look ahead again, to find a prospect for the future.

Autobiographical memory, according to Harald Welzer, ‘more than any other determines, denotes and guarantees our ego, and it develops in processes of social exchange’ (2008: 290). In this sense, the way in which topics like the Second World War and all its implications are dealt with in the family unit and the social environment have a significant influence on a person’s conception and formation of a German national identity. Naturally, there was a diversity of people in Torgau whose autobiographical memories were influenced by very different backgrounds.

I met Connie in a café in the market square, just opposite the impressive Renaissance town hall, where she worked every afternoon. I had spent many of the hot summer afternoons there in the shade of the sun canopy, refreshed by a light breeze and a cool shandy, observing the hustle and bustle of this little town, while working on my notes. With a frank smile on her face, Connie described her family as ‘so red, it couldn’t be any redder’, meaning they had all been very devoted comrades, devoted to the Party and socialism. Her father was in the police force, one uncle worked for the Stasi, another one was employed at the police training...
college, and yet another one worked in the Torgau prison; even her mother had a position within the SED. Thus, she said, for her there was very little chance to be different. At the age of fourteen, only a couple of years before the Wende, she felt attracted to the church and attended a service one Sunday morning. Unfortunately somebody saw her and snitched on her, and that was it, there was no way she would be allowed to ever go back there as this did not fit the image of a family that was so true to socialist party principles.

With regard to the Second World War, Connie opined that it had always been the capitalist Germans who were to blame for everything, ‘the other Germans’. This, at least, had been the firm conviction in her family. ‘But then’, she added, ‘we don’t even have to go as far back as the Third Reich. If we just look at what happened here in Torgau, right in front of our eyes, not only during the Nazi dictatorship, but all the way through, until the end of the GDR … Well, that could really turn your stomach, really horrible …’ What she was hinting at was a side of Torgau’s history that was really only revealed and made public after the collapse of the socialist regime.

According to Harald Welzer the everyday experience and dealings ‘with those things that themselves transport history and memory’ and thus, ‘communicate the past and interpretations of the past in a non-intentional manner’ are the main area of social memory (2008: 286). Thus, spaces, landscapes, architecture, wastelands are all part of the social memory. A significant landmark in Torgau is the magnificent sixteenth-century Castle Hartenfels. The castle houses the DIZ (Documentation and Information Centre) of Torgau and the permanent exhibition ‘Spuren des Unrechts’ (Traces of Injustice), which reconstructs the history of the penal institutions in Torgau. This exhibition provides a thorough introduction into the darker moments of Torgau’s history, disclosing the town’s involvement and significance during the Third Reich and the Second World War. What Connie was hinting at, however, was not the involvement of Torgau during the Nazi dictatorship, but the disclosure of the truth around the Jugendwerkhof, something that belonged to the much more recent legacy of the GDR.

The Jugendwerkhof was a closed and barred, prison-like reformatory for teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18 years old, a place where between 1964 and 1989 more than 4,000 so-called ‘difficult youngsters’ were interned for their ‘betterment of character’ and re-education according to socialist principles. The building was situated right in the middle of the town, in fact, not far from the castle. The first reports became public in the early 1990s, and when facts emerged about the strict regimen, excessive hard work, mistreatment, abuse and cruelty imposed upon the girls and boys, many Torgauer initially reacted with disbelief and shock. I only became aware of the significance of this about half way into my stay. All at once the many quiet remarks or mumbled asides about ‘Torgau’s shadows’ from earlier conversations that I initially had completely misinterpreted began to fall into place. While I had concentrated so much on finding out how people were dealing with the Nazi past, I had overlooked the fact that, for my interlocutors in Torgau, the much more recent East German past and the transition from socialism to
capitalism was, in reality, a much more lived memory and something much more pressing to come to terms with than a social communicative memory that was already almost sinking beyond the temporal horizon. Thus, the disclosure of acts of injustice that had been carried out, unbeknownst to them, yet almost in front of their eyes, understandably caused a sense of shock, incomprehension and outright revulsion among the citizens.

Barbara (55 years) expressed her deep consternation and how she almost felt ashamed at the thought that she, for years, had passed the building regularly, even had seen the youngsters waving behind the barred windows, and yet had no idea what was actually going on behind those locked doors. A similar reaction came from Connie, who once more emphasized that she did not feel any guilt or even shame regarding the crimes carried out during Nazi times, but felt quite aghast about the barbaric practices that had taken place in her lifetime, almost on her front doorstep. Walter, on the other hand, assured me that whatever I heard about this ‘juvenile detention thing’ was all exaggerated, blown out of proportion. Another interlocutor, Mr. Weber, also took this line, asserting that I should not really believe anything that I heard about it, that it was all lies anyway, and really mainly capitalist propaganda to make the GDR look bad.

**Conclusion**

In this article I have discussed the different ways of dealing with the legacy of the Nazi crimes, with a focus on the diversity of memory construction in the former GDR and its effects on the development of German national self-esteem. I decided to use the framework of memory, and in particular the communicative memory with its sub-divisions of institutional, autobiographical and social memory, because the historical context of the past is closely linked with the present aspects of identity construction. I propose that it was, and still is, the combination of these different sub-divisions of communicative memory that influences the way people feel about their national identity. I am aware that the scale of my research was limited in time and only covers a small community; however, I did have the opportunity to speak to a large and diverse group of people, and the town Torgau itself offered an unexpectedly complex historical background.

With respect to the first aspect of my research interest, I received from my interlocutors a clear and virtually unanimous confirmation of the generalized statements regarding the socialist views on the Nazi past. In fact, their declarations concurred very much with the impression made by the academic literature that I had consulted, where it was suggested that under socialist doctrine, responsibility for Nazi crimes was regarded as an issue concerning only capitalists in the West, who were nothing less than Fascists in disguise. None of my interlocutors felt compelled to feel ashamed or in any way uncomfortable about her or his national German identity, even more so because these crimes had happened before their lifetimes.

However, the way this institutional memory was interpreted in the individual cases depended very much on the personal family story, the social environment and the regional influences. The autobiographical and social memory, therefore, were determining factors in how different people dealt differently with these historical facts in the present. Most people felt pride in their town and its architectural beauty, and some also expressed their pride in being German for aspects of German cultural history and values beyond the communicative memory, pertaining to the realm of cultural memory.

Another very significant factor, though, and one that I had not considered sufficiently as I embarked on my research, was the fact, that, for my interlocutors in Torgau, the disclosure of the many acts of injustice carried out during the forty years of socialism, and also the still-prevalent imbalances between the former West and the former East Germany, were much more pressing matters to deal with. The communicative memory concerning the Holocaust and the Nazi past, therefore, were already beginning to sink beyond the temporal horizon, thus slowly entering the realm of cultural memory. This is what Assmann describes when he speaks about communicative memory as being subject to constant change as it ‘shifts in direct relation to the passing of time’ in constant ‘proximity to the everyday’ (Assmann 1995: 126).

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1 This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted for my BA Thesis in July and August 2009 in the small town of Torgau in North Saxony, Germany. While all the characters mentioned in this article are real people, for reasons of confidentiality all their names have been changed. I want to thank all the people that I met in Torgau for their friendly welcome, their openness and honesty in our conversations and their infinite hospitality during my stay.

2 Name for the inhabitants of Torgau.

3 Wendefirmung, literally translated ‘turning point, change, reversal’, has become the common term used in Germany to stand for the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent reunification of West and East Germany.

4 Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the GDR governing party.

5 Jugendweihe (roughly translated as ‘youth dedication’, a civic initiation ceremony) is a phenomenon that originated in the late nineteenth century as an alternative to the Christian rite of confirmation. It was already particularly strong under the National Socialist regime, in opposition to the Catholic and Lutheran rites of Konfirmation and Konfirmation. In 1954 it was adopted in the former GDR as an obligatory pledge to socialism, almost completely displacing Christian confirmation. Since the German unification it has remained very popular in the former eastern states but also slowly has become a recognized
alternative in the West.

The GDR Secret Police.

References


The Contribution of Forensic Anthropology to International Criminal Justice: Mass grave exhumations conducted by United Nations International Criminal Tribunals

Éadaoin O’Brien

Abstract: The investigations of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity have increasingly been marked by the use of forensic sciences including forensic anthropology. The graphic images of mass graves commonly associated with the armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda exposed some of the appalling atrocities that had occurred during these shocking periods of those countries’ histories. The discovery and subsequent exhumation of these graves provided international courts charged with prosecuting the architects and most senior leaders with indisputable evidence of their crimes. This paper will examine the role forensic anthropology has played in securing forensic evidence utilized by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Introduction
Forensic anthropology has increasingly come to play an important role in post-conflict justice. In the months, years and indeed decades following armed conflict, forensic expertise can be utilized to investigate allegations of human rights violations such as extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances; war crimes; crimes against humanity and genocide.¹

The value of recovering bodies of victims, including those located in mass graves, and of utilizing biological anthropology experts to identify the bodies and document skeletal trauma has been recognized in a number of contexts. Transitional justice reconciliatory institutions such as Truth and Reconciliation commissions have recognized the importance of exhumations. To give one example, in the final report issued by the Commission for Historical Clarification in Guatemala, one of its primary recommendations was the establishment of a national reparation programme, including an active policy of exhumations, believing that the exhumation of human remains ‘is in itself an act of justice and reparation and is an important step on the path to reconciliation’ (Commission for Historical Clarification 1999). International organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have highlighted the imperative to retrieve the remains of the dead and have instigated important programmes in this regard (Tidball-Binz 2007). Courts established by the international community to try senior leaders charged with violations of international law in the context of armed conflict have relied upon forensic evidence collected through the exhumation of mass graves in a number of cases. This article will further outline the value of utilizing forensic evidence in international criminal trials.

War Dead, Mass Grave Exhumations and International Law
In the course of armed conflict combatants and civilians alike will inevitably lose their lives as a direct consequence of hostilities. To be clear at the outset, not all soldiers who die in war are killed legally and not all civilians who are killed die illegally. The conduct of warfare is moderated by a specialized body of international law known as international humanitarian law (IHL).² Whilst soldiers are legitimate targets in armed conflict, unconstrained use of fatal fire is not permitted in all circumstances. Engagement must comply with the principle of military necessity, superfluous suffering is not permitted, and fighters or combatants who are hors de combat (outside of combat) due to injury or surrender should not be subject to lethal force.³ Civilian deaths may be a consequence of lawful conduct during armed conflict (so-called collateral damage) (Dinstein 2005) or may be due to the failure to conduct fighting according to the rules and principles of international humanitarian law – for example, not paying due diligence to the principles of distinction, proportionality and necessity (Doswald-Beck 1987). Further, civilians may be deliberately targeted and executed constituting a war crime (Fenrick 2004). In addition to war crimes certain acts may also concurrently constitute a crime against humanity or genocide,⁴ such categories being applicable in both peacetime and during armed conflict. The atrocious mass killings of approximately 7,500 men and boys in the area surrounding Srebrenica, Bosnia, during the Balkan conflict in the 1990s was a notable case in point. It is also worth noting that it is widely recognized that human rights law continues to be applicable during
armed conflict (Lubell 2007) and thus gross violations of human rights law can occur in wartime.

Unfortunately, it is too often the case that parties to an armed conflict do not adhere to the principles and provisions of international law including humanitarian law. Many violations remain undocumented, perpetrators escape with impunity and many missing persons remain unaccounted for. However, the work of international criminal institutions such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) which sits in The Hague, the Netherlands, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) which sits in Arusha, Tanzania, has served to help reduce the impunity gap. The ICTY, established in May 1993 by the Security Council pursuant to Resolution 827, has jurisdiction over four categories of crimes: grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, violations of the laws or customs of war, genocide, and crimes against humanity (ICTY Statute 1993, updated 2009: Articles 2–5 respectively). The tribunal has the competence to prosecute persons suspected of responsibility for crimes under the jurisdiction of the court committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ibid.: Article 1).

The ICTR, established also under a United Nations Security Council Resolution (Resolution 955) in November 1994, has subject matter jurisdiction over three crime categories: genocide, crimes against humanity, and violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II (ICTR Statute 1994: Articles 2–4 respectively). The temporal jurisdiction of the Rwandan tribunal is limited to a period of one calendar year, between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994 and may prosecute perpetrators responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed in the territory of Rwanda and may prosecute Rwandan citizens who have committed acts in connection with the 1994 genocide in neighbouring states (ibid.: Article 1).

Mass grave exhumations completed by the international tribunals are carried out with the express aim of gathering forensic evidence to be utilized in court in support of the indictments issued by the tribunals. It is not the purpose of such institutions to locate, excavate and exhume graves with the intention of fulfilling a humanitarian mandate that would see each set of human remains identified and repatriated to the families. Nonetheless, this may sometimes come about as a consequence of the forensic investigations (ICTY–UNICRI 2009: 17). In addition, organizations with a specific mandate to find mass graves, achieve positive individual identifications, and return victims’ remains for reburial may be established in countries recovering in the aftermath of war, for example the International Commission for Missing Persons (ICMP) in the former Yugoslavia and the Office of Missing Persons and Forensics of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

The ICTY exhumation programme got under way in July of 1996 (ICTY 1996: at 26). After a 1995 agreement between the tribunal and IFOR, the NATO ‘Implementation Force’ in Bosnia and Herzegovina ensured the security of investigation teams for the duration of their on-site missions on territory under Bosnian Serb control in Republika Srpska and it became possible to initiate exhumations. This development was regarded as critical, as ‘access to mass grave sites
gave the Prosecutor the opportunity to integrate the evidence obtained from exhumations into his investigative strategy’ (ibid: at 25–26). The programme was for the most part completed by 2001, with only a residual forensic programme remaining (ICTY, 2002: at 39). In contrast, the forensic programme undertaken by the ICTR was a considerably more modest affair. Exhumations and anthropological examinations were completed by the Boston-based non-governmental organization ‘Physicians for Human Rights’ on behalf of the tribunal. The main excavation for the ICTR began in the western Rwandan town of Kibuye in December 1995 on the grounds of a Roman Catholic Church. Following eight weeks of digging, the forensic practitioners exhumed 493 bodies, more than half of whom were infants and children under the age of eighteen (Stover and Peress 1998: 146).

The Work of the Forensic Anthropologist
Forensic Anthropologists interpret morphological features on bones in order to estimate the age, sex, ancestry and stature of the individual, as well as indicating pathologies on the skeleton, such as diseases which manifest on the bones or dentition, and documenting signs of trauma and injury on the body (White and Folkens 2005). Anthropologists can assess if inflicted wounds evident skeletally were caused prior to death (ante-mortem), around the time of death (peri-mortem), or after death (post-mortem). This expertise is particularly useful in a post-conflict context where often thousands of dead and missing require identification and wounded bodies require examination in order to determine whether or not the death was extra-legal. Anthropological assessment can be used when methods that have the potential to yield a high percentage of positive identifications, such as forensic genetics (DNA comparisons), are limited or unavailable (Baraybar 2008). DNA analysis is not infallible and results may be unreliable due to sample degradation or contamination. Anthropological analysis often serves as a check against prospective errors. In many places the option of using DNA analysis is not a viable one due to the costs involved or where familial samples for comparison are unavailable or unobtainable. Thus forensic anthropology is applied in lieu of other identification techniques.

In the investigation of complex crimes such as war crimes, forensic anthropologists do not work in isolation, rather they form part of a multi-disciplinary team that will be composed of ‘core expertise’ from archaeologists, anthropologists and pathologists. Additionally, further expertise can be sought from a range of disciplines with a forensic speciality and other experts such as photographers, logisticians, forensic odontologists, forensic geneticists, surveyors, entomologists, and heavy equipment operators (Skinner and Sterenberg 2005: 222). It should be noted, however, that this composition is an ideal and was exemplified by the ICTY. Human rights investigations are often under-resourced and the forensic anthropologists may find themselves working in near isolation.

The forensic anthropologists’ contribution to the investigation is valuable in a number of ways, both during exhumation and in the period when mortuary examination is completed following the recovery of human remains from the graves. Their expert knowledge in osteology enables fragmented or disarticulated bones and bodies to be reconstructed; this leads to an increased number of identifiable individuals and facilitates the calculation of the minimum number of individuals contained in a mass grave. The anthropological assessment is part of the contribution to the post-exhumation analysis of the criminal evidence. Furthermore, the documentation of the anthropological findings provides an objective, scientific notation that contradicts attempts at historical revisionism (ibid: 224). Anthropological knowledge of taphonomic processes can also be beneficial in helping to estimate a post-mortem interval (Haglund 2002).

There are a number of variables that determine the rate and manner of decomposition of human remains including the environmental temperature, the type of soil the bodies are buried in, the time since burial and whether the bodies are spaced apart or compacted in the grave. Bodies exhumed from mass graves will be found in various states ranging from very fleshy to nearly fully decomposed. When bodies are in an advanced state of decomposition with little or no soft tissue present, the evidence to be gathered from external examination can be limited. Therefore the examination of bones by forensic anthropologists is recognized as ‘an important tool, enabling the identification of bullet strikes and other wounds causing death’ (Manning 2008: 18).

The Value of Utilizing Forensic Evidence in International Criminal Trials
Forensic investigations can play a critical role in the prosecution of core international crimes. Although a trial will not rely solely on forensic evidence in order to substantiate charges listed in an indictment, the details it provides can serve to verify information obtained from other sources such as eyewitnesses, informants and intercepted intelligence, and strengthen an argument posed by the prosecution (Blewitt 1997: 284). It can of course be the case that forensic evidence can also come in the form of exculpatory evidence and thus helps to strengthen the fair trial guarantees of a case. Forensic evidence in and of itself cannot establish the guilt or otherwise of a defendant and forensic experts including forensic anthropologists are not expected to build a prosecution or defence case; rather it is the role of the judges to interpret all the available evidence placed before them in a fair and impartial criminal trial and to come to a decision on culpability (Ranta and Takamaa 2007: 453).

The ICTY identified four objectives of the exhumation programme in line with its prosecutorial strategy: ‘to obtain evidence regarding the identity
of victims killed during the conflict; ‘to establish the circumstances and causes of death’; ‘to link primary [the initial burial site] and secondary mass graves’ [the site into which exhumed bodies are reburied, often with the objective of concealing the crime and destroying evidence which could potentially link the perpetrators to the crime]; ‘to reveal attempts to cover up the crimes’ (ICTY–UNICRI 2009: 17).

The anthropological assessment of the recovered remains can assist in providing an identification of the victims. For international trials it may be unreasonable to expect that all murder victims recovered from mass graves are positively identified in order to lead the evidence during a trial, as the bodies recovered can number in the hundreds, or even thousands. Often it is more valuable to establish group identification, that is, determine if the deceased belonged to a particular racial, ethnic, national or religious group in the context of genocide charges and, in the case of violations of the laws and customs of war, if the deceased were civilians or combatants. Although biological traits on the human skeleton can indicate ancestral differences that may coincide with religious, ethnic and racial differences, the indicators of such categories will not always be evident on the bones of the remains. An important indicator of group identification is the objects and personal effects found on or near the remains. Material culture associated with the bodies and the graves in which they are found can be documented and the significance of such objects can greatly assist in the identification of the decedents and in mapping together the chain of events which led to their deaths. The presence of a crucifix or a Koran, for example, may denote the religious group that the decedent belonged to:

Assessing the biological age of the remains can intimate whether they are those of a civilian or a combatant. It is unlikely that the very young and elderly are military fighters. In places where women are not admitted into the armed forces the presence of female remains indicates that the bodies are those of civilians. Clothing and other fabric provides additional clues as to the identity of the decedent and can signify if he or she was a civilian or soldier. Remains found dressed in combat fatigue as opposed to civilian clothing suggest that the deceased was a combatant. Similarly, the wound pattern can indicate if the deceased died in combat or was executed.

The results of the forensic investigations suggest that the majority of bodies exhumed were not killed in combat; they were killed in mass executions. Investigators discovered at least 448 blindfolds on or with the bodies uncovered during the exhumations at ten separate sites. At least 423 ligatures were located during exhumations at 13 separate sites … These ligatures and blindfolds are inconsistent with combat casualties … The exhumations also revealed that some of the victims were severely handicapped and, for that reason, unlikely
to have been combatants. (ICTY, Krstić Judgement, 02 August 2001, paragraph 75)

Anthropological assessment of the bodies in the graves can also help determine the modus operandi of the killing and the cause of death. In the Vujadin Popović et al trial, forensic anthropologist William Haglund was asked how he knew individuals he exhumed from a grave known as Nova Kasaba 2 were killed in the grave. The explanation offered was that:

They were in kneeling positions with their torsos bent forward, [with] their heads forward. Many of them were still in that position, some had fallen over sideways in that position. And the majority of those individuals ... 95 per cent of them received gun-shots to the head. (ICTY, Testimony of expert witness William Haglund, 15 Mar 2007, Transcript T. 8911)

In many of the trials that relied upon forensic evidence at the ad hoc tribunals, the value of such physical evidence in corroborating other accounts of the events alleged in the indictments, ultimately leading to a successful conviction, was emphasized in the judgements.

Forensic evidence corroborates the survivors’ account of mass executions at the Kravica Warehouse (ICTY, Blagojević and Jokić, Judgement, 17 January 2005, Paragraph 312)

The witness testimonies are corroborated by forensic evidence of two primary graves at Lažete, next to Orahovac, and secondary graves along the Hodžići Road. (ICTY, Blagojević and Jokić, Judgement, 17 January 2005, Paragraph 336)

A further function of forensic and medicolegal evidence in international criminal institutions such as the ad hoc tribunals is the contribution this form of evidence makes to the historical record. It may only be through a criminal investigation that the scale of killings carried out through the conflict or genocide begins to be comprehended. Although only a fraction of the clandestine burial sites will be excavated by the tribunal, locating mass grave sites and exhuming the remains can betray the extent of atrocities carried out by adversaries. As highlighted in the judgement of the Plavišć trial at the Yugoslav tribunal:

In some instances it has only been through the discovery and exhumation of mass graves in the period following these incidences of brutality and aggression that the true scale of the killings has been established. (ICTY, Plavišć sentencing judgement, 27 February 2003, Paragraph 42)

However, the expert witness testimony of forensic science practitioners is not always accepted by the bench, a feature of criminal trials that is indicative of the adversarial nature of international proceedings of this type. In the Rutaganda trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the evidence submitted by an experienced forensic anthropologist on behalf of the prosecution was not accepted by the judge as determining due to a more persuasive and contradictory opinion offered by the defence expert witness:

[The Chamber, on the basis of the testimony by Dr. Kathleen Reich, a forensic anthropologist, called by the Defence as an expert witness, is not satisfied that the scientific method used by Professor Haglund is such as to allow the Chamber to rely on his findings in the determination of the case. (ICTR Rutaganda judgement, 6 December 1999, Paragraph 256)

Forensic anthropological evidence was ultimately only used in two trials at the ICTR, the Rutaganda trial and Kayishema et al trial. Whilst the application of forensic evidence was unsuccessful for the Rutaganda trial, the testimony of forensic anthropologist Dr. William Haglund was accepted by the bench and entered into evidence in the Kayishema et al proceedings. This was particularly constructive for the tribunal as this was one of the first three cases prosecuted at the ICTR and many facts were disputed including whether the events that unfolded in Rwanda in 1994 constituted genocide. The prosecution therefore had to construct a case that firmly demonstrated that genocide had indeed taken place. Forensic expertise was called mainly to assist in showing that the victims were women and children and thus civilians and that the cause of the wounds, mostly blunt-force trauma, was inconsistent with battle-field trauma (Trial Attorney ICTR, Personal interview with author, Arusha, April 2010).

Conclusion

As outlined in this article, forensic anthropologists have played an important role in the protection of human rights and have made a significant contribution to international criminal justice through their involvement with the investigative process working on behalf of both the prosecution and defence. Evidence can point not only towards guilt but also towards innocence and the potential of forensic anthropological analysis to provide exculpatory evidence strengthens the fair trial guarantees of criminal proceedings. Recovery of the bodies of victims from mass graves provides justice in a number of ways. Perpetrators responsible for heinous acts in war can be convicted and punished for their crimes following the successful utilization of the forensic evidence meticulously gathered by forensic experts including anthropologists. Furthermore,
through exhumation of graves, individuals may come to be identified and their bodies returned to their families and communities for reburial; this itself is recognized as a form of justice. As the ad hoc tribunals complete their mandates, valuable lessons learnt from the practice of these significant institutions can help shape future advancements in international forensic investigations by bodies such as the International Criminal Court as well as at the regional and domestic level.

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1 The research on which this paper is based has been funded by a postgraduate scholarship awarded by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
2 International Humanitarian Law (IHL) has been defined as ‘the branch of international law limiting the use of violence in armed conflicts by:
   a) sparing those who do not or no longer directly participate in hostilities;
   b) limiting the violence to the amount necessary to achieve the aim of the conflict, which can be – independently of the causes fought for – only to weaken the military potential of the enemy’
There are a number of basic principles in IHL which serve to guide its application and are integral in the consideration of whether or not an act in war constitutes a legitimate use of force or conversely a violation of the laws of armed conflict. These principles are:
   ‘the distinction between civilians and combatants’;
   ‘the prohibition to attack those hors de combat’;
   ‘the prohibition to inflict unnecessary suffering’;
   ‘the principle of necessity; and
   the principle of proportionality’
Marco Sassòli and Antoine A. Bouvier, How Does Law Protect in War? Cases, Documents and Teaching Materials on Contemporary Practice in International Humanitarian Law, Volume 1, 2006 (2nd Edition) Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, p. 81. International Humanitarian Law consists of a large number of provisions pertaining to conflict between states, with such conflicts being referred to as international armed conflicts. A smaller number of provisions moderate conflict of a non-international character; such conflicts are referred to as non-international armed conflicts or internal armed conflicts.
3 In the case of international armed conflict, such persons may be afforded prisoner of war status. The Third Geneva Convention of 1949 (Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949) is dedicated to detailing the obligations and restrictions protecting POWs. Prisoner of war status is not explicitly recognized in non-international armed conflicts. However, fighters who lay down their arms or are outside of combat through sickness, surrender or detention or any other reason are entitled to enjoy the following protections:
   ‘In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions:
   (1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons:
   (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
   (b) taking of hostages;
   (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment;
   (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.
   (2) The wounded and sick shall be collected and cared for.’
Source: Article (3) Common to the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949
Additionally, conflict on the territory of states who are high contracting parties to the Second Additional Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), of 8 June 1977 shall be afforded humane treatment including fundamental guarantees (Article 4) which states that ‘All persons who do not take a direct part or who have ceased to take part in hostilities, whether or not their liberty has been restricted, are entitled to respect for their persons, honour and convictions and religious practices. They shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without adverse distinction. It is prohibited to order that there shall be no survivors’ (Article 4.1). Article 4.2 inter alia prohibits violence to the life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder.
Finally, customary international humanitarian law, rules and principles which are recognized as customary and therefore binding on all states regardless of the status of
ratification or accession to humanitarian law treaties, provide a further source of protection. For the seminal study on customary IHL see the ICRC study, available online at http://www.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home

4 Crimes Against Humanity as per the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia constitute a number of crimes systematically directed against a civilian population and include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape, persecution on political, racial and religious grounds and other inhumane acts.

5 The legal definition of genocide as outlined in Article 2 of the Article II of the 1948 is as follows:

1 In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
   (a) Killing members of the group;
   (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
   (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
   (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
   (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

6 There is no one authoritative definition of mass grave, rather there exists a variety of characterizations which are in a sense determined by the discipline framing the terms of reference. Within an international criminal law framework the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions has defined mass graves as locations where three or more victims of extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions were buried, not having died in combat or armed confrontations. UN Doc E/CN.4/1993/50, 10 February 1993. Situation of Human Rights in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia. Report on the situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia submitted by Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, pursuant to Commission resolution 1992/S-1/1 of 14 August 1992. Annex I: Summary of the report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on his mission to investigate allegations of mass graves from 15 to 20 December 1992, Available at http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/313049964d7549ec802567900054cf88?OpenDocument

7 Taphonomy can be defined as the study of postmortem processes which affect (1) the preservation, observation, or recovery of dead organisms, (2) the reconstruction of their biology or ecology, or (3) the reconstruction of the circumstances of their death. Forensic taphonomy is that part of forensic anthropology which focuses on reconstructing events during and following death by collecting and analyzing data about the depositional context, discriminating peri- and postmortem modification of the remains, and estimating the postmortem interval.

(Haglund)

8 Although children have been and continue to be recruited into paramilitary forces, it is prohibited under international humanitarian law for children under fifteen to take part in hostilities. The use of children in armed combat constitutes a war crime.

References


Case Law and Legal Instruments
ICTR, Prosecutor v. Clément Kayishema and Obed Razindana, Case No. ICTR-95-1-A.
Book Reviews


Since ancient times, human beings have killed, maimed, enslaved and otherwise mistreated each other. Nevertheless, the atrocities of totalitarian regimes between the wars do have a peculiarly dreadful quality. This collection of intelligent essays reassesses Hannah Arendt, a major post-war commentator on human cruelty, looking particularly at her book The Origins of Totalitarianism. Here, Arendt emphasized the uniqueness of totalitarianism, finding its origin in pre-First World War colonialism, which ‘boomeranged’ to create racist and non-democratic theories and practices in Europe itself.

Eliza von Jeoden-Forgy starts by giving a flavour of German South West Africa, writing of the rapes, massacres, trophy beheadings and casual executions and floggings that culminated in the near-extinction of the Herero people between 1904 and 1907. She claims that ‘colour-coded racism’, not only removed native peoples from the protection of the ordinary law, it also helped insulate an essentially humane German identity from colonial brutality.

In a not-dissimilar argument, Robert Bernasconi claims that Arendt wanted to insulate the western and especially the Kantian tradition from the taint of imperialism and totalitarianism. Unfortunately, he says, Arendt’s claim that racism is incompatible with the Western political and moral standards of the past does not bear close scrutiny, for even Kant had declined to oppose slavery and had supported racial segregation. In this context, I also enjoyed Marcel Stoezler’s more straightforwardly historical account which relates the unfolding of anti-Semitism to the decline of the guilds and the rise of liberal capitalism.

Though Arendt was centrally concerned with Nazism, she also considered the Stalinist atrocities. Richard Shorten notes, however, that Europeans, particularly on the Left, for many years failed to recognize the crimes of Stalin. Even now, there are unseemly competitions to emphasize one set of atrocities more than another. Ned Curthoys says that writers such as Camus, Bourdieu and Feraoun were dismayed at the atrocities perpetrated by Algerian revolutionaries just as they were by those of the French state, but that others – including Sartre and Fanon – gave the revolutionaries unqualified support.

Several writers, indeed, allege that Arendt herself believed that racism towards Africans was more excusable than that towards Chinese, Indian or Jewish people. This is most directly addressed in a piece by Stephen Douglas Maloney, who discusses Arendt’s Reflections on Little Rock, which questioned the wisdom of sending schoolchildren to oppose segregation in schools. Interestingly, he notes that in writing about America, Arendt was much influenced by Montesquieu and Tocqueville.

Robert Eaglestone addresses Arendt’s famous association, as her teacher and lover, with Martin Heidegger. Her Heideggerian inheritance reveals itself in the way she sees imperialism, racism and totalitarianism as part of the ‘subterranean stream’ of European history. Heidegger, notes Eaglestone, traces the way in which productionist metaphysics turn the world into a world of use. Arendt, however, understands totalitarianism to take this further in the project of changing human nature itself.

Two articles consider the place of Darwinism in relation to racism and imperialism. André Duarte claims that this ‘biopolitics’, by regarding the life of the individual, the race, the people or community as the supreme good, by a paradox made it possible for politics to become murderous in the struggle for survival.

Tony Barta asks if it is ‘fair to draw the gentle scientist Darwin into the history of genocide?’, concluding that Darwin did indeed accept the ‘extinction of less improved forms’ of human beings. He similarly finds that Marx talked sufficiently about the ‘transcendent progress of history’ to justify the excesses of a Stalin or a Mao.

Vlasta Jaluic revisits Arendt’s celebrated consideration of Eichmann’s ‘thoughtlessness’ as he committed unspeakable crimes. She claims that, since this kind of ‘thoughtlessness’ is a widespread human trait, then the Holocaust must be seen as eminently repeatable. She proves her point with reference to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and their worst single atrocity, the massacre at Srebrenica.

I have a few complaints. Most of the Nazi leaders were old soldiers, Germany and Austria having reacted differently in defeat to the way Britain and France did in victory. War, in its own way, exemplifies the expendability of people (both friends and foes) for the greater good, so it is surprising that there is no mention of the Great War. Mussolini, Franco and other dictators are similarly absent, yet it is plain that Hitler, to some degree, modelled himself on Mussolini. Other points could have been expanded. For example, Germany and Russia were small players in the late nineteenth century scramble for Empire; whereas the largest imperial powers, Britain and France remained stubbornly democratic. It is also clear that the much older empires of Austria-Hungary and Russia had had a ramshackle version of totalitarianism – replete with...
Lodge Number 796. As it was the 12th of July, a group of Orangemen in full regalia were gathered outside the Shankill Row and buy him sweets or a comic. There was no sense of threat or intimidation in being in a 'Protestant space'. The street belonged to Catholics as well as to Protestants and Liam and his father would admire the preparations for the Orange celebrations.

There is a very strong human element to this book and many interesting stories are told. On page 11 for example, Liam tells the reader that his great-grandfather was called William Carson and was a Protestant. He was, apparently, an Orangeman from Ballymena. However, when he married his second wife (Liam's great-grandmother) he turned Catholic. This was a condition of her acceptance. Having already had nine children with his first wife, William produced a further thirteen with the second wife. 'He fathered the equivalent of two soccer teams' (p. 11).

The father figure in Carson's book comes across as an amiable character. This is in deep contrast with Hugo Hamilton's Speckled People, where Hugo's father's love of Irish is portrayed as difficult for the family to cope with. In call mother a lonely field, Liam speaks lovingly of his memories of his father suggesting that 'what survives most of him is his voice and the Irish language' (p. 110). When Liam dreams of him, his father is always speaking in Irish. Carson also notes the elements of language choice in his relationship with his father. At one stage, his Da told him that he understood different to the father's youth. He understood a world that was very different generation and a different world that he understood. As his dementia gathered momentum, his mother reverted to speaking Irish until the 'Troubles' erupted. This was a condition of her acceptance. Having already had nine children with his first wife, William produced a further thirteen with the second wife. 'He fathered the equivalent of two soccer teams' (p. 11).

But it is that the character of the mother that dominates the text. She is portrayed as a woman who was eager for her children to learn the Irish language until the 'Troubles' erupted. Then she became nervous that their speaking Irish might be interpreted as support for terrorism, Republicanism and the IRA. This fear caused her to revert to English in the household. For me, the emotional strong-point (almost break-point) of the book was the description of his mother in a care home in her old age. As her dementia gathered momentum, his mother reverted to speaking Irish which now became a 'secret language' which she could

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Earlier this year, Hag's Head Press in Dublin published a new memoir written by Liam Carson, director of the IMRAM Irish language literature festival. The title Call mother a lonely field is taken from the song of Jackie Leven. Although this is primarily a literary text, it is also a social document of strong relevance for anthropologists working in the field of Northern Ireland. Engaging with texts is not a new practice for anthropologists. In 1973, Cliford Geertz proposed the notion of culture as text. He suggested that the 'culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong (Geertz 1977: 452). He compared the process of doing ethnography as 'like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript'.

The memoir offers very many insights into growing up in Northern Ireland before the onset of the 'Troubles'. The description of cordial relations between Catholics and Protestants at that time was particularly interesting for me. On page 29, for example, the author tells us that his Catholic father was deeply religious and used to carry his rosary beads everywhere with him. One particular summer day Liam's father was delivering the post in Protestant Shankill to the house of Billy Moore, the Grand Master of the Defenders of Ulster Lodge Number 796. As it was the 12th of July, a group of Orangemen in full regalia were gathered outside the house. They were waiting for Billy to come out. When Liam's father knocked on the door to deliver the letter, Billy invited him in for a drink. As Liam's father was known as 'Wullie' there was an assumption that he was Protestant. Moreover it was presumed that no Catholic would venture into the Shankill on the 12th July. After drinking a few bottles of McCaffrey's Ale, Billy invited 'Wullie' to sing a few Orange songs in honour of the day. Liam's father loved these songs (which had many Irish names), and he began with 'Dolly's Brae'. After another beer and more whiskey, Liam's father reached into his pocket to get a handkerchief and mistakenly pulled out the rosary beads which fell on the floor. It was at that point that the host realized that the postman 'kicked with the wrong foot'. Nevertheless, although the people of the Shankill now knew the local postman was a 'Papist', they continued to be as friendly to him as they had ever been, and would often call on him to sing a song' (p. 30).

Liam explains that it was not unusual for his father and other members of the family to go and watch the Twelfth celebrations at this time. His father had many Protestant friends who shared respect for traditional values and family life. At one stage Liam found a Bible that had been given to his father as a present. In it was inscribed: 'Although we are Catholic and Protestant. We share in the salvation of the Blood of the Lamb. To my brother in Christ' (p. 46). Sometimes Liam's father would bring him up to Protestant Sandy Row and buy him sweets or a comic. There was no sense of threat or intimidation in being in a 'Protestant space'.

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But it is that the character of the mother that dominates the text. She is portrayed as a woman who was eager for her children to learn the Irish language until the 'Troubles' erupted. Then she became nervous that their speaking Irish might be interpreted as support for terrorism, Republicanism and the IRA. This fear caused her to revert to English in the household. For me, the emotional strong-point (almost break-point) of the book was the description of his mother in a care home in her old age. As her dementia gathered momentum, his mother reverted to speaking Irish which now became a 'secret language' which she could
use to complain about the nursing staff. From her perspective, these nurses did not appear to understand that his mother was perfectly healthy and simply wanted to go home. ‘Ba mhaislim liom gabháil ‘na bhailé’ (I want to go home) was a phrase she repeated endlessly and heartbreakingly. Once outside the nursing home, Liam would burst into tears at being unable to give his mother the one thing she wanted (p. 95).

This book has a strong focus on Irish, and the language frequently ‘breaks through’ the text. Sometimes the author uses an Irish language term when there is no English equivalent. Consider the following example: ‘Cumhaidh is what gripped me – pining, loneliness, homesickness, a soreness of the heart, longing. This Irish word contains in its sound an ache that no English word can evoke for me. Like tocht – an oppression, a catch in the throat or at the heart, a fit of grief, silence in the face of overwhelming emotion – it is a word my father often used when looking back at the lost world of his youth’ (p. 107). Anthropologists often debate the issue of whether each language is an entry point to a distinct world view. Liam would appear to support the view of languages being linked with different worldviews. As he was brought up speaking Irish in an English-speaking environment, he became aware of different signifiers at a very early age but the different languages did not describe the world similarly. ‘[A]t the end of the day if something is said in Irish it’s not the same as if it is said in the English language. This is a non-negotiable viewpoint from his perspective. ‘There’s no final way of saying here is how it is. There isn’t finally an answer to the objective structure of the mind’ (p. 64).

The book features numerous photographs and illustrations which will be of interest to anthropologists. Personal family photographs appear here as well as photographs from the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. There are advertisements and illustrations from various journals such as an tUachtar. The reader is also provided with a brief list of sources for further reading. This book is to be highly recommended for those with research and teaching interests in Northern Ireland and other comparative regions. It will be relevant for courses in anthropology, international politics, peace and cultural studies, Irish Studies etc. It is a local story with international relevance. It is to be recommended for your university library.

References
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In a fascinating work, Eileen Kane revisits her Nevada Paiute Indians, among whom she did her Ph.D. fieldwork in 1964. The book is centred on a re-examination of her first fieldwork in light of the vast experience she has amassed ever since. In a courageous self-effacing style, the book presents a strenuous critique of anthropology, exposing many flaws that continue to bedevil the discipline to this day. Reminiscent of all young Ph.D. candidates, Kane entered her field with what she now sees as extreme naivety coupled with the then stunning pomposity of the discipline. After all, Kane did her study at a time when anthropology was commonly defined as ‘the study of savages’. Never mind that the student herself was labelled as a ‘working class girl from a poor family’ who grew up in Youngstown, a place that was literally run by the mafia. Her professors at the University of Pittsburgh, obsessed by the objectivity of the day, insisted on sending her to study the Indians and not her own town, a more suitable location for her fieldwork. The Indians provided a superfluity of raw material for construction of the ‘other’ – the savage and the native.

Like all young scholars, Kane soon realised how impoverished her training was for her study of the natives. Sociologists had questionnaires, psychologists had projective tests, while she, the anthropologist, had only wishy-washy participant observation as an instrument; too open-ended by far to generate any worthwhile material. Worse than that, the young anthropologist had already decided beforehand what she was to study. In other words, she and her professors knew what was important for the natives and what priorities they had in their reservation.

Anthropologists always thrive on the illusion that they have the power to construct their study theme, choose their informants and reign in the fieldwork process. Well, young Kane discovered otherwise. The natives too had power; they proceeded to decide on what was spoken about, who would act as informant and what would find its way into the fieldwork notebook. More often than not, Kane was told in no uncertain terms: ‘Why study that? Who cares about that? And don’t bother to write down that shit’. The Indians were not passive informants but were generous nonetheless. They decided to be the parents, the experts and the philanthropists who helped Kane to get good grades and send her back to complete her interrupted honeymoon on their own terms. The natives knew that religious continuity, the subject chosen by the anthropologist, was far down the list of their concerns. Theirs were poverty, social security, discrimination and incarceration in reservations. In the end, they did
oblige but only to redirect the topic towards their spirit creature Coyote, the mischievous rule-breaker.

But who and what is a trickster—a legitimate question that will haunt any person who decides to buy and read Kane’s work. It is the Coyote who sustained the Indians by playing havoc with their system. It is the mafia credited with keeping life going in the face of the incompetence of the politicians. It is the anthropologist who received without giving. It is me, but equally, too, you the reader. We are all tricksters in our own ways.

Kane’s work evokes a memory of Margaret Mead who liberated anthropology out of its captivity behind college walls. Is it a novel? Of course not. Kane’s book combines the depth of anthropology with the accessibility of the novel. It is written in a captivating and yet rich style, hilarious and entertaining for almost all readers. But above all, the book shows real people and normal human beings. Unlike other anthropology books, often riddled with meaningless, esoteric, anthropological jargon, Kane speaks in plain words and refuses to stand between the reader and the studied. Perhaps we should all go back to our field notes and rewrite our long-forgotten Ph.D. theses in the way Kane does here. The future of anthropology as a discipline may demand just that.

This book is a must for all young scholars, but equally enlightening for seasoned anthropologists.

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‘O wad some pow’r the giftie gie us / To see oursels as others see us’ (Robert Burns). A goal of Social Thought on Ireland is to gie the Irish just this giftie. It shows the complex ways that a selected group of admittedly elite thinkers responded to the country and its people during that most critical of centuries, from around the birth of the Union with Great Britain until the eve of independence. Versions of almost all the nine analytical essays were presented to a 2005 conference of the Anthropological Association of Ireland (AAI). They were revised, impressive documentation added, and the collection edited by Séamas Ó Síocháin (emeritus) of the National University of Ireland Maynooth. Noting the development of anthropology as a discipline during the nineteenth century, the editor intends the collection ‘to bring into focus the extent to which Ireland was a significant “Other”’ (vii). A history of the anthropological observation of Ireland must, he validly asserts, explore the thinking of important non-Irish writers. Focused on less than a dozen such outsiders, the book could not claim to be representative. However it is an excellent contribution to such a larger venture, pointing up the country’s significance ‘as a case study for the emerging social sciences’ (ix).

A brief but useful introduction to Ireland’s ‘long nineteenth century’ (1798–1914) by R.V. Comerford opens the collection. Most of the observers/writers were British. There are essays on: John Stuart Mill (by Graham Finlay); Sir Henry Maine (by editor Ó Síocháin); James Anthony Froude (by Ciaran Brady); James Macpherson, Matthew Arnold and Celticism (by the late George J. Watson); and, the only woman, Harriet Martineau (by Brian Conway and Michael R. Hill). And on non-British thinkers: Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Toqueville, both French (by Tom Garvin and Andreas Hess); and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, both German (by Chandana Mathur and Dermot Dix). There is also a stimulating discussion by Peter J. Bowler on the limited extent to which the ‘scientific racism’ of the period depicted the Irish as biologically inferior. In an Afterword Peter Gray recapitulates major themes (such as otherness, and the associated puzzlement over environmental versus natural/essential/racial explanations for the conditions of the Irish). He also suggests the need for further studies of, especially, the broader contexts of the writers’ views, along with Irish responses. By the 1860s, he believes, at least some British thinkers and policy makers— not all, as we shall see—were moving towards the realization that ‘governing Ireland by Irish ideas’ might be a good idea (173).

Edited collections are often faulted for the uneven quality of the contributions. Here, however, all are carefully researched and clearly-written, working extremely well together to give the reader a powerful sense of observer perceptions. One visitor was ‘haunted by the human chimpanzees’ he believed he saw in the ‘horrible country’ around Sligo (141). Also arresting was the strangely fearful Social Darwinism of Maine. England’s failing, he believed, lay in not dealing firmly enough with Irish barbarism. Civilization itself was in danger should the government succumb to that deadly virus, ‘governing Ireland by Irish ideas’—does one raise children by the ideas of children? (78).

Most observers, even those critical of the supposed Irish lack of Anglo-Saxon virtues, were less brutal and more careful. Martineau was no ‘armchair anthropologist/sociologist,’ pontificating on exotic races from afar. She consulted the census and other documents; but also embarked on ‘field trips’ (as we would now call them) to different parts of Ireland, observing and talking to the natives. Marx and Engels could caricature the Irish, but both were sympathetic to their difficulties, which they saw more in economic than political terms. Mathur and Dix note ‘their solid grasp of the material underpinnings of the colonial relationship’ (106). The strange and sometimes ironic results of Celticism, from MacPherson, to Arnold, to
Yeats and others in Ireland, also impresses. Although stereotypical and resonant with romantically tragic Celtic twilights, this imagined Scottish and Irish ‘history’ was partly positive and helped define strong but different senses of identity in both countries.

A simplistic picture of outsider prejudice does not emerge. Even those unsympathetic to Irish nationalistic aspirations could simultaneously be critical of Britain’s failings on its other island. Some of the observers were willing to change their views. Complexity within basic patterns of ‘othering’ – that is the major theme of this major collection.

At 173 pages of text and endnotes, however, perhaps the book could have been longer. Did these or other observers comment upon the complex educational developments in Ireland then? Further, a few American writers might have been included. In a fascinating passage a famous African American ex-slave, autobiographer, and abolitionist recounted his visit. ‘The Irishman educated, is a model gentleman,’ wrote Frederick Douglass, ‘the Irishman ignorant and degraded, compares in form and feature with the negro!’ (Quoted in The Nature of Difference: Sciences of Race in the United States from Jefferson to Genomics, eds. E.M. Hammonds and R.M. Herzig. [Cambridge, MASS: MIT Press, 2008], 37–38).

Social Thought on Ireland strongly complements other recent studies of nineteenth-century outsider ‘gaze’ – of the British tourist gaze (2008) by W.H.A. Williams (an American, formerly a lecturer at University College Dublin), and of the British press gaze (2003) by Leslie Williams (also American). The work under review obviously crosses disciplinary boundaries. It is sociology and postcolonial analysis and anthropology; in addition, many of the essays read like good ol’ intellectual history (the reviewer is a historian). The book does gie Irish readers that great giftie: provoking us to see ourselves as others saw us.

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News Miscellany

If you have any interesting news items you would like to share with the IJA readership, please forward them to me at emma.ja.heffernan@nuim.ie. Items may include awards, conference reports / conference announcements, publications, new appointments, upcoming seminars. Emma Heffernan, News Editor

Conference Reports
This year was a particularly busy year for conferences in Ireland with the AAI conference held in Trinity College Dublin in May and both MASN and EASA held in Maynooth and the ASA in Belfast.

AAI Annual Conference, ‘Ethnography Beyond Ethnos’, TCD, Dublin, 7–8 May 2010
Emma Heffernan

The May 2010 AAI conference ‘Ethnography Beyond Ethnos?’ was a huge success, thanks to Andrew Finlay’s magnificent organizing skills. It opened with a provocative talk ‘Writing Ireland, Ireland Writing: possibilities for Irish Ethnographers’ by Fiona Murphy and Keith Egan, with responses by Steve Coleman (NUIM) and David Prendergast (Intel). It was then followed by several parallel sessions with topics as varied as ‘Health, Care, and Death’, ‘Netnography’, ‘Migration’ and ‘Foucault and Ethnography’. The keynote address was given by Dr Yael Navaro-Yashin, from the University of Cambridge, on: ‘Framing Conflict: measurement, objectification and comparison in studies of violence and practices for its amelioration’.

The AAI was well represented with some superb papers from members including Mark Maguire, Cormac Sheehan, Lee Komito, Tom Keegan, Fiona Larkan, Alex O’Connell, Terence Wright, Thomas Strong and Cathy Bailey amongst others.

8th MASN Conference ‘Anthropological Trajectories’ NUI Maynooth, Co Kildare, 20–22 August 2010
(1) Deirdre Carolan

Moving Anthropology Student Network (MASN) Ireland hosted the 8th MASN conference in Patrick’s College, Maynooth, from 20 to 22 August 2010. Behind this two-day event lay months of preparation, stretching back to a meeting in Vienna, Austria, the previous autumn, where it was decided that Ireland would hold its first MASN conference. Out of this MASN Ireland was then formed, comprising enthusiastic anthropology students at NUI Maynooth. Among these were AAI members Alex O’Connell and Tom Keegan.

The theme of ‘Anthropological Trajectories’ was decided and seemed suitably apt to the Moving Anthropology Student Network. Once chosen, it fixed the tone of the conference. Our next step was to communicate this, and the MASN Ireland website was launched. With a contact list compiled from anthropology departments and institutions, from as far apart as Chile and Taiwan, we sent out the call for papers. Our funding team was then busy sourcing much-needed sponsors. Initially, we met with little response and enthusiasm, yet as the months wore on our budget gradually increased and, in the weeks preceding the event, did so dramatically. This sense of momentum characterized our activity as the opening drew near, subduing any sense of unpreparedness.

While the aim of MASN Ireland was the conference itself, its import was surely found in the mission of the MASN network: its ability to connect student anthropologists and the dynamism this brings. These elements were apparent in the workings of the conference and indeed throughout the period of preparation itself.

(2) Katja Seidel, Martin Luger and Martha Cecilia Dietrich

This summer, the latest highlight of five years of MASN conferences took place in St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. In three days 35 scholars from more than ten different countries discussed ‘Anthropological Trajectories’, through paper presentations, workshops, discussions, a network meeting, and fringe events.

In times of globalization social and cultural anthropology is ever-more concerned with transit, change and transformation. It is the interest in pathways and motivations of actors and the social structures that they manifest themselves in that pushes these topics towards the centre of anthropological attention. This year’s theme of ‘anthropological trajectories’ opened up a broad field for participants to discuss their research in diverse areas such as migration, health, online communication or the distribution of capital. Papers such as the ones presented by the AAI members Tom Keegan (‘Making friends through text: how online communities develop and grow through textual interaction’) and Alex O’Connell (‘“Others” Appropriating Orientalism: Hindu-Right conceptions of Islam in India’) displayed anthropological knowledge in flux and illustrated some current flows of theories, communities, and people.

MASN conferences are set up to provide a more playful approach to academia, to gain insights into the work of professionals, to make space for interdisciplinary overlaps and to discuss the impact of anthropology outside the scientific community. Face-to-face encounters enhance and unite these domains, enabling us to think through new designs and formats for scientific work. The Network, that sustains the
annual conferences, emphasizes egalitarian interaction
and is set up by students for students. The atmosphere
created during the conferences, which aims to go
beyond the structure of traditional academic settings,
enables students to freely and critically engage in
discussions.

The 8th MASN Conference was held shortly
before the 11th EASA Conference, hosted by the
National University of Ireland Maynooth. This setup
already proved to be inspiring after the previous
conference in 2008 in Ljubljana and allowed
participants once more to establish a mutual exchange
and to strengthen connections between students and
academics.

Thanks to the organizing team the 8th MASN
Conference was a full success for all participants. Further information on the network and on
upcoming conferences can be found here: www.
movinganthropology.net, www.masn-ireland.com

11th Biennial Conference of the European
Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA),
‘Crisis and Imagination’, NUI Maynooth,
Ireland, 24–27 August, 2010
(1) David O’Kane

At the end of August 2010, nearly a thousand members of
EASA converged on the campus of Maynooth, drawn there by the themes of the association’s biennial
conference, ‘Crisis and Imagination’. It was clear
from the first keynote and plenary, as well as from the
workshops and panels that made up the core of the
conference, that there are many, many perspectives
from which these themes could be approached. It
was equally clear that the discipline of anthropology
remains diverse and healthy enough to do this job.

There is much to do on this subject, because the
world the human race has created for itself is moving
into a widening gyre of endemic and chronic crisis.
Talal Asad, who delivered the opening address on
the theme of ‘Human Atrocities and Human Rights’,
reflected on the global political crisis that erupted on
11 September 2001 and on the unconsidered cultural
baggage that successive American governments have
brought to that crisis. The disruption of normal life
which the terrorist event of that date brought triggered
an upsurge in anxiety, and a consequent flight to
‘nationalist fervour’ on the part of a large swathe of the
American population. This was co-opted by the Bush
administration to gain support for its neoconservative
programme of making the world safe for democracy
through a series of short, victorious wars. The Obama
administration, in its own way, also brings a sense of
mission to its foreign policy. This war for civilization,
like so many before it, articulates compassion in
principle with cruelty in practice.

This articulation of two apparently antithetical
concepts is just one of the social uses of culture in today’s
world, but it is arguably the most important such use.

This would be agreed on by those who have borne the
brunt of crisis and conflict over recent years, and not
only in New York or Iraq. Paul Richards, Wendy James,
and Abdullahi Osman El-Tom provided some vital
perspectives on this. Dr El-Tom focused on the role
of local mediation institutions in Darfur, and the role
they may yet play in peace-making in the traumatized
region of Sudan. Paul Richards and Wendy James
considered new perspectives on the anthropology of
conflict generally. For Professor Richards, the concept
of effervescence, derived from the Durkheimian sociology
of religion is a more effective tool for the analysis of
contemporary warfare in Africa than the putatively
rigorous but ultimately intellectually impoverished
econometric models of African conflict proposed by
writers like Paul Collier. Wendy James, for her part,
considered the realities of ‘fieldwork under fire’. The
worst effects of the current world crisis are in those
areas of the world where crisis takes an immediate and
terrible form of violent assaults on the lives and persons
of human beings, and on their communities. Episodes
of violence such as these are, at best, difficult to study
by traditional anthropological methods. Therefore,
Professor James proposes ‘longitudinal’ methods, which
can complement the direct first-hand approaches of the
participant observer.

My concentration on these plenary papers reflects
my own current orientations in research and
teaching. There was, in the conference as a whole, an
array of diverse themes, topics, regions and intellectual
paradigms from which those in attendance could select.

The fact that this was the largest EASA conference in
the association’s history testifies to the health of the
association. The intellectual depth and diversity of the
workshops, panels and plenaries testifies to the health
of our discipline.

This was a conference that also attested to the
health of Maynooth’s department of anthropology, for
a number of reasons. This was the largest conference
ever held at Maynooth, and it was organized by a
department once described to me by one of its
founders as having been built ‘out of peasant cunning
and spit’. Those who have had a closer relation with
the anthropology department than I have over the
past seventeen years may argue that anthropology at
Maynooth ‘came of age’ quite some time ago. I believe,
however, that the success of the EASA 2010 conference
demonstrates that that ‘coming of age’ is indisputable.

(2) Fiona Murphy

EASA is Europe’s largest anthropology conference
and this year the Department of Anthropology in
NUI Maynooth had the enormous task of organizing
it. With over 1,300 delegates, the conference was the
biggest ever hosted on the NUIM campus. The central
thematic focus of this year’s conference was ‘Crisis and
Imagination,’ such a broad remit thus allowing a diverse
range of interesting and intellectually stimulating
workshops to take place. A general atmosphere of collegiality pervaded the numerous plenaries and workshops, many delivered with an efficacy generated in part by the trojan work of the Anthropology Department’s volunteers, led by Maynooth PhD student Anthony Kelly. While daytimes were replete with intellectual discussion, evenings were set aside for eating, chat, music and dancing. Entertainment highlights included the welcoming ceremony, the céilí, and the banquet – with Mantra, one of Maynooth’s newest premises, featuring large as a place to relinquish the frenetic pace of the day. Both the opening ceremony and the Banquet branded the charm of Maynooth’s beautiful old campus. As candles flickered, and the haunting sound of the uileann pipes filled the stone-crafted hallways of Pugin Hall where conference delegates sipped champagne and chatted, the tone of the week was firmly set; participants were not to be disappointed.

While difficult to reflect the vast array of workshops from such a large conference, I managed to attend quite a range of panels dealing with topics as divergent as hope, reconciliation, and the future, mobilities, religion, experience and temporality, migration, peace and conflict, material culture, and the AAI panel organized by Andrew Finlay and Helena Wulf, entitled ‘Re-imagining Irish Ethnography.’ Both Noel Salazar’s Mobilities panel and Finlay and Wulf’s AAI panel stood out as workshops dealing with topical and timely subjects, providing much needed stimulating and thought-provoking debate; some of which I hope will be continued beyond the conference platform. Lunch times too were infused with instruction, particularly for the post-grad and newly-qualified doctoral candidate. Having eaten with alacrity, I managed to attend both the lunchtime EASA publishing workshop led by EASA Book Series Editor, James Carrier, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation Grants workshop, led by Victoria Malkin. Both events were well attended by graduates and postdoctoral fellows, and provided a good broad overview of the competitive world of publishing and grant applications.

Many of the questions raised signaled the growing concern amongst anthropology graduates about an increasingly unhealthy jobs market. Plenaries were early morning affairs and thus poorly attended, but nonetheless provided an interesting stimulus to debate a range of issues from the anthropology of warfare and reconciliation to the anthropology of economic crises. Friday morning’s plenary organized by Drs Mark Maguire and Stuart McLean provided an important moment to showcase the work of young graduates from a number of universities across Europe. The Young Scholars Forum was one of the more stimulating sessions that I attended over the duration of the conference, with PhD student Federica Guglielmo’s work on reconciliation in Rwanda generating some heated debate on issues of witness and testimony in anthropological research, thus proving her work to be a laudable enterprise. The highlight of the conference, however, was Talal Asad’s opening keynote lecture entitled ‘Human Atrocities and Human Rights’. Speaking to a crowded lecture hall with video links to a number of smaller lecture theatres, Asad dealt with a dizzying array of issues anchored in an unpacking of the notion of sovereignty and human rights. The only disappointment to this invigorating talk was the lack of time at the end for any questions or responses. To conclude, then, large conferences with more than 1000 delegates can often be difficult to navigate, occasionally proving to be a large circus of confusion. This one, however, due to the hard work of the local organizing committee and NOMAD IT, proved an enormous success, so much so that someone even organized for the sun to shine all week long!

(3) AAI Panel at EASA ‘Re-imagining Irish Ethnography’
Andrew Finlay

Helena Wulf and I convened a panel on behalf of the Anthropological Association of Ireland entitled ‘Re-imagining Irish Ethnography’. Six papers were presented: Máiréad Nic Craith (University of Ulster), ‘Intercultural Memoirs and Irish Anthropology’; Helena Wulf (Stockholm University), ‘Re-imagining Ireland: Ethnographic Fictions by Contemporary Writers’; Ulrich Kockel (University of Ulster), ‘Toposophy: towards and Irish ethnology’; Johan Nilsson (Stockholm University), ‘New Drinkers, New Places’; Jennifer Way (University of North Texas), ‘Neither here nor there: the diasporic nation of Irelantis’; and Edward McDonald (Ethnosciences), ‘The Ethnographical Survey of Ireland and Imperial Science: an invisible genealogy in the history of anthropology and Irish ethnography’. The papers were each of a high quality, but they were on disparate topics, and the discussant, Virginia Dominguez, President of the American Anthropological Association, did a magnificent job in pulling the session together at the end.

‘The Value of Ethnographic Writing’ Writing Retreat, Sli na Bandé, Co Wicklow, June 1–4, 2010
Fiona Murphy

In June 2010, a group of ten doctoral and postdoctoral students from anthropology departments in Queen’s University Belfast and NUI Maynooth gathered in a small retreat centre in the verdant Wicklow hills to discuss the value of ethnographic writing in their academic pursuits. Both I and the co-organizer of the retreat (Keith Egan) intended this time together to be a space where our understanding of the potency of ethnographic imaginings, representations, and voice could enter into dialogue with the practicalities (much needed in PhD and early career circles) of academic writing, both for scholars and the broader public. Led by Professor Michael Jackson, prolific anthropologist
and fiction writer, the retreat was infused with a sense that ‘writing to do justice’ (Jackson, June 2010, pc) to the voices, stories and lives of one’s research participants should be foremost in our writing projects. Jackson also ensured that participants understood the connections between ethnographic writing and representation and the vagaries of emotion, cadence, and rhythm. Each day participants presented their own work – the fieldwork contexts were diverse: stolen generations in Australia, sex workers in Dublin, life on the Sino-Burmese border, pilgrimage in the West of Ireland, the creation of an ‘Irish quarter’ in Belfast, jazz musicians in Athens, HIV/AIDS clinics in South Africa, death rituals straddling the North/South border in Ireland, gender politics in children’s play in Dublin and language practices in rural Venezuela. As the retreat progressed, we arrived at a sense of how richly textured ethnographic content can unfold into a dialogue with what Jackson called in his opening introduction to the retreat ‘the sensory face of language’. How to engage the broader public by writing creatively and inspiring an understanding of complex worlds through ethnographic voice and story figured large in our many discussions. Given the dearth of public engagement with anthropological thinking here on the island of Ireland, these conversations encouraged a re-thinking of the value of ethnographic writing and its imprint on broader society amongst the retreat’s participants. The retreat was a success for many reasons, not least because in between structured sessions, participants ate meals and socialized together. Excursions to the beautiful Glendalough and the chic coastal town of Greystones allowed time to get to know one another, to fully assimilate the days discussions and debates and, finally, to cement friendships. The retreat, then, provided an all-too-temporary idyll from the challenges of everyday scholarly life. Departing, we agreed together as a group that it should mark the beginning not the end of extended discussion and collaboration on the value and potency of ethnographic writing here on the island of Ireland and further afield.

*Alternative Spiritualities, the New Age and New Religious Movements in Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Conference, NUI Maynooth, 30–31 October, 2009*

*Attracta Brownlee*

This conference, the first of its kind in Ireland, brought together academic research on New Religious Movements, the New Age and Alternative Spiritualities on the island of Ireland.

The conference papers covered a wide range of themes including Orientalism in Ireland, neo-Paganism, Celtic spirituality, alternative medicine and healing, feminism and the New Age, Evangelicalism, globalization and the psychological dimension of religious experience.

The conference commenced with an opening address by Professor Tom Inglis of UCD on *A Sociological Map of Religion in Contemporary Ireland*. He observed that the Irish are still reluctant to shop for new religions and that in the 2006 Census of Ireland 87% of the population still self-identified as Catholic. Professor Eileen Barker of the LSE gave a plenary lecture on *Cults, Sects and/or New Religions*. Carmen Kuhling’s plenary lecture was on *From the Parish Hall to the Shopping Mall: Consumption and Re-enchantment in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland*.

With over 40 speakers from three continents and disciplines such as sociology, computing, Irish studies, education, theology, history of art, folklore, psychology, human geography, ethnology, religious studies and anthropology represented it was a truly interdisciplinary affair.

It is impossible in the space provided to discuss every contribution to the conference or to do justice to the depth and quality of the papers presented. Therefore, a brief outline of just a small number of conference papers will be presented here. Laurence Cox and Maria Griffin charted the long history of Buddhism in Ireland. Ciara O’Connor explored the relationships between feminism and the New Age and noted the preponderance of women as New Age practitioners and consumers. Anne Mulhall looked at marketing spirituality in contemporary Ireland and used Lough Derg as a case study. Brian Bocking, in a very stimulating paper, made the case for Catholicism as a new religious movement. Catherine Maignant explored the Fellowship of Isis. Lyn Thomas focused on alternative spirituality and Catholicism as portrayed in the television programme, *The Monastery*. Jenny Butler discussed neo-Paganism while Courtney Roberts outlined the long history of astrology in Ireland. Oliver Scharbrodt charted the growth of the Islamic community on the island.

The attendant poster session explored a diversity of themes. Kerry Gallagher, for instance, looked at the role religion plays in the integration of Polish immigrants into Irish society. Ronan Foley explored therapeutic landscapes, ownership and spiritual health. Brigitte Veiz, in her poster presentation, examined rituals and circles in a neo-tribal, global subculture.

Laurence Cox and Maria Griffin organized a bus trip to the Hill of Tara and the Loughcrew Megalithic Cemetery which, despite the inclement weather, was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

*Attracta Brownlee*
A selection of the conference papers will be published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in early 2011.

**Anthropological Association of Ireland**

**News**

*Emma Heffernan*

**AAI AGM**

The AAI AGM was held on 8 May 2010 at the AAI conference in Trinity College Dublin. The full Executive Committee for 2010–2011, elected at the AGM, is as follows:

- Chair: Chandana Mathur
- Vice-Chair: Neil Jarman
- Secretary: Tom Strong
- Treasurer: Sheila Fitzgerald
- Membership Officer: Jaime Rollins McColgan
- Public Relations Officer: David Murphy
- Webmaster: Emma Heffernan
- Ordinary Members: Máiréad Nic Craith, Andrew Finlay, Séamas Ó Siocháin

**New AAI Website**

The AAI is in the process of launching its newly-designed website. Here you can find all the latest AAI news, news from members, conference calls as well as membership renewal etc. See http://www.anthropologyireland.org/ for more details.

**AAI Annual Postgraduate Essay Prize**

The AAI established an annual Postgraduate Essay Prize this year (2010). The winner will receive a cash prize of €100 and publication of their winning essay in the **IJA**. The Prize is open to postgraduate students studying anthropology or related disciplines, whose research that strengthens the anthropological tradition in Ireland. The 2010 prize went to NUI Maynooth student Svenja Gosen, for her essay 'Spoken, Not Written: Story-telling, Lament and Gossip as Performance Events' (published in this number of *IJA*).

The call for 2011 is now open. Submissions should be no longer than 4,000 words, be previously unpublished, include a short abstract, and should conform to the style guidelines of the *Irish Journal of Anthropology*. See: http://www.anthropologyireland.org/ijajournal3/contributors.htm. Submissions must be made electronically (in .doc or .pdf format) to AIAssayprize@gmail.com. The deadline for submission of essays is 14 March 2011. The prize will be awarded at the 2011 Annual General Meeting.

**WCAA Dinner**

*Chandana Mathur*

The World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) is a network of national and international associations that aims to promote worldwide communication and cooperation in anthropology. Shortly after the Anthropological Association of Ireland (AAI) sought and gained membership in the WCAA in 2010, we learnt that the Council was planning to hold its biennial meeting in Ireland in August 2010. As the local member association of the WCAA, we immediately became involved in the process of hosting the meeting, which eventually took place on 23–24 August 2010 at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. It was only the third face-to-face meeting of the Presidents/Chairs of anthropological associations, large and small, from around the world, since the founding of the WCAA in 2005. Nearly thirty delegates attended this successful and productive gathering, and the AAI was represented by its current Chair, Chandana Mathur.

We also arranged an evening where the WCAA delegates could meet members of the AAI Committee over dinner. The event took place at Headfort House (the home of Headfort School) in Kells, County Meath, which is thought to be one of the better surviving examples of the work of the noted Georgian architect Robert Adam. The evening included a short discussion by Dermot Dix of the social historical significance of Headfort House, and of the ‘big house’ in Ireland more generally, as symbols simultaneously of expropriation and heritage. The social nature of the occasion made for a unique opportunity to share knowledge of anthropological traditions and disciplinary solidarities with fellow-practitioners from a variety of world regions, and was greatly enjoyed by both the AAI and the WCAA members who attended.

**Awards / Funding**

**IRCHSS Post-Doctoral Fellowship 2009–2011**

Roínn an Bhéaloidis / Department of Folklore and Ethnology, University College Cork, is delighted to be hosting new post-doctoral fellow, Dr John Eastlake, with support from Roínn na Nua-Ghaeilge. Eastlake was recently awarded an IRCHSS Post-Doctoral Fellowship for 2009–2011 after completing his PhD in Irish Studies at the Centre for Irish Studies, National University of Ireland Galway. The ongoing project is entitled: ‘Jeremiah Curtin: Cross-cultural, Collaborative Textual Production of Irish and Native American Mythologies’. Ethnographer, folklorist, and ‘mythologist’, Jeremiah Curtin, made a vital contribution to the study of Irish popular culture at the end of the nineteenth century. This study will evaluate his Irish publications in comparison with his work on Native Americans, which will allow for a contextualized...
understanding of Curtin and his contributions to the development of Irish Studies.

Comórtas Liteartha 2010: Oireachtas na Gaeilge
Dr Stiofán Ó Cadhla, Head of Roinn an Bhéaloidis: Irish Cultural Studies, Folklore and Ethnology, has been awarded a prize for a work in prose in the 2010 Literary Competition of the annual Irish language cultural event Oireachtas na Gaeilge. The prize has been awarded to him for his latest publication entitled ‘The Honeysuckle Branch: Indigenous Knowledge and Arts’, due for publication soon by the leading publishers Cló IarChonnachta in Galway. The book, the author’s fifth, suggests that it is time to re-examine some of the key canonical understandings of what folklore actually is, or isn’t; what, and who, defined it and whether these definitions are useful either for communities or education. This is done through a number of diverse case studies ranging from past assessments of the provenance of Irish learning to the contemporary popular culture in the living Gaeltacht of the present. The author revisits the nineteenth-century case of Mayo-man Myles Joyce, tried, convicted (and hanged) in a language that he could neither understand nor speak, looks at the popular culture round of fair and festival as well as issues such as gender, urban legend, technology and contemporary country-and-western-style singing in the Irish language.

UK Research Excellence Framework 2014
In November 2010 Hastings Donnan was appointed to chair the Anthropology and Development Studies subpanel of the UK Research Excellence Framework 2014. The REF replaces the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and will award funding to Anthropology and Development Studies departments throughout the UK on the basis of the panel’s assessment of the quality of research submitted to the exercise.

BBC Documentary
Toni Maguire, an MA student at Queens, has recently contributed to a BBC documentary ‘Limbo Babies’. Her research which centres on Milltown Cemetery in Belfast, explores the marginalized burial in unblessed ground of unbaptized infants, suicides and other individuals who were considered collectively as the ‘dangerous dead’. The documentary was shown on BBC2 in November.

Recent Publications


Forthcoming:
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

Articles for consideration should be sent to the Editor or Associate Editor as follows:
Séamas Ó Síocháin, Editor, Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. seamas.osiochain@nuim.ie
Fiona Magowan, Associate Editor, School of History and Anthropology, The Queen's University Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, N. Ireland. f.magowan@qub.ac.uk

Books for review and completed reviews should be sent to the Reviews Editors:
Chandana Mathur, Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth. chandana.mathur@nuim.ie; or to Máiréad Nic Craith, Director, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, University of Ulster (Magee), Aberfoyle House, Northland Road, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 7JA. m.nicraith@ulster.ac.uk

Other material (conference and research reports, news, advertisements, letters etc.) should be sent to:
Emma Heffernan, c/o Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland. emma.ja.heffernan@nuim.ie

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

The following points should be observed:

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


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