studies in rhetoric+culture

tropological thought and action

Essays on the poetics of imagination

edited by Marko Živković, Jamin Pelkey, and James W. Fernandez

TROPOLOGICAL THOUGHT AND ACTION:Essays on the Poetics of Imagination
Edited by Marko Živković, Jamin Pelkey and James W. Fernandez
Berghahn Press 2022

CHAPTER 8

SÍ TEANGA NA MUINTIRE A SHLÁNÓS AN MHUINTIR

Ó CADHAIN, RHETORIC, AND IMMANENCE

Steve Coleman

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the rhetoric of Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1906–70), an Irish-language writer and activist. Ó Cadhain developed a few key tropes in Irish-language expression—"dead," "live," and "clay"—to reveal a series of analogies that he used to interrogate the views and policies of the Irish state and its cultural, intellectual, and political representatives. His writing and oratory drew its power from its use of these key figures to effect a reversal of perspective in terms of what we see as "living" and "dead" in Irish social, cultural, and political life. *Cré* ("clay") functioned as a key trope for Ó Cadhain, standing for sociality itself—the language and social life of people, especially the Western, Irish-speaking lower classes. "Clay" was also the soil they are formed by, soil that is largely man-made in many communities where Irish is spoken.

I suggest that, like our bodies and the clay they return to, tropes have this quality because they are made of the same stuff as ourselves. Ó Cadhain's poetics point to a radical immanence within human sociality, and I argue that this is the stance from which his interventions gain their power.

THE *BÉALOIDEAS* LECTURE

Dublin, February 1950. We are in the company of Cumann na Scribhneoirí (The Writers' Society), who have asked Ó Cadhain to speak on the topic of "folklore." Ó Cadhain: a native speaker of Irish from a poor rural Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) area. A republican, IRA member, detained during World War II in the Curragh internment camp. Author of a novel, *Cré na Cille* (The graveyard clay), radical in form, scandalous in content. It has been serialized in a national newspaper, the *Irish Press*, but otherwise is not yet published.

He is here to mess with your head. He begins by asserting that he himself was "squeezed out" of the world of folklore, from a community where folklore was the only form of learning available to most of his neighbors. He describes how as a child he used to listen to his elderly grandfather telling hero-tales to a neighbor to pass the time of day. The two old men would argue on the accuracy of the telling, until the neighbor was silenced with this proverb:

> *Nuair a bhíos clann na gaisce ag inseacht scéil,*
> *Bíodh clann na gcailleach i sost a mbéil*
>
> When the sons of valor are telling stories,
> let the sons of hags be silent (Ó Cadhain 1990: 130; translation in Ó Giolláin, 2000: 151)[1]

Here, "folklore" is fodder for old men's endless pedantic arguments. Folklore is trash, leftover things from obsolescent life, like the school copybook in which the eight-year-old Ó Cadhain tried to write out Fenian tales. Ó Cadhain has just described to us finding it on a trip home and,

out of a kind of dread, being compelled to read his own juvenile writing, staring at it intently before throwing it into the fire, "putting it out of its torments forever" (1990: 129).

The copybook spooks Ó Cadhain as something undead that needs to be destroyed. But what about that proverb: its perfect form as a poetic couplet—in his grandfather's mouth, a thumping put-down and closer of discussion. Its powerful assertion that some are born to tell, others merely to listen. "*Clann na gaisce ag inseacht scéil . . .*" *Gaisce*: feats of valor. The hero (*gaiscíoch*) whom the teller gives voice to, and who in turn gives voice and authority to the teller.

If you insist on thinking about folklore in terms of something like "culture," something "out there" in some sort of abstract social universe, or even worse, as *representations* of something (tradition, beliefs, old ways of speaking?), think about this: It animates us as we animate it. Its life becomes ours and vice versa. Transubstantiation: the living Host emerges from our mouths. Reanimated, it walks the earth.

We are all made of the same stuff as this "folklore." Ó Cadhain calls it "clay," that which we come out of and return to. Ó Cadhain wants us to know that we are badly underestimating both how dead and how alive this stuff is, this "clay." We need to be punched up a bit, and these tropes, *BEO* and *MARBH*, are his right and left hooks to the head. ALIVE! DEAD! Do we even know which is which?

He wants us to see folklore as existing on a plane of life and death rather than merely at a place in a historical continuum:

> Dead: "The sword of light I got from the king's young son, long ago life's bile made a rusty stump of it in my hand."

Alive: “And yet, whenever I read certain things in *Béaloideas* (the national folklore journal) don’t I feel the sword back in my grip.”

Dead: “That sword will never cut off another head.”

And the typical characters of folklore, Clann na Bardscoloige, Cab ar Dosan, Darby Beag Produm, Cailin an Staicin Eorna, Connla, “won’t get the respect they deserve from the faint sarcastic smile of commerce these days . . . they can take their rest with the gods of the race, with history’s cancelled checks” (Ó Cadhain 1990: 130–131).

MÁIRTÍN Ó CADHAIN AS NATION-BUILDER

It will not be long until the police arrive to eject the rioting audience (Ó Cathasaigh 2002: 127). Time enough to learn a bit about the speaker and his reasons for delivering such an unsettling oration in such distinguished company. Máirtín Ó Cadhain was born in 1905 in the Connemara Gaeltacht, the Irish-speaking community in Co. Galway. He was a native speaker of Irish, which became the official national language of the newly independent Irish state (in 1937; the Irish Free State was declared in 1921). As a young man he collected folklore in his own community and worked as a schoolteacher, from 1926 to 1936. After moving to Dublin, he was hired as a lexicographer and translator of government documents (1947–56) and was involved with official committees for coining Irish-language terminology. He became a highly regarded novelist, short story writer, and essayist and ended his life on the faculty of Trinity College, Dublin, where he was a lecturer in Irish from 1956 to 1969 and Professor of Irish from 1969 to 1970.

At first glance, Ó Cadhain's life seems like a typical biography of a nation-building intellectual of the type described by Benedict Anderson (1983), helping the Irish state assemble its own national language and recover its common heritage. But the Irish state achieved neither the political nor the linguistic unity characteristic of many European nation-states. Ireland's consolidation as an imagined community was effected mainly through the medium of English.

Although Ó Cadhain became a national intellectual and member of the educated elite, he retained the language, values, and perspectives of his origins and felt acutely the contradictions engendered by a postcolonial state that based its sense of national identity on the language and culture of some of its most marginal areas. The Gaeltacht areas remain among the poorest in Ireland, and their identification with the Irish language strengthens the associations between language, culture, and class:

> Class distinctions are more prominent in the Gaeltacht than anywhere else in Ireland. Marx, Engels, and Lenin would get a fine proof [there] of their theory that it is the upper classes and the merchant classes—the capitalists—who are the first to abandon the wisdom or culture of the people. [To them,] poverty and Irish were the same thing. This class hatred was ingrained in me long before I ever read a word of James Connolly or of Das Kapital. (Ó Cadhain 1987: 327)

Ó Cadhain spent most of his life in active opposition to the Irish state and its policies. He joined the Irish Republican Army as a teenager, fighting on the losing side of the civil war of 1922 and 1923. In the 1930s he led a campaign for land, fishing rights, and linguistic rights for

poor rural Irish speakers. His lifelong membership in the IRA led to his dismissal (in 1936) from his job as a schoolteacher. Along with many other leftists and republicans, he was interned in the Curragh prison camp—"Ireland's Siberia, surely the coldest place in Ireland" (Ó Cadhain 1969: 7)—for most of World War II, a place he compared to Dostoevsky's House of the Dead. This experience transformed Ó Cadhain's life and gave him the experience that formed the basis of his career as a writer: "I spent the equivalent of five years in three or four prisons but most of it was in the prison camp in the Curragh of Kildare. I don't wish to say much about it although it is relevant to these issues. I learned as much about humanity [there] as I would if I'd lived a hundred years. Knowledge of humanity, of life, is necessary for a writer" (26).

The internees managed to turn the camp into a kind of university where Ó Cadhain taught himself and others several European languages, reading through the Russian and French classics (Ó Cadhain 1969, 1973). Over the course of his life, his politics expanded from republicanism to the Irish-language revival to socialism (Ó Tuathail 1999). In a 1969 speech criticizing the Irish-language movement, Ó Cadhain (1987:327) wrote,

> It is the duty of Irish-speakers to be socialists. Irish-speakers in the Gaeltacht are the most oppressed and impoverished class of our people in Ireland. To me, it is the same thing to save that class, the Irish-speaking community, and to save the Irish language [itself]. The only way to achieve this is through the Reconquest of Ireland—to give ownership of Ireland and its wealth back to the Irish people.

An “underground politician,” Ó Cadhain frequently intervened in public occasions to embarrass the anglophone state into honoring its nominal commitments to the Irish language (Mac Aonghusa 1978; Ó Glaisne 1971). The current occasion at Cumann na Scribhneoirí is best considered in this light.

Folklore is not history, Ó Cadhain is telling us, because the social classes who nurtured it were not the active makers of history; rather, folklore itself was “the great actor, for thousands of years of barbarism and civilization, in this phantasmagoria [*dráma doilfeach*] that eternally plays in the human mind.” This deep layer of everyday drama was “more interesting to us in many ways than any well-defined educated arrangement [of thought]” but “it crept off the stage [of history] in a single day” (Ó Cadhain 1990: 131). Later he will claim that it was changes in the social organization of work, especially the collective work of turf-cutting, that banished this world of the imagination (167). Yet he will also claim that the world of folklore lives eternally in the human imagination, that “new” folklore is constantly made. These arguments are reminiscent of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s later claims, both that what he considered undomesticated, “wild thought” is part of universal human nature and that, in the types of society we think of as “primitive,” this “wild thought” is constitutive of society itself (Lévi-Strauss 2021). By claiming both the universality of folklore and its historical and imaginative rootedness in particular social conditions and in the deep past, Ó Cadhain positions himself to make a powerful critique of the stance taken by professional folklorists, Celtic scholars, philologists, dialect scholars, and antiquarians. He claims that these scholars unerringly identify, value, and abstract precisely those aspects of culture that are “dead”—that have lost their function in social life and the collective imagination. By valuing the most archaic, unreflective, and localized cultural forms, these

scholars deliberately cut themselves off from the great sweep of change that flows through human society and culture. Anything, as long as it is archaic, fragmentary, and not actively an object of thought or reflection by a conscious human subject, is of value to the scholar, although he quotes them as saying that the true value of any bit of folklore cannot be established—such judgments are indefinitely deferred as more and more millions of pages of text are collected and archived. Worse still, these scholars identify this archived material with culture and civilization itself, while constituting it as things (texts) that by design exclude precisely the likes of Ó Cadhain himself and his audience of Irish-speaking writers. In prose that boils with rage, Ó Cadhain (1990: 138–139) turns the scholars' own words against them—their methodological dictates, their disciplinary self-celebrations, and their predictions of the always-imminent demise of "the old ways" and of the Irish language itself—a demise that will only increase the scholars' own value as the only true custodians of the past:

> There are no skills except the old skills. There is no learning but the learning of old people without learning. . . . The importance of the Gaeltacht isn't that one can learn Irish there. Nor that Irish could spread from there to the rest of the country. Little chance. It's there that "the old-ways" are practiced. It's there above all where there is folklore. The Gaeltacht is only a branch of folklore.

Ó Cadhain contrasts a dynamic view of the Gaeltacht and its cultural forms as a site for transformation with the conservative view that sees the Gaeltacht only as a wellspring of tradition. The collection of Gaeltacht speech as "folklore" paradoxically removes it to new forms

and contexts where its community life ceases; for the bourgeoisie, reified folklore becomes "a string of shiny baubles from the trinket-shop of the gods" (Ó Cadhain 1990: 140). Taking a metaphor from his novel *Cré na Cille*, Ó Cadhain referred to archived folklore as "dead clay." From the point of view of folklore scholarship, it is exactly the effects of poverty, illiteracy, and colonization that make Ireland an ideal site for folklore collection. Quoting folklorist Caoimhín Ó Danachair (1987: 138), "Ireland is in an exceptional position among the countries of Western Europe, for here the normal course of education and social development was interrupted for centuries." Ó Cadhain (1990: 138) adds that "this is not cause for joy for most of us!"

Likewise with Robin Flower's lament for the effects of literacy—"Twenty years ago [a particular storyteller's] mind was alive with antique memories, and in him and men like him, an old stable world endured still as it had endured for centuries. But now the fatal drip of the printer's ink has obliterated the agelong pattern" (quoted in Ó Cadhain 1990: 138)—and Séamas Ó Duilearga's praise for a schoolteacher who "spoke Irish from his youth, and only Irish, so that he had every turn of talk and old saying, and he was completely free of the discipline of books [*smacht na leabhair*]"—to which Ó Cadhain adds, "strange praise indeed for a schoolmaster!" (138). Folklore as the absolute, retrojected past (McLean 2004) was continually re-presented as the foundation and warrant for the modern state, underwriting the state's modernity (Ó Giolláin 1996, 2000). The folkloric discipline of the archival state constituted itself as a project of rescue and cultural retrieval, founded on the romantic notion that authentic culture belongs to a forever-receding past. Ó Cadhain mercilessly interrogated this discourse of cultural "death," revealing the hidden affinities between romantic antimodernism and the "homogenous empty time" (Benjamin 1969: 263) of the new Irish state.

As a native Irish speaker from one of the most folklorized communities in Ireland, Ó Cadhain had a unique perspective on the pragmatics of textuality at both "folk" and national levels. He pointed out that both the state and local tradition-bearers assumed that their role was that of the faithful transmitter of "texts" for future generations. The state saw itself as engaged in a gigantic archival/rescue program, as the repository and final interpretant of a vanishing language and a set of cultural texts. As the case of Ó Cadhain's grandfather shows us, the right to recount traditional tales was always restricted and jealously guarded in local communities; from the local point of view, the state had now arrogated to itself the locally defined role of authorized teller of tales.

Symptomatic of their inadvertent role as authorized tradition-bearers, folklorists did little to encourage local tradition-bearers to actively pass on their skills in new environments, such as the school system. School was seen as the domain of literacy, and as we have seen, literacy was seen as poisonous to (officially) "authentic" folklore.

Insisting that "genuine" folklore is exclusively oral in nature led scholars such as Ó Duilearga to dismiss the written traditions of Ireland. Thus, discussing the manuscript tradition, which he claims died out at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ó Duilearga writes, "These poor tattered copybooks mark the end of a continuous literary tradition; they are the last link in the long chain of Gaelic literature" (quoted in Ó Cadhain 1990: 151). Ó Cadhain objects that he had a handwritten manuscript that was made in 1930 and that songs, prayers, and even newly composed poetry are still written out to send to American relations. His main objection to Ó Duilearga's statements, however, is that his image of a dying manuscript tradition and an absolute break with the past ignores the reality of the Irish writing of the Gaelic Revival, already underway in the period Ó Duilearga speaks of:

> Before the "*tattered copybooks*" or the "*last links of Gaelic literature*" came to a halt, wasn't the school of the [Gaelic] Revival—an tAthair Peadar [Ó Laoghaire], [Pádraig] Pearse, [Pádraig] Ó Conaire—under way? Isn't Irish-language literature growing more than it has for 150 years? Séamas Ó Duilearga gets a great taste out of talking about "last links." (Ó Cadhain 1990: 152)[2]

Throughout his lecture Ó Cadhain is careful to point out that Irish folklore and linguistic scholarship constitutes its authority in part on the basis of the vanishingness and/or obscurity of its object of study. As Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs (2003: 16), observe, creating and maintaining "intertextual gaps" is the key to this process:

> There will inevitably be an intertextual gap between the source text, however conceived, and the [scholarly] text-artifact. Most importantly, the source text is conceived as oral, collectively shaped by the traditionalizing process, premodern in form and provenance, while the text artifact is written, individually rendered, and presented in a printed book, a quintessentially modern venue. And it is precisely in the space of hybridity defined by these contrastive qualities that the politics of authenticity—one of the key tropes of modernity—are contested.

Folklorists' and linguists' avoidance of standard orthography is a case in point, where scholars seek to emphasize the gap between oral culture and their own scholarly output, but at the same

time to attempt to minimize it through what Ó Cadhain (1990: 147) would consider to render their texts phonetically true to their sources:

> Scholars and collectors are not more numerous than orthographic systems. And of course, they love that; it is their aspiration. Anyone who wants a scholarly reputation or a reputation in the Irish language will do the same. [He] is a person without a genealogy without it. It will exaggerate the differences between the dialects and make them more permanent. It is a solace to the native speaker who didn't sleep a wink last night worrying that his own Irish would be betrayed in the morning. It is a solace to the professor who got his chair from the dialect and place-lore of Tóin le Gaoith [Arse-to-the-Wind, a common place-name]. It is a solace to the scholar who is creating a [professorial] chair for himself before Tóin le Gaoith slips out of arse-lore [*tóinseanchas*] forever."

Thus the words of Irish speakers, both as writers and as folkloric informants, were to be committed to written text as examples of "dialect." Ó Cadhain (1990: 147) pointed out that in effect, "the only 'Irish writers' are the English-speakers. The Irish-language writers are 'idiomatic Munster writers' or 'colloquial Connemara writers' or 'racy Rosses' writers.'" The state's efforts to lovingly preserve its Irish-language heritage had the unforeseen effect of making English the locus not only of "national literature" but of linguistic convergence, standardization, and state-building. English was the language of the future, Irish the language of the past.

Obsessed with death and the passing of old ways, Ó Cadhain tells us, folklore scholars' attention is continually misdirected. Thus Ó Duilearga, saying that when the currently living old-timers in the Gaeltacht pass away, it will mean "the end of the Middle Ages in Western Europe," and after quoting several similarly elegiac passages from these scholars Ó Cadhain (1990: 153) reads us a passage from a news story in the 21 January 1950 issue of the *Sunday Independent*:

> Penniless, footsore and hungry, a 17 1/2 year old boy from the Galway Gaeltacht wandered into the Lancashire town of Wigan one night recently. . . . The boy spoke very little English. So the official in charge rang up a member of the Council, who is a native Irish speaker, and requested him to call at the office to act as interpreter.

Then he comments on "the end of the Middle Ages in Wigan, in South Boston, in the Bowery. . . . Have these longers for the Middle Ages ever opened their sweet little mouths in order to maintain these remnants of the Middle Ages as a community? They were prudent in their day. They grabbed a leprechaun and never took their eyes off it" (1990: 153). Here, he refers to the popular superstition that if one catches a leprechaun, one must not take one's eyes off of it lest it escape. Folklore scholars' fixation on the old and passing elements of culture effectively blinds them to the reality of the people and communities who produce it. This fixation amounts to a fetish whereby the life and spirit of the Gaeltacht is seen to adhere not in the people themselves, or even their own active creativity and imagination, but rather in the decontextualized products of the folklore collection process. Thus, quoting critic and translator Arland Ussher, Ó Cadhain comments that "the Middle Ages are still destined for a long life":

> In those circumstances [the decline and death of the Irish language, which Ussher claimed was imminent], why oh why is not an "oral library" founded in the capital, an Aeolian cave of voices, where the student could turn up in the catalogue the dialect and subject of his choice, and be handed the appropriate phonograph records—with a printed translation—bottles, as it were, preserving for a more leisured posterity the flavour and "body" of the old indigenous speech? (1990: 153–154)

Ó Cadhain then quotes folklorist Seán Ó Súilleabháin: "If the Irish language dies we will have collections from and recordings of the stories of the storytellers so that the people who come after us can understand the life of those who came before them" (154). And his voice rises at this point:

> Death! Death! Death!
>
> This is the sin that is being cursed to God, the Delargyan lamentation, the Medieval murmuring that is sucking the very marrow of hope from our race. All riches and gain are gone, going, or will soon go. There won't be the least ember left and if there is, it won't be worth noticing. (154)

What follows is an astonishing statement that transforms the sovereignty myth that underlay the precolonial Gaelic political order, in which the king is married to a goddess of sovereignty who represents both the land and the people of Ireland:

> If Irish is dead she is dead and ten million more pages of folklore will not bring back for our posterity any glimmer of the life it lacks. If Irish is dead our future generations will be as proud of this "*past of a dead civilization*"—Seán Ó Súilleabháin's wax cylinders—as a bride who finds the corpse of her husband's first wife in her marriage bed. (154)

Ó Cadhain then suggests that we draw a circle on a map of central Dublin, inside of which would be "the administration, directly or indirectly, of the race" (1990: 154)—the Irish Folklore Commission, the universities and museums, and the Institute for Advanced Studies (with its "Indo-European Sahibs" [155]). Within it we can find stored up everyone who is important and everything that is dead in Irish culture, including his grandfather and "myself and my little pile of Medieval clay": "This narrow circle is Newgrange: the earthly paradise of the Ordinary Public: The Burial-Ground of the Irish Language: The Chief-Cemetery of Ireland: The Dead Clay" (154–155).

What is missing here, for Ó Cahdain? Why is this stuff "dead?" Why call it "clay?" We have seen how Ó Cadhain seems to attribute life and power to cultural elements themselves insofar as they are "alive" and also that these materials can, to some extent, be reanimated. We have seen how certain scholarly approaches, which Ó Cadhain (1990: 175) typifies as "the point of view of the folklorist" (*dearcadh an bhealoideasa*), seem to focus on, or even impose or foreground, the "dead" aspects of culture.[3] And we have met with Ó Cadhain's impassioned plea for the Irish state to recognize living persons—working to preserve people and their communities rather than

abstracted? collected?

their ~~attracted~~ and processed cultural texts. We have encountered his plea, similar to that made much later by Johannes Fabian (1983), to recognize the coevality of these people rather than seeing them as representatives of an ever-retreating past. His "clay" trope focuses on the immanence—the livingness and indeed the inseparability of persons, their cultural imaginations, and their cultural products—of their talk and texts. Cultural forms that the scholars have "saved" —collected, archived, etc.—lack this livingness, this connection to the lives of actual people and to their imaginations:

> I asked myself at the beginning of this talk, what is folklore? . . . There's no folklore without a mouth [the word for folklore, *béaloideas*, comes from the roots *béal* ("mouth") and *oideas* ("instruction")]. The mouths in the Cemetery are silent/dead [*béil mharbha*], and let the lovers of the Middle Ages sniff at them as long as they like. Let them benefit, if they can. To us there is no mouth but the living mouth, no clay but living clay. As a guide to folklore the Circle is no help to us. (Ó Cadhain 1990: 175)

Using a basic etymology (folklore as "mouth-education") and a few puns (the term *marbh* can mean both "dead" and "silent"), and perhaps another pun on the Irish words for "sniff" (*bolaigh*) and "collect" (*bailigh*), Ó Cadhain reorients us to "the living clay," his trope for sociality—persons in community, their imaginations, and their speech. What seems to be lacking in folklorists' collected material, for Ó Cadhain, is any sense of *futurity* or emergence within

folkloric material itself; it is precisely this aspect of folklore that scholarship has excised—Ó Cadhain identifies this aspect with "life."

Ó Cadhain's trope of "dead" and "living" "clay" has a lot to do with the difference between his own relationship as a writer to the prior speech of his community and that of the scholars he criticizes. Here, he resembles the Bengali poet Arunkumar Sarkar as discussed by Chakrabarty (2000) and Bauman and Briggs (2003). For Sarkar,

> "Ever since I was a child, I was attracted to [the] sound [of language], and it was this attraction that gave rise to the desire to write poetry. My mother used to recite different kinds of poems, my father Sanskrit verses of praise [to deities], and my grandmother the hundred and eight names of [the god] Krishna. I did not understand their meanings, but I felt absorbed in the sounds." (quoted in Chakrabarty 2000: 251)

Chakrabarty (2000: 251) comments,

> "This is how the archaic comes into the modern, not as a remnant of another time but as something constitutive of the present. Whatever the nature of these pasts that already 'are,' they are always oriented to futures that also already 'are.' […] The 'having been' of Sarkar's mother's recitation of poetry, his father's of Sanskrit verses, and his grandmother's of the names of the Hindu god Krishna is (re)collected here in a movement of existence whose direction is futural. The futural direction of the movement is indicated by the phrase 'the desire to write poetry.' It is within this futurity that

Sarkar's poetry writing happens" (Chakrabarty 2000: 251; Bauman and Briggs 2003: 319).

Like Sarkar, Ó Cadhain sees his own work, his own desire to write, emerge from his entanglement with the speech genres he encountered as a child. He rejects the version of modernism that would view that speech as archaic, an artifact of an "epochal gap separating antiquity from modernity" (Bauman and Briggs 2003: 320), instead identifying Irish-language writing with a future that already "is," to use Chakrabarty's phrase. Ó Cadhain repeatedly insists that Irish-language writing represents the genuine imaginative life of the community, and thus is a continuation of the life and function of folklore, and he identifies "life" with a rootedness in "living speech," naming several Irish-language writers from his own and the previous century. In his discussion of "living clay" he cites Yeats as an exemplar of the approach that he advocates. Even across the great social difference between Yeats's class and that of the "peasants" whose speech he sought out, Yeats never denies their coevality, and, sometimes in a confused fashion, he identifies these people themselves with Ireland's future. Ó Cadhain quotes the Yeats poem "The Municipal Gallery Revisited":

John Synge, I and Augusta Gregory thought
All that we did, all that we said or sang
Must come from contact with the soil, from that
Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong.

He then comments:

> The "*primitive speech*"—this "*living speech as against a bookish speech*"—this was the guiding sign [*treoirshaighead*] for an Chraoibhín [Douglas Hyde] in his English translation of "The Love-Songs of Connaught." Yeats followed this guidance, cultivating living speech and limbering it up [*dhá aclú*], for the rest of his life. (1990: 156)

In Ó Cadhain's view, it was speech above all else that constituted the "living clay" of community life, its sociality. Speech was the element in which the struggle of old and new life occurred. He saw this as a dynamic aspect of all communities; he was especially sensitive to these dynamics within the Gaeltacht, where older "fossilized" forms were constantly being recycled and supplanted by new fashions of speaking (Ó Cadhain 1990: 156). He singled out the flourishing of popular (sung) poetry in the Gaeltacht, which thrived even as the older ornamented hero-tales (which had attracted the majority of attention from folklorists) died out. This poetry was continually being composed out of the "living clay" of the community's speech, as local poets altered and recycled older, calcified forms. The lack of attention paid by folklorists to this poetry was, paradoxically, the "secret of its longevity": "It has the public's affection, and is serving a purpose. Beyond every other aspect of folklore, of verbal literature, it belongs completely to the community, and that is the secret of its longevity" (166; see Ó Cadhain 1969, Denvir 1989, 1997). The strength of a community's traditions is directly linked to its sense of local autonomy, immanent in its sense of the nature of its own speech.

For Ó Cadhain, this sense of local autonomy played a role in language shift as well as linguistic change. The "living speech" of the community of Kiltartan (in East Co. Galway), which inspired Yeats, came from speakers who had recently abandoned Irish in favor of English; Ó Cadhain (1990: 156) compared their "wrestling" with their "new medium of speech" to a writer's creative struggle with his or her artistic material. He equated Yeats's own struggle with "Kiltartanish," "working living speech and making it more adroit" (*ag saothrú urlabhra beo agus dhá aclú*), to both his own and local folk poets' struggles with the "living speech" of the Gaeltacht (156). Essential to this "life" are processes of remediation, which involve struggles to create and possess new media and to create or renew genres, while still maintaining and giving precedence to situatedness and point of view of the speech forms of one's community. This is an ontological commitment for Ó Cadhain, who, in an important late memoir, maintains that Irish itself (as a literary vehicle) is a "new medium" and that "it is my own, something I can't say about any other medium." He immediately follows this statement with a reflection upon what he *hears* in Irish: "the cackling of the Blackbird of Leitreach Laoigh and the musical chant of the Fianna" (Ó Cadhain 1969: 41). The historical depth and resonance of Irish intensifies both Ó Cadhain's commitment to his medium and the seriousness of his struggle to "make it more adroit" and fully possess it. The fact that Irish was in danger of being abandoned as a community language made his ontological commitment even more serious (Nic Eoin 2015: 3). It is important to note, however, that these commitments are no less serious than those of Gaeltacht people themselves; Ó Cadhain saw a perfect continuity between the process of folkloric creation and transmission (as a process of reworking and recycling older forms) and the activities of modernist writers, like Yeats and himself, who immersed themselves in "folk speech" but were

not beholden to the fossilized forms it took in the folklore archive, or to the ideology of disappearance and preservation that motivated the academy.

Yeats and Ó Cadhain were aiming not to accurately represent "folk speech" but to develop and use it as a medium of expression, as a form for the writer's own thoughts. In Ó Cadhain's case, unlike Yeats, there was a further ontological commitment, to the community itself and its people as fundamentally "the same" as the writer himself. *Cré* is not just a metaphor for mutuality of being (Sahlins 2013: ix) as a writer's textual strategy but is an expression of Ó Cadhain's experience as having originated in a "local organic community" (Ó Cadhain 1969: 9) whose members, in Marshall Sahlins's words, "are persons who participate intrinsically in each other's existence; they are members of one another" (Sahlins 2013: v). Late in his life, Ó Cadhain participated in a documentary film (Ó Gallchóir 1967) in which he revisited his ancestral townland, An Cnocán Glas near An Spidéal in Co. Galway. Visiting the ruins of the house where his parents' marriage was celebrated, Ó Cadhain insists that he remembers the wedding well—not, as one might suppose, because he had heard so many stories about it, although he had, but because he had been to so many other identical weddings and had witnessed the same events. He goes on to visualize these events: the performances, the element of competition between his father's and mother's "people," and so on. The fundamental unity of these wedding celebrations is like that of different iterations or replicas of a legisign in Peirce's sense (Ness 2016), in this case a type of complex cultural performance, precisely the kind of event where performative *talk* is created. Here we sense the fundamental unity of expressive culture, kinship relations (including tensions therein), and the immanent being of Ó Cadhain and his neighbors and relations. Ó Cadhain's relationship to the people of An Cnócan Glas is one of

mediation rather than representation; his people mediate his own thoughts and work, a point driven home later in the film when he is shown having a drink with his neighbors in the local pub. As he engages in banter with a neighbor, Ó Cadhain's voice can be heard on the soundtrack, addressing "his people":

> Here they are. You're here, I declare. Seáinin, Máirtín, Maidhc. The Cois Fhairrge family. I never put pen to paper without you on my mind, you pack of devils. Weren't you coming between myself and the paper, going on the paper whether I intended it or not. (in Ó Gallchóir 1967)

The people of his townland "come between" Ó Cadhain, his thoughts, his work, and even the paper he writes on—the very definition of a medium, that which comes between, that which facilitates and animates. In his memoir of 1969, Ó Cadhain relates how the discovery of one of Gorky's short stories made him realize he could be a writer. His locality, with its landscape and the faces of its men, women, and children, "began to create itself" (1969: 26) behind his closed eyes. Media operate on three levels, I surmise. At their most superficial, they allow one to describe things: for instance, the form and generic attributes of Gorky's short story, by means of which Ó Cadhain realizes he could describe his locality and its people. At a more intense level of engagement, the forms of media become involved directly with what they give access to, as with the "coming between-ness" Ó Cadhain attributes to "his people." At their most intense, media enable the co-animation that, following Ó Cadhain, I attributed to folklore itself insofar as it is "living": it animates us as we animate it.

Cré na Cille

Making our escape from the rioting members of Cumann na Scribhneoirí, we can move on to a few reflections on Ó Cadhain's masterpiece, the novel *Cré na Cille* (Ó Cadhain 1949), in which the characters are all dead and buried in a Connemara graveyard. Since I have already written about *Cré na Cille* (Coleman 1999, 2004), and considering the subsequent publishing of two excellent English translations (Ó Cadhain 2015, 2016), I will keep my description of this astonishing work to a minimum.

Like his "folklore" lecture, *Cré na Cille* is dominated by, and could be considered a reflection on and intervention into, our concepts of life and death. As I and others have noted (Coleman 2004; L. de Paor 2014) it makes a mockery of the notion of death as transcendence: with few exceptions, in death Ó Cadhain's characters remain exactly as they were in life, their posthumous attempts to "get ahead" coming to nought. Following Alasdair Macintyre (2014), Pádraig De Paor (2016)[4] suggests that Ó Cadhain was responding to the modernist lack of faith in human ends, in the sense of a telos or redemptive evolution; thus the novel is "endless" as in an unchanging but repetitive stasis. Ó Cadhain's theatrical note on the frontispiece says "Time: Eternity." But the term he used, *de shíor*, has the basic meaning of "eternally, continually, unceasingly," as in repetitive unchanging action (P. de Paor 2016: 78; Coleman 1999: 300). We should also note that *Cré na Cille* conforms closely to the genre Bakhtin (1984) identifies as Menippean satire, in which, through a series of carnivalized encounters, a mockery is made of ultimate ends. As Jim Fernandez (1995) observed about a much earlier version of this paper,

> "the Voices of the Dead, in their struggle against oblivion, the forgetfulness of time, to maintain their social identity, can shed light or afterlight upon the pretensions, passions and pettyness of the living. This use of a society of 'Dead Souls' to make comments on the 'moral topography of living ones is an ancient device."

Bakhtin locates the modern avatar of the Menippea in Dostoevsky's short story *Bobok*, which Ó Cadhain read and which features both the dialogue of corpses in a graveyard and the theme of organic decay: "The main thing: two or three months of life [e.g., as relatively conscious corpses], and finally—bobok!" (Dostoyevsky 1979:54). In Dostoevsky's story the Menippean form is intensified, and Ó Cadhain's novel intensifies it further.

The sense in *Cré na Cille* of "end-less-ness" as nontranscendance is complemented by the voice of "*Stoc na Cille*" (the Graveyard Trumpet), who, in highly poetic prose, periodically reflects on the relativity of life and death, perhaps inspiring us to notice the much greater cycle of decay and regeneration underlying *Cré na Cille*, in which the deceased are gradually forgotten, while the community carries on, the names of the local dead recurring in future generations (Ó Crualaoich 1981); Ó Cadhain's next major work was a novel, unpublished in his lifetime, entitled *Athnuachan* (Renewal). I would like to suggest that we can read *Cré na Cille*, through Ó Cadhain's *Béaloideas* lecture, as making a powerful contrast between the "homogenous empty time" of historical progress, as exemplified in nationalism, and a more organic, immanent, and recursive space-time, evoking a politics that Ó Cadhain perhaps never managed to fully articulate in his lifetime—although its lineaments are visible in, for example, Ó Cadhain's slogan, "*Sí teanga na muintire a shlánós an mhuintir*" ([It is] the people's own language [that] will save them). Here, speech itself as essentialized sociality is imagined as a medium of political

salvation. In this slogan we can perhaps feel a basic tension in Ó Cadhain's literary politics. As we have seen, he saw the loving preservation of "dialect" as pointless in itself, compared with the potential of the Irish language to generalize itself across the wider speech communities of Ireland. This latter potential he identified especially with writers and their struggle to develop Irish as a "new medium." But he did not appear to identify with the impulse of the modern nation-state to create a superposed "Standard," imposed from above, nor with the transcendence, purification, and standardization of dialect that have been felt to be a contribution of the novel form to nationalism. The rhetorical structure of *Cré na Cille*—lacking a narrator and written entirely in direct voice of its characters—perfectly expresses this tension, as will be discussed below.

The Novel as Medium and Trope

The novel form itself has been theorized as a rhetorical trope, which is to say, a figuration of something else. Several theorists have maintained that the novel as a genre bears a special relationship—whether figurative or literal or somewhere in between—to the nation, the public, the linguistic community, modernity, the human condition, and so on. In the thought of Anderson and Bakhtin, the novel performs as a trope, to dynamically "figure," and thereby help bring about, complex new social realities. In the course of this process, the tropic qualities of the novel are partially superseded or otherwise fade from consciousness.

For Anderson (1983), the novel's importance to the nation depends on its particular relationships to space and time; its use of standardized language enables it to encompass and represent the speech of vast territories, which in turn gives it the ability to represent simultaneity.

It is this latter quality that enables the novel to trope the nation-state: "[The novel] is clearly a device for the presentation of simultaneity in 'homogeneous, empty time,' or a complex gloss upon the word 'meanwhile'" (1983: 25).

It is with the portrayal of multiple lives unfolding within the same temporal framework, which is also found in the newspaper—"reading a newspaper is like reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot" (Anderson 1983: 33)—that the novel comes to accurately represent modern time. As readers of novels and newspapers, we learn to position ourselves, along with the people we read about, within the same temporal "envelope," and thus we come to imagine ourselves as inhabiting the large collectivities that we call "nations." Anderson saw "print-capitalism"—the production of standardized and commodified language—as necessary to this process; standardized language and the commercialized print genres it enables construct a sharable space-time. There is a question about the literality of this "trope," however. As Michael Silverstein (2000: 126) points out, Anderson did not fully see the space-time of the novel as a trope, preferring to "to mistake the dialectically produced trope of 'we'-ness for the reality". Anderson thus seems to envision, then partially forget, the novel's creative, rhetorical force in bringing the nation into being. He ultimately settles for a view of the novel as merely revealing, through its representation, a genuine sociotemporal reality, although he maintains that the large-scale collectivities that inhabit it are (merely?) "imagined." And yet in Anderson's system nationality itself, as an "anthropological" quality of the person of the same order as kinship and gender, is felt to be primordial, not bound to the dynamics of homogenous, empty time (Silverstein 2000: 109, 117). So the novel both performatively figures nation-ness as coexistence in historical time and ideologically obscures its own figuration.

In *Cré na Cille*, however, we are made aware of the extent to which the "Andersonian" properties of the novel are really the product of the existence, or possible existence, of a more or less omniscient narrator, since "simultaneity" implies the power to judge that different actions in different places are happening at the same time. Because *Cré na Cille* has no narrator and exists only as the direct speech of characters who are not even named, except in the speech of other characters, there is no possibility of a narrator's point of view. The corpses' knowledge of historical events in the outside world is hopelessly distorted, relying as they must on news and rumors brought by newly arrived corpses but also on folkloric prophecies, contested, biased "retellings" of past events, and so forth. Almost every definitive statement made by a corpse is instantly contradicted and ridiculed by another. The characters are trapped in the claustrophobic repetitiveness of hidebound habit alluded to above.

The action of *Cré na Cille* takes place within a chronotope in which both time (as mere repetition and decay) and space (consisting only of the rudimentary division of the graveyard into three sections according to the amount spent on a corpse's plot) are reduced to practically nothing. We can view this as complex political space as well, in which are overlaid the space-times of the Curragh prison camp in which Ó Cadhain was interred, that of the Gaeltacht as a claustrophobically small, marginalized community, and that of the Irish state itself. It is from this that *Cré na Cille* draws its power as a satirical antinovel and as a critique of the stasis in which Ireland found itself in the decades following independence.

Indeed, "representation" in its political sense is impossible in a space where all peoples' voices are audible, all the time. Ó Cadhain dramatizes this through a hilariously portrayed, disastrous attempt to found a local Rotary Club and hold elections within the graveyard. In this

sense, there is an almost utopian striving toward a very different "imagined community," aligned much more with the space-time of Walter Benjamin's revolutionary history, a cyclic time of recurrence that Ó Cadhain (1999 [1963]) identified with the insurrectionary politics of Wolf Tone, who, Ó Cadhain (1990: 142) reminds us in his folklore lecture, had no folklore but nonetheless "brought two navies to Ireland" (see Whelan 1996).

If *Cré na Cille* lacks both the industrially produced standardized language and the sense of "traveling together" through homogenous, empty time that Anderson celebrates, it also lacks much of the "orchestration" of voices that Bakhtin discovers in the novel. In Bakhtin's case, the novel plays a particular role in the development of the modern linguistic community, society, and indeed consciousness itself, to the extent that its *creative* function—its role in bringing these things into being—perhaps outweighs its representational role as merely a complex diagram of social life.

In Bakhtin's (1981) view, the novel emerges from the heteroglossia (social diversity of ways of speaking) of the nation-state as a socially and linguistically stratified society. Social diversity gives rise to a multiplicity of ways of speaking; Bakhtin thought of this process in terms of "centrifugal forces" that work to diversify language. These are opposed by the "centripetal" forces that tend to "unify" language—and that are exemplified in state institutions such as the educational system, the machinery of academic normative grammar, formal linguistics, and certain genres such as literary poetry. The novel takes this diversity of speech types as its artistic medium, bringing them, in the form of its variously "voiced" characters, into dialogue. Speech becomes "voiced" when particular forms ("words," styles, etc.) become infused with the points of view and value systems of particular social strata. This process is enabled by the unique ability

of language to represent speech in speech (Voloshinov 1973; Bakhtin 1981; Lucy 1993). In this manner, heteroglossia becomes represented as a system of social "accents." Bakhtin thought of these in terms of "tastes": it is when words come out of our own mouths that we "taste" the "socially charged contexts" in which they originate. Social dialogue is in no small measure a struggle to "appropriate" linguistic forms to one's own intentions—to assimilate them to one's own social context. This, then, is the basis of "centrifugal forces" within language, as this struggle gives rise to more and more highly differentiated forms of speech.

The novel is the perfect medium for the emergence of heteroglossia and its transformation into something more profound. In the novel, heteroglossia is "orchestrated"—as different social "voices," as embodied in the speech and thought of characters, are brought into dialogue and artistically arranged by the author: "The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of [heteroglossia] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions" (Bakhtin 1981: 263).

"Polyphony"—the novelistic expression of heteroglossia—"is precisely what happens between various consciousnesses, that is, their interaction and interdependence" (Bakhtin 1984: 36). As an accentual system, in Silverstein's (1999: 104) analysis, the Bakhtinian novel evokes a (sometimes hidden) center, a point of view that emerges as relatively neutral or "unaccented" in contradistinction to the styles of various characters, a social position that the reader feels him- or herself as potentially inhabiting. This neutral center may be identified with the voice of a narrator, a hero/protagonist, or even no one at all; it may still be felt to be "present" virtually, perhaps identified with socially "standard" speech—the target of centripetal forces in society. In this way the novel figures the linguistic community itself, as a collection of socially diverse,

linguistically accented, personal "types." The novel helps bring together (bring into dialogue) socially diverse strata of society, thus helping to create the complex unity that it describes. In Bakhtin's theory, the novel as a genre is thus performative; it is a powerful means of bringing about the unified yet sociolinguistically diverse linguistic community that it represents. Silverstein evokes Peirce's trope of a map of an island drawn in the very sand of that island to illustrate the way that the polyphonic novel constructs its indexical center. Peirce observes that within such a map there is always one point that perfectly corresponds to the point it represents. Likewise, there is a point within the novel's polyphony around which all of its "voices" take their relational meanings—they gain their "tastes" in relation to it (Silverstein 2000: 117–118). Just as with the polyrhythmic music of West Africa, where the central unifying "beat" is heard but not performed (Chernoff 1979), in the realist polyphonic novel such an indexical center need not be explicitly voiced in order to be sensed.

All of this is only a prelude, however, to what Bakhtin saw as the novel's main accomplishment as a still-emerging genre in modernity. The fundamentally dialogic and socially charged nature of language—plus the ability, inherent in language, to represent speech and thought linguistically (through various types of quotation)—creates a new semiotic potential, realized completely only in the novel, to represent, and by doing so, to model, consciousness (Banfield 1993). The novel thus allows us to explore and extend the interanimation of human consciousness through various types of dialogue between characters and among characters, narrators, and readers themselves. Bakhtin saw the novel, in the hands of authors such as Dickens and especially Dostoevsky, as bringing about a transformation in human consciousness. He saw this accomplishment in terms of Dostoevsky's refusal to "finalize" his characters—to

fully objectify them. One encounters a Dostoyevskyan character from both "outside" (through descriptions of their features and language) and "inside" (via their own thought), and furthermore, these perspectives are indivisible, as both narrative consciousness and that of other characters are infused with that of his or her own consciousness as a "living" character. The novel, for Bakhtin, thus becomes an immensely complex trope of social life itself, as well as a revolutionary instrument for the transformation of that very social life.

Needless to say, the orchestration and dialogicization of heteroglossia are largely absent in *Cré na Cille*. We have the direct speech of characters but little or none of the interpenetration of consciousness that Bakhtin (1984:32) celebrates.

What of the novel's role within a complex, multilingual, postcolonial polity such as that of modern Ireland? In the Irish case, we see the novel as never fully superseding its tropic character, as the social reality it represents never develops into the fully fledged national order on which Anderson and Bakhtin base their analyses. As several theorists have pointed out, Irish realities challenge both the Andersonian and the Bakhtinian models.

Luke Gibbons (1996, 2005) points out that there are two, largely incompatible, nationalist traditions in Ireland: constitutional nationalism, which largely follows the pattern mapped out by Anderson, but also an insurrectionary nationalism, which both James Joyce and, as discussed above, Ó Cadhain identified. Modern Ireland is the product of both of these traditions, which have their own (opposed and incompatible) space-times. Any sort of realist representation of Irish reality would have to somehow represent both of these as "simultaneously" present, the "homogenous, empty time" of constitutional nationalism coexisting in consciousness with an insurrectionary, nonlinear time in which the past is always virtually or potentially present. In

Joyce's work we can find a vivid sense of the copresence of these two space-times, provided we understand that this situation is not *represented* (in the sense of a definite description, which would be impossible) as much as it is *indicated*, via depictions of characters' (often uneasy) relationships to the landscape and to cultural forms such as songs and ballads.

David Lloyd (1993) points out similar problems with Bakhtin's (1981) theory of "orchestration," arguing that the Irish postcolonial order poses insurmountable problems for the achievement of a unified "voice," in effect suggesting that Irish heteroglossia is not "orchestratable" in the relatively straightforward way that Bakhtin suggests. As a result, instead of the great humanist interanimation of voice and consciousness that was achieved by the likes of Dickens and Dostoevsky, writers like Joyce resorted to an "adulteration" and "contamination" of voices by incompatible others:

> Thus, for instance, [Leopold] Bloom cannot be the exemplary hero of what might be an Irish epic, not only because of his status as "neither fish nor fowl," to quote the Citizen, but because *Ulysses* as a whole refuses the narrative verisimilitude within which the formation of representative man could be conceived. The aesthetic formation of the exemplary citizen requires not alone the selection of an individual sociologically or statistically "normative," but the representation of that individual's progress from unsubordinated contingency to socially significant integration with the totality. This requires in turn what Bakhtin describes as "a combining of languages and styles into a higher unity," the novel's capacity to "orchestrate all its themes" into a totality. . . . *Ulysses*' most radical movement is in its refusal to fulfill either of these

demands and its correspondent refusal to subordinate itself to the socializing functions of identity formation. It insists instead on a deliberate stylization of dependence and inauthenticity, a stylization of the hybrid status of the colonized subject as of the colonized culture, their internal adulteration and the strictly parodic modes that they produce in every sphere. (Lloyd 1993: 110)

"Unsubordinated contingency" describes very accurately the qualities of both character and voice that we find in *Cré na Cille*. Ó Cadhain's novel more closely follows the pattern of Gaeltacht verbal art than the modern novel (Ó Crualaoich 1989; Coleman 2004), intensifying the generic form of *agallamh beirte*, or poetic dialogue (a popular form of Gaeltacht verbal art), bringing it into the realm of the Menippean satire discussed above. These generic forms aim not for transcendence but for what Bakhtin (1984: 114) terms "the testing of an idea"—in the case of *Cré na Cille*, the very idea of a future for Ireland as a modern nation-state in which Irish speakers fulfill roles as "representative man" or "exemplary citizens."

Frantz Fanon (2004: 160), in his essay "On National Culture," criticizes "intellectuals" in much the same way that Ó Cadhain criticizes the Irish folklorists of 1950:

The culture with which the intellectual is preoccupied is very often nothing but an inventory of particularisms. Seeking to cling close to the people, he clings merely to a visible veneer. This veneer, however, is merely a reflection of a dense, subterranean life in perpetual renewal. . . . Instead of seeking out this substance, the intellectual lets

himself be mesmerized by these mummified fragments which, now consolidated, signify, on the contrary, negation, obsolescence, and fabrication.

Observing the cultural transformations of prerevolutionary Algeria, Fanon describes the reawakening of "traditional" arts—storytelling, music, sculpture, etc.—as they cast off rigid forms, becoming future-oriented and reconnected to life. We can see Ó Cadhain yearning for the same transformation, trying to bring it about in both his literary and polemical work. Like the people of An Cnocán Glas who mediate Ó Cadhain's thought and writing, his sense of them as "living clay" animates Ó Cadhain's aesthetic choices, even to the point of leading him to the impasses of *Cré na Cille*. His refusal or inability to write an "Irish novel" that would function transcendently to figure the nation in the manner described by Anderson and Bakhtin is a measure of his belief in the language and culture of the Gaeltacht and his desire to stay true to the life of its inhabitants. "Clay," as his master trope, is alive to the extent that Ó Cadhain uses it to mediate his own thought and writing. As signs in Peirce's sense (Ness 2016), not only do tropes in general move us—so that we are not in the same place or on the same footing after encountering them meaningfully—but they are themselves alive; they are what Peirce (1976: 243–244) called "powers" active in the world, which can grow, decline, and die.

POSTSCRIPT

November 2020: revisions are due today on this chapter. Ó Cadhain is fifty years dead. On Raidió na Gaeltachta, local folklore has come under local control (de Mórdha 2019). The pithy

sayings of beloved aunts are captured by Gaeltacht people and blasted out live to the universe on social media. The people are reclaiming their own speech.

I am thinking about my fellow contributors to this volume who have passed away. I am thinking about how some of us drunkenly looked for Ó Cadhain's grave once, by the sea in Connemara; eventually I discovered that he is buried behind my house in Dublin. I am thinking about how I used to imagine anonymous blog commenting as the most Cré na Cillish medium yet. But we are in the Age of Animation now (Silvio 2019), and the age of mass extinction, and most living humans are natives of a world where Ó Cadhain's "*dráma doilfeach*" has a new type of materiality, and "our environment is in a state of constant mutability and flux, and . . . the division between the world of mutability, dreams, and the unconscious, and the hard and fast 'real' is an increasingly ambiguous one" (Napier 2005: 74).

It is level 5 lockdown in Dublin, and I am thinking about how COVID-19 enters a community invisibly and then fades into view as symptoms appear through the population—you do not "get" COVID, you discover you have already gotten it, and already passed it on, and maybe people will die. I wonder sometimes if we are already dead, translated into that world of mutability; is this what it feels like to wake up as graveyard clay?

I am thinking about those policemen in 1950, young *Gardaí Síochána*, big country lads in the city, as they prepare to enter Cumann na Scribhneoirí to break up the melee.

It is cinematic, a close-up: the intake of breath, the opening of the door, the pause as the host lets them in. That blue light. They silently rebuffer, in a darkened room, in their little rectangular boxes. Up on the screen are two young men from the Royal Irish Academy (the *Gardaí* remove their caps), discussing Ó Cadhain's lexicographic work, which they are preparing for publication

in April 2021.[5] In Ó Cadhain's handwritten manuscripts, the headwords are illustrated with snatches of conversation he has collected from the visiting-houses of Connemara, by real, named individuals, each entry a miniature extract from some long-extinct social drama, a rough draft of a short story (Dillon and Ó Cuaig 2020). Of course. Ó Cadhain wouldn't make any other kind of dictionary, would he?

Steve Coleman (PhD Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1999) is lecturer in anthropology at Maynooth University, Ireland. His research focuses on politics, identity, and performance in the Irish Gaeltacht, via linguistic anthropology, semiotics, ethnomusicology, and performance studies. Recent interests include the politics of nature and autonomy in minority-language communities and new practices of remediation and animation in the national and transnational spheres.

References

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. London: Verso.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

———. 1984. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Banfield, Ann. 1993. "Where Epistemology, Style, and Grammar Meet Literary History: The Development of Represented Speech and Thought." In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. John A. Lucy, pp. 339-364. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bauman, Richard. 2000. Commentary on "Dead and Living Clay in Dialogue: Folklore, Commemoration, and the Irish State," by Steve Coleman. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, November 2000.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles L. Briggs. 2003. *Voices of Modernity: Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken.

Briody, Mícheál. 2014. "'Dead Clay and Living Clay': Máirtín Ó Cadhain's Criticisms of the Work of the Irish Folklore Commission." *Approaching Religion* 4(1): 55–65.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chernoff, John Miller. 1979. *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Coleman, Steve. 1999. "Return from the West: A Poetics of Voice in Irish." PhD dissertation. Chicago: University of Chicago.

———. 2004. “The Nation, the State, and the Neighbors: Personation in Irish-Language Discourse.” *Language & Communication* 24(4): 381–411.

de Paor, Louis. 2014. “Irish Language Modernisms.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Modernism*, ed. Joe Cleary, 161–173. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Paor, Pádraig. 2016. “Ends, Endings, and Endlessness in *Cré na Cille*.” In *New Trails and Beaten Paths in Celtic Studies*, ed. Maria Bloch-Trojnar, Robert Looby, Mark Ó Fionnáin, and Aleksander Bednarski, 75–89. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

de Mórdha, Dáithí. 2019. “RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta & Cultúr Phobal na Gaeltachta.” PhD dissertation. Cork: University College, Cork.

Denvir, Gearóid. 1989. “The Living Tradition: Oral Irish Language Poetry in Connemara Today.” *Éire-Ireland* 24(1): 92–108.

———. 1997. *Litríocht agus Pobal: Cnuasach Aistí*. Indreabhán, Connemara: Cló Iar-Chonnachta.

Dillon, Charles, and Colm Ó Cuaig. 2020. “Máirtín Ó Cadhain: Foclóirí.” Máirtín Ó Cadhain 2020 conference, Trinity College Dublin (via Zoom), 20 November 2020.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. 1979. Bobok: Notes of a Certain Man, in The Diary of a Writer, pp. 43-57. Translated and Annotated by Boris Brasol. Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City. Peregrine Smith.

Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fanon, Frantz. 2004. “On National Culture.” In *The Wretched of the Earth*, 145–80. New York: Grove.

Fernandez, James W. 1995. Commentary on “Voices of the Dead and a ‘New Medium’: Máirtín Ó Cadhain’s Cré na Cille,” by Steve Coleman. American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, November 1995.

Gibbons, Luke. 1996 “Identity without a Centre: Allegory, History and Irish Nationalism.” In *Transformations in Irish Culture*, pp.134-147. Cork: Cork University Press.

———. 2005. “Spaces of Time through Times of Space: Joyce, Ireland, and Colonial Modernity.” *Field Day Review* (1): 71–86.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 2021. Wild thought: a new translation of "La pensée sauvage". Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman, and John Harold Leavitt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lloyd, David. 1993. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment*. Dublin: Lilliput.

Lucy, John A., ed. 1993. *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mac Aonghusa, Proinsias. 1978. “Máirtín Ó Cadhain: Fear Cúise ar Bhealaí Conspóideacha.” *Scríobh* 3: 87–107.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. 2014. “Ends and Endings.” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88(4): 807–21.

McLean, Stuart. 2004. *The Event and Its Terrors: Ireland, Famine, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Napier, Susan J. 2005. “The Problem of Existence in Japanese Animation.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 149(1): 72–79.

Ness, Sally Ann. 2016. *Choreographies of Landscape: Signs of Performance in Yosemite National Park*. London: Berghahn.

Nic Eoin, Máirín. 2015. "Léirmheas: Languages of the Night: Minor Languages and the Literary Imagination in Twentieth-Century Ireland and Europe." *COMHARTaighde* 1: 2–10.

Ó Cadhain, Máirtín. 1949. *Cré na Cille: Aithris i nDeich nEadarlúid*. Dublin: Sáirséal agus Dill.

———. 1969. *Páipéir Bhána agus Páipéir Bhreaca*. Dublin: An Clóchomhar Tta.

———. 1973. *As an nGéibheann: Litreacha Chuig Tomás Bairéad*. Dublin: Sáirséal agus Dill.

———. 1987 (1970). "Gluaiseacht na Gaeilge gluaiseacht ar strae." In *De Ghlaschloich an Oileáin: Beatha agus Saothar Mháirtín Uí Cadhain*, ed. An tSr. Bosco Costigan and Seán Ó Curraoin, 317–331. Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnachta.

———. 1990 (1950). "Béaloideas." In *Ó Cadhain i bhFeasta*, ed. Seán Ó Laighin, 129–181. Dublin: Clódhanna Teo.

———. 1999 (1963). *Tone: Inné agus Inniu*. Dublin: Coiscéim.

———. 2015. *The Dirty Dust: Cré na Cille*, trans. Alan Titley. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 2016. *Graveyard Clay: Cré na Cille; A Narrative in Ten Interludes*, trans. Liam Mac an Iomaire and Tim Robinson. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ó Cathasaigh, Aindrias. 2002. *Ag samhlú troda: Máirtín Ó Cadhain 1905–1970*. Dublin: Coiscéim.

Ó Crualaoich, Gearóid. 1981. "Domhan na Cille agus Domhan na Bréige." *Scriobh* 5: 80–86.

———. 1989. "Máirtín Ó Cadhain agus Dioscúrsa na Gaeilge." In *Léachtaí Uí Chadhain*, ed. Eoghan Ó hAnluain, 166–180. Dublin: An Clóchomhar Tta.

Ó Gallchóir, Aindreas, dir. 1967. *Ó Cadhain sa gCnocán Glas*. Dublin: RTÉ.

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid. 1996. "An Cultúr Coiteann agus Léann an Bhéaloidis." *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* 36: 137–158.

———. 2000. *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity*. Cork: Cork University Press.

Ó Glaisne, Risteárd. 1971. "Máirtín Ó Cadhain: Fear Poiblí." *Comhar* 30(10): 16–21.

Ó Tuathail, Séamas. 1999. "An Cadhanach, An Ghaeilge is an Polaitíocht." In *Criostalú: Aistí ar Shaothar Mháirtín Uí Chadhain*, ed. Cathal Ó Háinle, 158–167. Dublin: Coiscéim.

Peirce, Charles S. 1976. *The New Elements of Mathematics*. The Hague: Mouton.

Sahlins, Marshall. 2013. *What Kinship Is—And Is Not*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Silverstein, Michael. 1999. "NIMBY Goes Linguistic: Conflicted 'Voicings' from the Culture of Local Language Communities." *Proceedings of the Chicago Linguistic Society* 35(2): 101–123.

———. 2000. "Whorfianism and the Linguistic Imagination of Nationality." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity, 85–138. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Silvio, Terri. 2019. *Puppets, Gods, and Brands: Theorizing the Age of Animation from Taiwan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Voloshinov, V. N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whelan, Kevin. 1996. *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760–1830*. Cork: Cork University Press.

Notes

---

1. All other translations in this chapter are my own.

2. See also Briody 2014: 60. Phrases in Ó Cadhain's statements that originally appear in English are italicized.

3. This "folklorist's point of view" derives from two different lineages; note that Ó Cadhain criticizes both: "The antiquarian line focuses on survivals of custom and belief, is not primarily concerned with poetics and textuality except insofar as texts encode custom and belief, and tends to valorize progress, though it may allow a bit of nostalgic regret to enter in, lamenting the inevitable loss of old pleasures, while the philological line in its romantic-nationalist guise, centers more on texts as such, with attention to poetics and textuality, though the texts are seen as distressed, sacred objects" (Bauman 2000).

4. I am indebted to Máirín Nic Eoin for this reference.

5 see https://focloiruichadhain.ria.ie