

## *A Nation Once Again*

### *Towards an Epistemology of the Republican Imaginaire*

*And Ireland long a province be  
A nation once again*

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'A Nation Once Again Towards an Epistemology of the Republican *Imaginaire*', in *Republicanism in Ireland*, edited by Fearghal McGarry, University College Dublin Press, 2003, pages 145-166.

#### **5 words:**

Epistemology, Lacan, imaginary, republican, ideology

#### **Abstract:**

The epistemological structure of Irish republican ideology is examined through the theoretical perspective of Jacques Lacan. This paper extrapolates this position into a societal and group matrix. The Lacanian imaginary is taken here as a model which can encompass the epistemological structure of republicanism in particular as a form or sub-set of nationalism. I will explore the nature of Lacan's concept of the imaginary order before applying it to the construction of a republican idea of selfhood. I am aware that Lacan's theories are essentially based on the individual self, but would contend that there is theoretical justification in applying them to a more societal or group concept of identity. In Althusserian terms, society interpellates the next generation in its own image through socio-cultural and linguistic signifiers, and the epistemological structure of republican nationalism is suffused with such structures, and has successfully replicated itself in various individuals over a long period of time. Lacan's theories of the creation of the individual self through a form of reflection would certainly seem to have some place in such structures.

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Perhaps the first things that need to be addressed, given the title of this paper, are the terms 'republican' and 'imaginaire'. The former term would seem to be self evident, in that it generically describes a political system wherein power within a state is held by the people, through their representatives. It also

refers to a political system where there is a separation of power between the legislature and the judiciary. The two great republican examples are those of the American and French revolutions wherein a military overthrow of a political regime was accompanied by an intellectual and philosophical interrogation of notions of power and responsibility.

The genesis of the term ‘republicanism,’ in a specifically Irish context, can be traced to the period antedating 1798. Republicanism has remained a potent signifier in subsequent Irish politics, and is still relevant today in the form of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, Provisional Sinn Féin, the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA and the 32 County Sovereignty Committee. Ironically, the motto of the Provisionals, ‘*tiocfaidh ár lá*’, translates as ‘our day will come’, and this is the exact phrase that is used by Davin in his conversation with Stephen in Chapter Five of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. As Stephen runs through the history of failed rebellions of the past, and states his refusal to join any such movement, Davin replies: they ‘died for their ideals, Stevie....Our day will come yet, believe me’.<sup>1</sup> This verbal parallelism foregrounds the thematic and imagistic dimensions of Republican ideology as we have come to know it. Literary tropes are suavisely used in order to reinforce a motivated connection between a particular group, a whole nation and notions of temporal closure: ‘a nation *once* again’.

The imaginaire, on the other hand, is a term specific to the theory of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. It is seen as the first order of development of the human ego, before progressing into the area of what he calls the symbolic, namely the register of language, symbols and agreed systems of meaning. In a ground-breaking essay entitled ‘The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I’,<sup>2</sup> Lacan sees one of the seminal stages of this ‘construct’ as the defining of the self in terms of a reflection. The self is defined in terms of misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of an image of itself in the mirror, a process which he terms the ‘mirror stage.’ While initially seen as a moment which can be placed at a particular time in a

child's life, between six and eighteen months, Lacan would later see this as a structural relationship vital to the formation of the ego.

This paper extrapolates this position into a societal and group matrix. The Lacanian imaginary is taken here as a model which can encompass the epistemological structure of republicanism in particular as a form or sub-set of nationalism. I will explore the nature of Lacan's concept of the imaginary order before applying it to the construction of a republican idea of selfhood. I am aware that Lacan's theories are essentially based on the individual self, but would contend that there is theoretical justification in applying them to a more societal or group concept of identity. In Althusserian terms, society interpellates the next generation in its own image through socio-cultural and linguistic signifiers, and the epistemological structure of republican nationalism is suffused with such structures, and has successfully replicated itself in various individuals over a long period of time. Lacan's theories of the creation of the individual self through a form of reflection would certainly seem to have some place in such structures.

In this essay, Lacan pictures a child becoming aware of its own image in a mirror, and goes on to discuss the 'jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child' as it aspires to the totality of that image:<sup>3</sup>

This...would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject. This form would have to be called the Ideal-I.<sup>4</sup>

The important point to note about this identification is that the image is ideal, it orients the 'agency of the ego' in a 'fictional direction'; it is something towards which the ego may aspire, but which it can never attain. It is also an identification that has no place for anything else outside of its scopical field (the field where the visual dimension of desire is enacted). Lacan makes the point that the human ego is created as

a result of identifying with one's own specular image, so what seems to be individual, internal and unique to the individual is, in fact, the result of identification with a two-dimensional representation of that individual. The 'ideal-I' is both a fiction, and a fixed model which can never be more fully developed.

Samuel Weber comments astutely on one particular aspect of this theory. He notes that a human being is able, at a much earlier stage: 'to perceive the unity of an image than it is to produce this unity in its own body'.<sup>5</sup> The difficulty here is that the image is both that of the self, and also a form of alterity, in that it is clearly *not* the self. The recognition of the self is actually misrecognition, but one which exerts a powerful hold on the ego, as it provides the comforting sense of wholeness which the ego desires. This prefigures an allied sense of alienation from the image, as feelings of narcissistic aggressivity arise in the tension between the specular image and the real body. In other words, through the agency of desire, the human child sees an image that is more coherent than the actuality of its own body and proceeds to identify with it. This is then taken as an image of our lifelong need to be better than we are. So, we see ourselves, ideally, as thinner, cleverer, more successful, more popular than we actually are.

Interestingly, Weber situates such conflicts in terms of temporality. He makes the point that for Lacan, the future anterior is of crucial importance in his discussion of the construction of identity, as it is through time that such notions are developed. Lacan himself stressed the importance of the future anterior in his own discussion on language and time:

I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object. What is realised in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.<sup>6</sup>

Lacan, Weber notes, locates the time of the subject as an ‘inconclusive futurity of what will-always-already-have-been...a “time” which can never be entirely remembered, since it will never have fully taken place’.<sup>7</sup> In other words, in the mirror stage, the identification of the subject with the imago<sup>8</sup> sets up a desire for imaginary wholeness in the future, a future towards which the subject strives, but which it will never reach. Hence, Lacan’s vision of the imago as an ‘alienating destination,’ which is reached by facing towards a ‘fictional direction’,<sup>9</sup> wherein the specular image ‘traps the subject in an illusory ideal of completeness’.<sup>10</sup> This ongoing process of captation and misrecognition is a performative through which the ego is created and defined. For Lacan, narcissistic aggressivity is the result of a desire that can never be fulfilled. Before desire can be mediated through language and the symbolic order, it: ‘exists solely in the single plane of the imaginary relation of the specular stage, projected, alienated in the other’.<sup>11</sup>

What we see in Lacan’s investigation of the mirror stage, then, is that he radically transformed a psychological experiment into a ‘theory of the imaginary organisation of the human subject’.<sup>12</sup> This stress on the imaginary as a structural ordering of human relationships is important in our discussion of nationalism. It begins in the mirror stage, but continues into all aspects of our lives. Elizabeth Grosz provides a comprehensive overview of the imaginary:

Imaginary relations are thus two-person relations, where the self sees itself reflected in the other. This dual imaginary relation...although structurally necessary, is an ultimately stifling and unproductive relation. The dual relationship between mother and child is a dyad [two individuals regarded as a pair], trapping both participants within a mutually defining

structure. Each strives to have the other, and ultimately, to *be* the other in a vertiginous spiral from one term or identity to the other.<sup>13</sup>

Here, we see the symphysis between the Lacanian imaginary and the epistemology of nationalism in general and republicanism in particular. At a basic level, this reflective captation of the subject by an image is what constitutes the imaginary order. Imaginary relationships are predominated by ambivalent emotions; a desire to become the image in the mirror, and, on realising the futility of this aim, a resultant aggressivity towards both the image, and anything which intervenes with, or blocks, the desired identification with that image. The image, as well as being a source of desire, is also, because it is fictional as well as external and can never be fully internalised, a source of hatred. The displacement of this hatred on all that is deemed to be outside this binary specular relationship is a possible explanation of the violence that seems to be inherent in practically all enunciations of nationalist ideology throughout history. The primary imaginary relationship for the ego is with the mother. Child and mother are seen as a unity, a biologically centred reaction as, of course, child and mother were a single entity during pregnancy

I will contend that this captation of the self by a reflected, two-dimensional image of that self, is the *sine qua non* of the epistemology of nationalism and Republicanism. An image of selfhood is set up as an ideal, an ideal which has a dual interaction with the temporal structures of history. The mirror in question here is one of language and time. This moment of ideal fusion between self and image is often postulated as a mythical alpha point, an ur-beginning, from which all ideas of the race or Volk derive. In an Irish republican context, for example, 1798 or 1916,<sup>14</sup> are such moments which seem to transcend time; from the unionist perspective, 1691, the date of the Battle of the Boyne, would be an analogous defining moment. Kevin Whelan makes the point that Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic nationalism also appealed to selective notions of history, ‘using an idealised past to destroy the decadent present’.<sup>15</sup>

However, such moments of fusion are also postulated as a goal towards which the ethnic<sup>16</sup> should aim at some undefined time in the future. As we will see, the discourse of nationalism abounds with variations of these two temporal imperatives, as peoples look to regain a lost prelapsarian past, or else to come into their kingdom in some golden futurity. In contemporary political discussion, this can be seen from a particular choice of descriptive locution.

Republican spokespeople constantly refer to ‘the Dublin government’ and ‘the London government’ in their comments. These terms have become a commonplace in the media, with both Irish and British broadcasters using them as norms. However, some conceptual unpacking will reveal that these terms are part of the predefined mirror image of the future that is central to republican epistemology. The term ‘Dublin government’ is used in preference to the term ‘Irish government’ because it is seen as an illegitimate state function which does not have jurisdiction over the ‘6 Occupied Counties’ of Northern Ireland. The 32 County Sovereignty Committee makes this point explicit by declaring ‘null and void any documents which usurp the sovereignty of our nation as declared in the 1919 Declaration of Independence’.<sup>17</sup> In this context, a two-dimensional image of Irishness from the past is seen as controlling all possible future developments of Irishness in the future, a temporal schemata which is very much in line with Lacan’s conception of the imaginary. Similarly, the ‘London government’ lacks legitimacy in the imaginary scheme precisely because it is the occupying force in question in Northern Ireland, and will only be deemed ‘British’ when this occupation, a temporal hiccup, is ended and ‘Ireland long a province’ can become ‘a nation once again.’ Like the images of the reflected ‘ideal-I’, the ‘Ideal-Ireland’ is reified, or fixed, allowing for no deviation from the temporal path set out in the imaginary mindset. Only then will there be a legitimate ‘Irish’ government. The fact that Republican ideology is suffused with personifications of Ireland as a mother figure is surely, in this context, no accident. The

use of racial, religious and linguistic tropes that are rooted in the individual and group unconscious, gives nationalist ideology a strong hold on the minds of its audience.

In his study, 'The Island of Ireland: a psychological contribution to political psychology,' Ernest Jones analyses the dominant image of a female personification of Ireland in terms of how the signifier 'Ireland' has become particularly associated with an 'unconscious maternal complex' (Gallagher, 1988: 1).<sup>18</sup> Jones made the point that for island peoples, the associations of their native land with the ideas of 'woman, virgin, mother and womb' are very strong and he went on to add that such phantasies tend to fuse 'in the central complex of the womb of a virgin mother'.<sup>19</sup>

The many different names that have been given to a personified Ireland – Erin, Cathleen Ni Houlihan, Banba, Mother Ireland, the Shan Van Vocht, the Poor Old Woman<sup>20</sup> – tend to demonstrate the accuracy of Jones's point, and I would largely agree with Cormac Gallagher's extrapolation from Jones's thesis that, in the case of Ireland, there is a strong connection between this personification and the 'repressed primary idea of Mother, the closest of all immediate blood relatives, to which powerful unconscious affective interests remain attached'.<sup>21</sup> What this means, in effect, is that the political has become mapped onto the familial, with the hugely affective and emotional aspects of family relationships mapped onto political structures. In *Defence of the Nation*, the 'Newsletter of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee', for example, we find the following quotation in a section entitled 'Where We Stand', which enunciates that organisations's credo: 'the committee seeks to achieve broad unity among the republican family on the single issue of sovereignty'.<sup>22</sup> Here, the strong political and ideological differences among different strands of republicanism have been transposed into an internal family squabble, a rhetorical device which serves to naturalise republican ideology into a familial norm, with Ireland personified as a mother. Here the elements of choice, argument, debate and ideology are subsumed into a naturalized familial dialectic.



Gallagher's study points us in the direction of an answer to this complicated question. Developing his point about the connection between the idea of Ireland and that of a mother figure, he points out that if nationalists unconsciously connect their actions with the 'primary idea' of the mother: 'their thoughts and actions will have such a compulsive force that no amount of reasoning or concessions will modify them'.<sup>23</sup> It is here, I would contend, that we approach the main epistemological dimension of the imaginaire. Lacan has identified desire as the most important human attribute, from the perspective of the development of the human ego. I will argue that desire is precisely the compulsive force, unconsciously driven, and oriented towards primary images and ideas, which permeates and originates nationalist ideology. By an analysis of Lacan's paradigms of the mirror stage and the imaginary order, we can see, at an individual level, the effects and dimensions of this desire on identity; and we can then go on to develop this in terms of the group identity as predicated in the nationalist imaginaire. In the song *A Nation Once Again*, this transposition from individual to group growth is framed within this imaginary notion of teleological nationhood. The song begins when 'boyhood's filer was in my blood', and proceeds through a process of political and religious development until manhood ('and so I grew from boy to man') is defined in terms of participation in the creation of the once and future nation.

In Lacan's account of the development of the ego, human identity is seen as emerging from the crossing of a frontier, from what he terms the 'imaginary order' (the dyadic world of mother and child), into that of the 'symbolic order,' which is concerned with symbolic systems, language being the main one (though both stages continue to coexist within the individual afterwards). The imaginary is defined as the 'world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined'.<sup>24</sup> Lacan's notion of the imaginary order is one wherein the human being becomes attached to an image, and attempts to find a wholeness and unity of meaning through a form of imitation or mimicry of this image.

It is the idea of the ego as being fascinated, and ultimately fixated, by its image that has such importance for our discussion of the modality of knowledge that is operative in, and through, nationalism. Lacan seems to see such mimicry as constitutive of our identity-generating process as humans. ‘the field of phantasies and images,’ with its prototype being the ‘infant before the mirror, fascinated with his image’,<sup>25</sup> while Gary Leonard, in his Lacanian study of James Joyce’s *Dubliners*, sees it in terms of a ‘period of time in which individuals mistake their mirror images for themselves, that is, as proof that they are unified and autonomous beings’.<sup>26</sup> As Lacan himself puts it, the imaginary is, at its core, an erotic relationship: ‘all seizing of the other in an image in a relationship of erotic captivation, occurs by way of the narcissistic relation’.<sup>27</sup> Here, he is pointing towards his theory of the importance of the image, or reflection, in the process of identificatory development of the ego, which he defines as a form of construct of self and image.

The important point to note about this identification is that the image is ideal, it orients the ‘agency of the ego’ in a ‘fictional direction,’ it is something towards which the ego may aspire, but which it can never attain. It is also an identification that has no place for anything else outside of its scopical field. Lacan makes the point that the human ego is created as a result of identifying with one’s own specular image, so what seems to be individual, internal and unique to the individual is, in fact, the result of an identification with a two-dimensional representation of that individual. Lacan’s point here is that the ego is constituted: ‘by an identification with another whole object, an imaginary projection, an idealisation (“Ideal-I”) which does not match the child’s feebleness.’ It is this ‘alienated relationship of the self to its own image’ that Lacan terms the imaginary.<sup>28</sup>

Nationalist narratives very often read as coherent and teleological, leading cohesively from past to future. In this sense, Lacan's notion of the future anterior is important as history, rather than being a record of events of the past, becomes a temporal mirror through which the nationalist imago is seen and reinforced: 'the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming'.<sup>29</sup> The wholeness of the reflected image of the self becomes the goal of the ego. In the narrative of history, this wholeness becomes the telos or goal. In a search for such wholeness and unity, as Bhabha notes, the subject assumes a 'discrete image which allows it to postulate a series of equivalences, samenesses, identities, between the objects of the surrounding world',<sup>30</sup> and this brings us to the third area of delimitation. The driving force behind these identities is what Bowie terms: 'the false fixities of the imaginary order'.<sup>31</sup> The imaginary order attempts to hypostasise (to fix in terms of underlying substance) and hypertrophy (to enlarge in terms of one specific dimension) the specular image of itself, and to block any development of this position of fixity: it is 'tirelessly intent upon freezing a subjective process that cannot be frozen'.<sup>32</sup> This prioritisation of the static image, and the resultant imperative towards fixity in the viewing subject, necessitates relationships in nationalist discourse which are unchanging and foundational. In an attempt to remove itself from 'the flux of becoming',<sup>33</sup> the nationalist imaginaire insists on identifications that are as permanent as it can find, with the most obvious of these being the identification between a people and a place, between a language and a land, as we saw in the motivated description of the 'Dublin' as opposed to the 'Irish' government.

The lococentric<sup>34</sup> relationship between a people and a place, the archetypal nationalistic trope, is by its nature, imaginary because it is fictive. Stressing a monological and temporal essentialism, it cannot cope with aspects of real society which do not correspond to the ideal reflected image. The practices of cultural nationalism all serve to create this mirror, this delusory dyad in which nothing else exists except this specular definition of selfhood. The aggressivity that is a concomitant of narcissism, the child

expelling that which upsets the specular symmetry, is an inherent aspect of the imaginary, and also, I would suggest, an inherent aspect of nationalism. All that is 'other' in terms of the imaginary selfhood must be expelled. Etymologically, the term 'territory' derives both from terra (earth) and terrere (to frighten) which leads, as Bhabha has astutely pointed out, to territorium: 'a place from which people are frightened off'.<sup>35</sup> If the people-place relationship is to enact the dyadic nature of the nationalist imaginary, then anything outside that dyadic scopic field must be elided.

In the establishment of the ego, as we have seen, the desire for some form of identity is paramount. From infancy, we seek to be desired and loved by the 'other,' a term which, as Mark Bracher notes, alters as we develop. Initially, at the beginning of life, this designation refers to the 'mother, then both parents, later one's peers, and finally any number of bodies or figures of authority, including God, Society and nature'.<sup>36</sup> In many ways, it is the growth and development of our notion of the other that structures the type of identity which we develop. If the other is allowed to remain static, if it becomes hypostasised in an imaginary dyad, then this attenuation of the other will result in a concomitant attenuation of the development of the self. These master signifiers also form some of the points de capiton (anchoring points) which Lacan sees as necessary for normal interaction within discourse.

For example, a specific narrative of the past can also be used as a binding factor in this imaginary relationship, as witnessed by the rhetoric of the imaginary that is to be found in the *Green Book*, the training manual of the Provisional IRA. Here, the imaginary identification of a whole people with a minority movement is enacted through the creation of a temporal master signifier which anchors a particular reading of Irish history:

Commitment to the Republican Movement is the firm belief that its struggle both military and political is morally justified, that war is morally justified and that the Army is the direct

representatives [*sic*] of the 1918 Dáil Éireann parliament, and that as such they are the legal and lawful government of the Irish Republic, which has the moral right to pass laws for, and claim jurisdiction over, the whole geographical fragment of Ireland...and all of its people regardless of creed or loyalty.<sup>37</sup>

This is the discourse of nationalism par excellence, embodying its imaginary epistemology. Time is frozen in a specular identification with the ‘Dáil of 1918,’ a term which is a *point de capiton* in Irish republican narrative.<sup>38</sup> All subsequent elections and democratic expressions of will are null and void; they do not correspond to the totalising image and must therefore be deemed invalid. All territory and people, ‘regardless of loyalty or creed,’ are claimed as part of the nationalist imaginary; the chilling question of exactly what is to be done with those whose loyalty is not to the Dáil of 1918 being left unasked and unanswered. Here, the master signifier sets limits to the development of the other in the discourse of Irish nationalism. The development of which Bracher spoke is stunted. Instead, the passive narcissistic desire (the desire to be the object of the other’s love, idealisation or recognition)<sup>39</sup> of the addressees of this document (IRA members), is fixed on an other which defines itself in terms of the election in 1918. This is also the position of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee, whose whole *raison d’être* is predicated on this particular point in time: ‘This committee solely stands to uphold the Declaration of Independence as proclaimed by Dáil Éireann on January 21<sup>st</sup> 1919’.<sup>40</sup>

Another master signifier in the above declaration is the term ‘belief.’ Here there is to be no rational debate, or attempt to win over opponents through force of argument. Instead, all that is necessary is that one should believe in the moral right of the IRA to carry out its political and military actions. As Renan has noted, nationality has a sentimental side to it: ‘it is both soul and body at once; a *Zollverein* is not a *patrie*’.<sup>41</sup> In terms of the song *A Nation Once Again*, this pattern of the language of belief and religion is a central trope. The chain of religious imagery, which I cite seriatim, functions as a narrative spine within the song:

And then I prayed I might yet see  
Our fetters rent in twain....  
....Outshine that solemn starlight  
It seemed to watch above my head  
In forum, field and fane  
Its angel voice sang round my bed....  
....It whispered too that freedoms ark  
And service high and holy....  
.....For, freedom comes from God's right hand  
And needs a godly train  
and righteous men must make our land  
A nation once again....

Belief in the nation as an almost sacral manifestation is a central tenet. If one believes in the nation, in the cause, then all further action is legitimated by this belief – the epistemological structure operative here is that of a dyad, the ‘I’ of the song believes in the nation that is to come, and that nation, in turn, validates and legitimates the growth of the self in the song from ‘boyhood’ to adulthood: ‘as I grew from boy to man’.

Here, then, is the epistemology of the republican imaginaire: a misrecognition, a *méconnaissance*, in which self and image cohere to the exclusion of all others. According to Lacan, the ego is constructed as the child struggles to achieve the specular image of wholeness that is observed in the mirror; an image:

that is both accurate (since it is an inverted reflection, the presence of light rays emanating from the child: the image as icon); as well as delusory (since the image prefigures a unity and mastery that the child still lacks).<sup>42</sup>

For Lacan, this specular relationship initiates the imaginary order where the self is dominated by an image of the self, and it seeks definition through reflected relations with this image. The nationalistic

ethnie is forever gazing towards a specular image that is fictional, optative (as in expressing a wish or desire) and of necessity, a source of aggressive impulses when it cannot be internalised. In this specular dyad, there is no place for a developing, growing 'other,' as outlined by Bracher. Instead, the specular image is fixed in a two-dimensional realm, and all three-dimensional changes which blur the purity of this image are alien, and must be purged.

This imaginary reflection is the driving force behind all nationalistic discursive formulations. Thus, the deistic skeptical Enlightenment thinker, Wolfe Tone, is captated<sup>43</sup> by the nationalist imaginary into a quasi-Catholic martyr, who died for his people in a salvific act of redemption. For the IRA, the ebb and flow of the signifying chain of Irish history is punctuated by a temporal master signifier – the 1918 Dáil Éireann parliament – which renders insignificant and meaningless all prior and subsequent electoral contests and democratic processes. When these refuse to validate the imaginary nationalistic vision of Ireland embodied in the 1918 Dáil, they are simply elided from the historical narrative structure. As Lacan tellingly put it: 'history is not the past. History is the past in so far as it is historicized in the present',<sup>44</sup> and the ideological and emotive elements which govern this historicisation are those of the nationalist *imaginaire*.

Hence, the image of a subject being captated by a reflection, which is both idealised and at the same time frozen, is a paradigm for the identificatory processes of nationalism. The captation of the child by his or her reflection is an analogue of the captation of a people by their nationalist mirror-image. The dual nature of the scopic field between an *ethnie* and the projection of its identity is central to nationalism. That there is no third party in this scopic bijection is another cogent factor. The identification is mutually fulfilling: there is no room for anything or anyone else. Such is the mindset of the IRA declaration which sees itself as having: 'the moral right to pass laws for, and claim jurisdiction over, the whole

geographical fragment of Ireland.’ Here we see a fusion of territory with a notion of religious warrant, as an essentially political movement expresses itself in terms that are profoundly religious in tenor: ‘belief...moral right.’ The specular imaginary deals with identities that exist outside of its scopic field in an acquisitive way: the IRA here encompasses ‘all of its [Ireland’s] people regardless of creed or loyalty’.<sup>45</sup> The choice for any other form of identity existing outside the nationalist imaginary is simple: leave the territory, or else be absorbed into the nationalist mentalité.

Lacan has made the point that: ‘[d]esidero is the Freudian cogito’,<sup>46</sup> and has stressed the primacy of desire as a motive force in the construction of our humanity. Such desire is central to the creation of the nationalist and republican imaginaire. If there is to be a core definition of nationalism qua nationalism then surely it must focus on the mode of creation of the ethnic group, or on the methods used in imagining the identity of the community in question, or on the rhetorical and suasive strategies used in terms of creating nationalistic sentiment. The modality of these creations or inventions, what Anderson terms ‘the style in which they are imagined’,<sup>47</sup> is crucial if we are to come to any understanding of how nationalism utters and fashions itself. To quote Bennington: at ‘the origin of the nation, we find a story of the nation’s origin’,<sup>48</sup> and there can be no doubting that this reflexive form of narrative is an important constituent of the epistemology of nationalism. Narratives create the myths of nationalism, and these are both protean and similar in that they feature a telling to the self of the self, a telling which, in the process, is performative in that it is creative of that self, at both conscious and unconscious levels.

Bennington’s focus on narrative, I think, allows us to overcome the antinomies already observed in terms of the problematics of defining nationalism. Every culture defines itself through a process of narrative imagination, a re-telling of stories about its own past which reaffirms the ritual unities of the culture in question. For example, Irish people remember the 1916 Easter rebellion as a nodal or central point in the



political and cultural reaffirmation of Irishness per se. Around this period, and for some time before, the major political parties, or their precursors, were founded, and the Gaelic, Celtic, Irish Language and Irish Literary revivals were set in motion. The Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association were set up, and the gradual adequation between the nationalist movement, both political and cultural, and the Catholic church came into being. This period of colonial upheaval – with the almost standard attendant processes of nationalist consciousness-raising, independence movement, armed rebellion, war of independence/liberation and an ensuing civil war – became part of the process of a national imaginary, defining Irishness as it emerged from the colonial shadow of Britain. This whole period, or more correctly, the narrative enculturation of this period, became a nodal point, or *point de capiton* from which particular notions of Irishness were traced.

Such a process is necessary for cultural definition, but there is always a danger that such culturally sanctioned categories may become reified into some form of epistemological orthodoxy which forms a hypostasised centre of identity. As Richard Kearney has noted, such a process of ‘ideological recollection of sacred foundational acts often serves to integrate and legitimate a social order’.<sup>49</sup> However, he goes on to cite a warning note sounded by Paul Ricoeur, who points out that such a process of reaffirmation can be perverted ‘into a mystificatory discourse which serves to uncritically vindicate or glorify the established political powers.’ Ricoeur’s point is essentially that in such instances the symbols of a community become fixed and fetishised; they serve as lies’.<sup>50</sup> Ricoeur has noted that imagination can function as two opposite poles. At one pole is the confusion of myth with reality brought about by a ‘non-critical consciousness’ which conflates the two into a societal ‘given.’ At the other end of the axis, where ‘critical distance is fully conscious of itself,’ ‘imagination is the very instrument of the critique of reality,’ because it enables ‘consciousness to posit something at a distance from the real and thus produce the alterity at the very heart of existence’ (Kearney, 1998: 147).<sup>51</sup>

I would argue that the narrative structure of nationalism is clearly allied to Ricoeur's initial pole, that of the confusion of myth with reality through a 'non-critical consciousness.' Such a narrative structure functions mainly at an unconscious level in culture and society, creating structural effects in terms of ethnic and racial stereotypes. Logic, reason and critical thinking allow us to discriminate between the value of stories as fictions, and their constative, or truth-telling status. However, by functioning at an unconscious level, through formal and informal apparatuses of communication, narratives and myths create a powerful drive, through which nationalist ideology can be disseminated. They create an imaginary selfhood which is reflected back into society as an ideal form of identity.

The stock example of such a process is Nazi Germany in the 1930s, but there are multifarious examples to be found of the unconscious effect of narratives that are uncritically equated with constative discourse. In an Irish context,<sup>52</sup> perhaps the locus classicus of this type of nationalist narrative operating at a pre-critical, unconscious level is Patrick Pearse's rewriting of the history of the United Irish rebellion of 1798. Pearse was a central figure in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, a sub-grouping within the Irish Volunteers, who organised a rebellion against the British Government in 1916.<sup>53</sup> In his efforts to create a narrative of nationalist resistance to British rule in Ireland, Pearse specifically set out to 'remember' the 1798 rebellion in highly specific terms.

The 1798 rebellion was led by Theobald Wolfe Tone.<sup>54</sup> Tone, a product of the French Enlightenment, had little time for religion, and saw the aim of his organisation, The United Irishmen, as the creation of a country where the terms Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter would be subsumed under the common name of Irishman.<sup>55</sup> Tone himself, as Marianne Elliott has observed, was a deist, 'who disliked institutionalised religion and sectarianism of any hue.' More importantly in the present context, she

makes the point that, based on his writings, he had ‘no time whatsoever for the romantic Gaelicism that has become part of Irish nationalism’.<sup>56</sup> Hence, if Pearse wished to create a seamless narrative wherein Tone was a historical nationalist avatar, and a Pearsean precursor, he would seem to have some factual historical difficulties with which to contend.

His response to these difficulties is a classic *exemplum* of what I have termed nationalist epistemology. In an oration given at the grave of Tone, in Bodenstown, County Kildare, in 1913, Pearse enfolded Tone in the following narrative structure:

We have come to one of the holiest places in Ireland; holier even than the place where Patrick sleeps in Down.<sup>57</sup> Patrick brought us life, but this man died for us. He was the greatest of Irish Nationalists.... We have come to renew our adherence to the faith of Tone: to express once more our full acceptance of the gospel of Irish Nationalism which he was the first to formulate in worldly terms. This man’s soul was a burning flame, so ardent, so generous, so pure, that to come into communion with it is to come unto a new baptism, into a new regeneration and cleansing.<sup>58</sup>

Here there is no attempt to commemorate the historical Wolfe Tone, the ‘child of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment’ whose hope was that Enlightenment rationality would supplant what he regarded as ‘superstitious beliefs’.<sup>59</sup> Instead, Tone is suavisely captated into Pearse’s own vision of Irish history. It is not accidental that Anderson has noted a ‘strong affinity’ between nationalist and religious imaginings.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, he has made the valid point that the dawn of the age of nationalism coincides with the dusk of religious thought,<sup>61</sup> as both tend to work with some form of ‘sacred text.’ The notion of a sacred text is important here, as the response to such a text is not that of close reading, or of some form of rational critical engagement; rather is it an acceptance, a belief, and a ready acknowledgement of the ‘truth’ that is revealed by this text.

His frame of reference is directed at an audience whose unconscious is saturated with Roman Catholic religiosity. The rhetorical device polyptoton<sup>62</sup> is used to cement the adequation of Tone with Saint Patrick in the opening line. This adequation transforms Tone from an historical figure, subject to the veridical discourse of history, into a mythico-religious one, comparable to the legendary Saint Patrick, about whom comparatively little is known, apart from his spectacular religious success. The connection between the two, the hinge upon which the whole rhetorical structure turns, is based on this lococentric comparison in terms of the holiness of a specific place. This connection is then developed in the contradiction that while Patrick ‘brought us life,’ a phrase which clearly implies religious life, Tone ‘died for us.’ By now, the adequation has done its work, and the unconscious religious background fills in any blanks in the narrative. In Catholic teaching, the notion of sacrifice, the one for the many, is a central tenet. The adequation between Tone and Saint Patrick is now elided and a stronger connection is set up. Given the religious frame of reference (reinforced by the lexical field of the paragraph: ‘faith’; ‘gospel’; ‘soul’; ‘communion’; ‘baptism’; ‘regeneration’; ‘cleansing’), the notion of someone dying ‘for us’ implies an adequation between Tone and Christ, and at a broader level, between nationalism and religion.

For Pearse, and we must keep in mind his notion of Tone as the first to formulate in worldly terms the gospel of Irish nationalism, there is something quasi-sacred about the nation. Régis Debray, in an attempt to study the constituent factors of the historical nation-state, has traced, in nationalism, the process whereby ‘life itself is rendered untouchable or sacred. This sacred character constitutes the real national question’.<sup>63</sup> The teleology of Pearse’s rhetorical transformation of the people into their own Messiah is to render them ‘immortal and impassable.’ Nationalistic selfhood creates a people, a Volk, which transcends time and death. The religious overtones of this message, allied to strong unconscious influences, combine to create a linguistic and suasive dimension to the epistemology of nationalism

which can never be fully examined in any analysis which is not grounded in literary, linguistic, and psychoanalytic techniques. This, I would argue, is why the already discussed definitions will always fail to analyse the workings and imperatives of nationalism. It is only by looking at its modality of expression, and its epistemological status, that we can come to clearer perceptions about its nature.

Let us observe Pearse on the steps of the General Post Office in the centre of Dublin on Easter Monday 1916, when he inscribes his act of rebellion against the British under the rubric of a nationalistic, rhetorical reading of Irish history:

Irishmen and Irishwomen: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.<sup>64</sup>

Through the use of a rhetorical structure largely underpinned by transcendental imagery, Pearse avoids the discourse of reason or of political debate, and instead appeals to the unconscious signification of the powerful images of ‘God,’ the ‘dead generations’ and the notion of Ireland as a mother, calling her children to her flag.

The phantasy invoked here is telling. As Easthope has noted, phantasy turns ideas into narratives,<sup>65</sup> and the proclamation of a provisional government, while encapsulating a certain social doctrine: (universal suffrage, and guarantees of ‘religious and civil liberty, equal rites and equal opportunities to all its citizens’),<sup>66</sup> is largely premised on a narrative structure which creates and defines selfhood in its own terms. Keeping in mind his notion of the people as their own messiah, it is noteworthy that the proclamation concludes by stressing the sacrificial, and ultimately salvific, nature of this struggle. He concludes:

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline, and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.<sup>67</sup>

The unconscious, pre-critical element that I maintain is a central tenet of the epistemology of nationalism, is evident here through close reading. The proclamation seems to come to a logical conclusion. Pearse's prayer is that the Irish nation must prove itself worthy of the 'august destiny' to which it is called, and this seems to make the act of rebellion almost preordained. Of course, on looking back to the beginning of the proclamation, we find that it is 'through us,'<sup>68</sup> namely the splinter group within the Irish Volunteers, who defied their own command structure in order to undertake the Rising, that the personified notion of Ireland initially summoned 'her children to her flag' and struck 'for her freedom.'<sup>69</sup> Consequently, the seemingly impersonal 'august destiny' is, in fact, part of a suasive rhetorical device which exemplifies the circularity and reflexivity of nationalist epistemology. The 'we' who are called into service as the children of a personified Ireland, are the very 'we' who have personified that notion of Ireland in the first place. In terms of an imaginary scene, which is altered in order to fulfil a wish for the subject, this whole exercise can be described as a *locus classicus* of phantasy, a phantasy which is constitutive in terms of defining the national subjectivity in question. This, in turn, produces an alteration from the communal and socially structured relationships of politics into the natural and organic relationships of the family: it is not a case of politically inspired revolutionaries deciding to fight for social or ideological aims, instead, it is children coming to the defence of their mother, an act which in itself requires neither explanation nor warrant.

The suasive and rhetorical effect of this process, when repeated, is to allow a linguistic performative to achieve a constative function. Here, myth and reality are fused in a nationalist imaginaire, and the mutual

reflection of one in the other combines to create a narrative structure which is impervious to the conventions of political and veridical discourse. This narrative structure is also constitutive of what we might term nationalist identity, given that it reflects a particular type of subjectivity that is deemed to be Irish. No matter how much evidence of Wolfe Tone's attitude to religion is instantiated in biographies, he is still seen as part of a Catholic, Gaelic, nationalist pantheon, as narrated by Pearse, and it is to his grave in Bodenstown that the Provisional IRA have trooped in pilgrimage every year. The fact that their sectarian murder campaign over the past thirty years was the antithesis of everything that Tone stood for, is not seen as any impediment to this process. What Pearse has been attempting is a narrative which will create trans-rational, unconscious, ethnic bonds between the past and the present. The facts of history are not part of such a discourse; they are only of value in selected instances, and if they reinforce the agenda of the narrative: they are creative of an identification, they are creative of an 'us.'

However, such valorisation or validation is actually defined relationally inasmuch as essentialist characteristics are actually predicated on a difference from otherness. For there to be an 'us,' then there must be a 'them' who are, by definition different from 'us.' This definition of the self promotes a desire for racial, linguistic, ideological, territorial and cultural purity which, at one end of the spectrum, validates a desire for socio-cultural identification and self-definition, and at the other, posits a desire to differentiate one's own group from others, and by extension, a related desire to keep other groupings outside one's native territory, be that territory actual or psychic, and be that desire conscious or unconscious.

The Ulster loyalist, for example, believes that he or she is British, and that Ulster (comprising six counties, since partition in 1922), as a political entity, is stable and viable. The Ulster republican, on the other hand, refuses to recognise the state of Northern Ireland, and instead sees Ulster (nine counties, part

of the original quinary provincial divisions of Ireland), as part of the whole island of Ireland. The leader of the Orange march at Drumcree, during the summer of 1996, believed that even as these marchers defied the legal ban imposed by Sir Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the RUC (the Royal Ulster Constabulary), he was obeying some higher notion of ‘Britishness,’ and was able to invoke the Queen in support of the actions of his followers and himself: ‘we are the Queen’s subjects, who wish to walk the Queen’s highway.’<sup>70</sup>

If the Queen of England is the titular head of the British legislature, then, by extension, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is acting in her interests and at her behest through the British parliament at Westminster. From a logical or rational perspective, his enforcement of the law regarding the prohibition of parades from marching in a particular locality is validated by British legal and governmental writ. To claim that by breaking the Queen’s law, one is, in some way demonstrating a higher form of loyalty to that Queen, is patently absurd. But of course, as we have seen in the case of Pearse, nationalist narrative is performative as opposed to constative, and this claim of a higher loyalty validates the Orange Order’s sense of itself as some form of latter-day chosen people, who are proclaiming a ‘*true*’ notion of ‘Britishness’ that only *they* can understand. Just as Pearse saw Tone as formulating the ‘gospel of Irish Nationalism in worldly terms,’ so the Orange Order sees itself as revealing the ‘truth’ about notions of loyalism and Britishness in a similar manner.

The militant Republicans who bombed Omagh in the Summer of 1998, similarly believed that their action would in some way facilitate the coming into being of a united Ireland. While claiming that it is non-sectarian, the IRA, in all its manifestations, has pursued overtly sectarian policies, by targeting people and premises purely on the basis that they are Protestant, and by extension, unionist and loyalist in political persuasion.<sup>71</sup> Both traditions blend religion and politics, seeing their own creed as true and the



other as heretical, and both traditions express their respective identities through a matrix of cultural signifiers: murals, graffiti, songs and icons, a matrix which is constitutive of powerful identificatory unconscious phantasies.<sup>72</sup>

If this type of politically motivated violence is to be removed from an Irish context, there is a need for a clear understanding of the nature of republicanism in a specifically Irish context. I would argue that Irish republicanism is very different from that of France or the United States in that it is a more essentialist political formulation, with none of the philosophical enquiry that underpinned the French and American revolutions. In terms of its mode of knowledge, of how it sees itself and its place in contemporary culture, Irish republicanism exemplifies all of the tenets of the Lacanian imaginaire, and only by progressing towards a more fluid definition of selfhood and alterity will it ever be able to acknowledge change and diversity as possible benefits to a changing dialectic. With the advent of Sinn Fein in the political spectrum of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, an advent which offers de facto recognition of the legitimacy of both states, and by definition of the position of the Ulster Unionist population, some measure of progress has been achieved. If that is to be maintained the idea of a nationhood that is temporally bound in the past and future anterior must give way to a more fluid concept, a concept that is enshrined in a different epistemology of Irishness, as enunciated by Daniel O'Connell: 'No man has the right to set a boundary to the onward march of a nation. No man has the right to say: 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.' This perspective on Irishness is one which the republican needs to embrace if it is ever to develop beyond the republican imaginaire.

## **A NATION ONCE AGAIN**

### **I**

When boyhoods fire was in my blood  
I read of ancient freemen  
For Greece and Rome who bravely stood

Three hundred men and three men  
And then I prayed I might yet see  
Our fetters rent in twain  
And Ireland long a province be  
A nation once again

### CHORUS

A nation once again  
A nation once again  
And Ireland long a province be  
A nation once again

### II

And from that time through wildest woe  
That hope has shone a far light  
Nor could loves brightest summer glow  
Outshine that solemn starlight  
It seemed to watch above my head  
In forum, field and fane  
Its angel voice sang round my bed  
A nation once again

### III

It whispered too that freedoms ark  
And service high and holy  
Would be profaned by feelings dark  
And passions vain or lowly  
For, freedom comes from Gods right hand  
And needs a godly train  
And righteous men must make our land  
A nation once again

### IV

So, as I grew from boy to man  
I bent me to that bidding  
My spirit of each selfish plan  
And cruel passion ridding  
For, thus I hoped some day to aid  
Oh, can such hope be vain

When my dear country shall be made  
A nation once again.

## ENDNOTES

- [1] J.Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce, James (1993) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Edited by R.B. Kershner. (Boston [First published 1916], p.177.
- [2] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits - A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), pp. 1-7.
- [3] The term ‘specular image’ is specific to the work of Jacques Lacan and refers to the image that the child sees of itself in the mirror. By definition, it will be a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional object
- [4] Lacan, *Écrits*, p.2.
- [5] Samuel Weber, *Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan’s Dislocation of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Michael Levine (Cambridge, 1991), p.12.
- [6] Lacan, *Écrits*, p.86.
- [7] Weber, *Return to Freud*, p.9.
- [8] This term, introduced into psychoanalysis by Jung, is related to the notion of the image, but refers to the affective domain as well in that it stresses the subjectivity of the image by including feelings.
- [9] Lacan, *Écrits*, p.2.
- [10] Madan Sarup, *Jacques Lacan* (Hemel Hempsted, 1992), p.66.
- [11] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I: Freud’s Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. Jacques-Alain Miller, (ed.). Translated by John Forrester (New York, 1988), p.170.
- [12] Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*. Translated by Barbara Bray (Cambridge, 1997), p.143.
- [13] Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* (London, 1990), pp.46-7.
- [14] 1798 was the year in which the United Irishmen and the Defenders rebelled against British rule, under the leadership of Wolfe Tone. 1916 was the date of the Easter Rising, a rebellion carried out by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan (the Women’s Army), under the leadership of Patrick Pearse and James Connolly in Easter week of that year.
- [15] Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830*. Critical Conditions Series (Cork, 1996), p.55.
- [16] See John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*; Anthony D Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* and Fredrik Barth, *Introduction in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Smith looks at the intrinsic meaning given to cultural practices, myths and symbols by ethnic communities which he terms *ethnies*. In both definitions, the *ethnie* is seen as an organic community, wherein social, cultural, religious and ideological practices cohere in a synthesis which promotes self-definition.
- [17] *Defence of the Nation* (1998) ‘Newsletter of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee’, volume 1, number 3, p.2.
- [18] Cormac Gallagher makes the point that this essay was first read at a particularly important time in Irish history. Jones’s paper was delivered to the British Psychological Society on June 21st 1922, as the Irish War of Independence was gradually being transformed into the Civil War. ‘“Ireland, Mother Ireland”: an essay in psychoanalytic symbolism’, *The Letter*, Issue 12 Spring 1998, pp.1-14.
- [19] Ernest Jones, ‘The Island of Ireland: a psychological contribution to political psychology’, in *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis* (London, 1964), p.196.
- [20] Eugene O’Brien, *The Question of Irish Identity in the Writings of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce* (Lampeter, 1998), p.221.
- [21] Gallagher, *Mother Ireland*, pp.4-5.
- [22] *Defence of the Nation*, 1998, volume 1, number 3, p.2.
- [23] Gallagher, *Mother Ireland*, pp.8-9.

- [24] Alan Sheridan, Translator's note to Jacques Lacan's *Écrits - A Selection*. (London, 1977), p.ix.
- [25] Bice Benvenuto, and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan* (London, 1986), p.81.
- [26] Gary M. Leonard, *Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective* (New York, 1983), p.188.
- [27] Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, 1955-1956*. Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.). Translated by Russell Grigg (London, 1993), pp.92-3.
- [28] Sarup, *Lacan*, p.66.
- [29] Lacan, *Écrits*, p.86.
- [30] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994), p.77.
- [31] Malcolm Bowie, *Lacan* (London, 1991), p.99.
- [32] Bowie, *Lacan*, p.25.
- [33] Bowie, *Lacan*, p.92.
- [34] This term is a coinage drawing on Jacques Derrida's notion of logocentrism as an epistemology centred on a particular notion of language and reason. It attempts to give expression to a notion of identity that is focused in the centrality of very specific view of place.
- [35] Bhabha cites *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, volume II, 215 for this definition. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, pp.94-5.
- [36] Mark Bracher, *Lacan, Discourse and Social Change: A Psychoanalytic Cultural Criticism* (Ithaca, 1993), p.24.
- [37] Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Féin from Armed Struggle to Peace Talks* (Dublin, 1993), p.350.
- [38] This term refers to certain anchoring points that are necessary for meaning to be generated, and these are what Lacan terms *points de capiton*, the 'minimal number of fundamental points of insertion between the signifier and the signified for a human being to be called normal' (Lacan *Seminar, Book 3*, pp.268-9). These points are where the 'signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of signification' (Lacan, *Écrits*, p.303).
- [39] Bracher, *Lacan*, p.20.
- [40] *Defence of the Nation*: 'Newsletter of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee', 1998, volume 1, number 4.
- [41] In his translator's notes, Martin Thom explains the term *Zollverein* as the German term for a customs union.
- [42] Grosz, *Lacan*, p.39.
- [43] The term 'captate' is a neologism coined by the French psychoanalysts Édouard Pichon and Odile Codet. It derives from the French verb '*capter*' and has the double sense 'capture' and 'captivate': of the image as a captivating, seductive force as well as one which is capable of capturing and imprisoning the subject in a one-dimensional line of thought or ideology.
- [44] Lacan, *Seminar, Book 1*, p.12.
- [45] O'Brien, *IRA*, p.350.
- [46] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, 1977), p.154.
- [47] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p.6.
- [48] Geoffrey Bennington, 'Postal Politics and the Institution of the Nation', in Homi K Bhabha (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London, 1990), p.121.
- [49] Richard Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-modern*. Edinburgh. 1998), p.166.
- [50] Paul Ricoeur, *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Edited by C. Regan and D. Stewart (Boston, 1973), p.29.
- [51] Kearney, *Poetics of Imagining*, p.147. I have taken this quote from Richard Kearney's translation of 'L'imagination dans le discours et dans l'action.' I can think of no better introduction to the work of Ricoeur than Kearney's *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*. Two of Kearney's other books, *Poetics of Modernity* and *Poetics of Imagination* contain excellent discussions of Ricoeur's work, as well as contextual placements of that work in terms of contemporary critical debate.
- [52] Here, I would cite the *caveat* mentioned by Benedict Anderson in the acknowledgements to *Imagined Communities*, where he notes that his own academic training, specialisation in Southeast Asia, accounts for

‘some of the book’s biases and choices of examples’ (Anderson 1991, ix). My own academic specialisation is in the area of Irish Studies, so this will, similarly, account for many of my own choices of examples, as well as for some of the biases in the book.

- [53] Perhaps the best available biography of Pearse is by Ruth Dudley Edwards, and is entitled *The Triumph of Failure*.
- [54] Marianne Elliott’s *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence*, is an excellent biography of Tone, and the monumental *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, compiled by his son William T. W. Tone, and edited by Thomas Bartlett, has been reissued by Lilliput Press.
- [55] O’Brien, *Irish Identity*, p.66.
- [56] Marianne Elliot, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven, 1989), p.1.
- [57] This reference is to Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.
- [58] Patrick Pearse, *Collected Works of Padraic H. Pearse: Political Writings and Speeches*. 5 volumes (Dublin, 1917-22), volume 2, p.58.
- [59] Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Ancestral Voices: Religion and Nationalism in Ireland* (Dublin, 1994), p.100.
- [60] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.10.
- [61] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.11.
- [62] The repetition of a word with varying grammatical inflections.
- [63] Régis Debray, ‘Marxism and the National Question’. *New left review*, 105 (September-October), 1977, pp.25-41, p.26.
- [64] Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (Dublin, 1990), p.280.
- [65] Anthony Easthope, *Poetry and Phantasy* (Cambridge, 1989), p.11.
- [66] Dudley Edwards, *Triumph of Failure*, p.281.
- [67] Dudley Edwards, *Triumph of Failure*, p.281.
- [68] It is possible that this construction, ‘through us,’ is a conscious or unconscious homage to the Great Doxology for the Mass Liturgy: ‘through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever.’
- [69] For a comprehensive bibliography of the 1916 Rising, and issues associated with it, see Dudley Edwards, 363-369.
- [70] This exchange was recorded on the BBC1 news on July 12th, 1996.