

Memory and Performance in Dublin's Art Scenario: Brian O'Doherty and Sebastian Barry

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Why would we live in Dublin iffen we didn't adore her?
Sebastian Barry, *The Pride of Parnell Street*

Abstract

In 2008 Brian O'Doherty buried his alter ego, Patrick Ireland, in Dublin, as a consequence of peace having been restored in Northern Ireland. "We are burying hate", said the New York artist of Irish origin, "it's not often you get the chance to do that". With Patrick's masked effigy lain in a coffin the memory of past tragic times was spectacularized, and paved the way to a more luminous future. In the previous summer the staging of Sebastian Barry's *The Pride of Parnell Street* focuses on an episode of domestic violence by a Dublin fellow on the occasion of "Italia '90" world cup. By staging the anxieties and confronting the fears of the two protagonists, man and wife, who have since then lived separately, in a one-to-one dialogue disguised as a monologue, both the woman and the man end up recovering one's freedom and one's pride, respectively. Through the analysis of O'Doherty's and Barry's performance, the essay shows how the contemporary artistic and multicultural global ferments, and the new ethnic dimension since the rising of the Celtic Tiger have brought changes to the social texture of a nation marred by forced emigration. Also, a 2007 film directed by John Carney, *Once*, proposes, through the story of an Irish Guy and a Czech migrant Girl, a social cross section that could work in Dublin as well as, thanks to the new global cultural flows, in any other of today's *ethnoscapes* and *ideoscapes*.

On May 20, 2008, after having signed his artworks as Patrick Ireland for thirty-six years, New York artist Brian O'Doherty buried his alter ego in the grounds of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin¹. This decision, taken in protest at the British military presence in Northern Ireland and the failure of the authorities to ensure civil rights for all, was described by the conceptual artist as an «expatriate's gesture in response to Bloody Sunday in Derry». The reference is – as is well known in Ireland – to the British soldiers' killing of fourteen unarmed Irish civilians manifesting against the internment of political activists in 1972. The performance – which took place before an audience among which were such fellow artists as Robert Ballagh and Brian King, who assisted him, friends, curators, scholars, acquaintances, and members of the Irish, and of the international, society – celebrated the restoration of peace in

Northern Ireland. «We are burying hate», said the artist, «it's not often you get the chance to do that». Patrick Ireland's effigy, lain in a coffin, was clothed in white, a death mask where the face should be; it was interred in the grounds of the Museum. It was the memory of those tragic times that turned many Irish nationals into migrants that was spectacularized and that made the past present. Poetry in different languages and music resonated with the event. «I was always searching for an identity», explained the artist, born in 1928 in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon². With two uncles joining the British army and a third fighting the British, his family, he maintained, has always had «a fractured sense of identity», something that led him to assume aliases, while reflecting, in his work, upon Ireland and identity³.

The “death” of Patrick Ireland was a homage to recovered peace, after years of war and civil war within a dissected nation, by an expatriate – a child of Ireland who emigrated in 1957, like many others, to America. It was the old site of Kilmainham Royal Military Hospital adjoining Kilmainham Gaol (where several Irish revolutionary heroes were imprisoned) in the city that James Joyce turned into a myth, however, that was chosen by the artist as the ideal space to share his memory of those absurd times and to witness his own present mythical re-birth. (The site is today a flourishing art gallery, part of it in the open).

With the “troubles” inoculating more and more hate into the nation, the artist takes up the challenge upon himself. Memory, identity, and expatriation are featured as a product of that challenge until peace finally takes over and the artist can dispose of the tragic mask. «Patrick will be in Dublin», O'Doherty assures his admirers, adding that he is not considering going back to Ireland but will continue living and working in the United States. Hate is buried, with Art taking up the challenge and triumphing in the ritualistic ceremony with the audience contributing to the ratification of the performance in a dedicated space of the «new Ireland»⁴.

Both literally and metaphorically, O'Doherty's performance vehiculated authenticity (in the sense of involvement) and vitality (what brings the work to life)⁵. The Irish artist, later hyphenized as Irish-American, goes back to his native country to involve himself and his art in the process of peace that grants him a new identity as champion of the new Ireland, a land free from hate that he chooses to embody in the city of Dublin – a micro-world that is not an object, but a changing process that *presents itself*, that becomes⁶.

Features of authenticity and vitality are not the exclusive privilege of (partly, at least) extemporaneous performances taking place in the street or elsewhere (rather than in a theatre) and based on a planned activity (or on multiple activities) without a proper script to support the whole. Apart from the fact that it is, by definition, unique, a performance is normally based on written work by a playwright and is realised, through collaborative work, by a director, the actors, and several figures who contribute to its realization ac-

ording to their own professional expertise, not last (but not necessarily) the playwright himself, provided – and this is crucial – there is a spectator, or an audience⁷. Authenticity as involvement and vitality as pertinent to life are at work when they are linked with the times and culture in which a work is conceived and staged, and with the work's multiplicity of histories manifested in previous productions.

The 2011 Irish revival of Sebastian Barry's *The Pride of Parnell Street*, and the inclusion of the play by "Culture Ireland. New York 2012" among the future work in Fishamble's repertoire for international touring, point to its potential for bringing out new possibilities not only through a directorial interpretation and a widely different audience, but also owing to differences due to the reception of an "assisted performance" in the case of the 2011 revival, *and* also, to today's changes from 2006 brought about by the global economic crisis⁸.

In an interview taking place at the beginning of 2012, director of Fishamble Theatre Company Jim Culleton is reported to have said: «A lot of the work we've been touring recently seems to be focused on the underdog, on the people we would rarely see on stage or would cross the street to avoid, like Sebastian Barry's *Pride of Parnell Street* [...]. There is an element of excitement about what a play can do»⁹. The *excitement* is surely due – in part, at least – to the success of the 2007 London and Dublin premières as well as to the popularity the play gained in successive Irish tours. The words pronounced in 2012, however, reverberate with some hidden, or even buried, theme overtones that the director might possibly wish to revise and deepen *when* there is, in fact, a revival of the play, or *if* there *is* a revival of it at all¹⁰. The hint at the *underdog*, at a time when the Celtic Tiger that roared with the economic resurgence of Ireland is dead and buried and, as a consequence, the rate of emigration (the US being always a popular goal) in search of a better way of life has reached new peaks, reveals a perhaps involuntary, or subconscious association with the past hard times for the Irish and the African (with whom the Irish were often identified) immigrants to America¹¹.

In the autumn of 2007 *The Pride of Parnell Street* was first staged at Tivoli Theatre on the occasion of the fiftieth Dublin Theatre Festival¹². In the play, the figure of a woman, Patty Duffy («the pride of Parnell Street», in the words of one of the two protagonists), is recalled to the mind¹³: in 1974, she gave out solidarity and comfort during an infamous attack in three Dublin streets (one of which was Parnell Street). Only a year before O'Doherty's celebration of the peace process, the focus of a text aspiring, since its infancy, to become functional in the social issue concerning violence against women, is on Dublin. *She Was Wearing... a green jersey* was, in fact, Barry's contribution to Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women campaign in 2005¹⁴: a monologue that worked as a performative macro-utterance veered towards the playwright's pragmatic engagement, and that of all the other people involved,

in defence of women's social rights. Two years later the finished script is ready for the Dublin Festival.

From what has so far been said about performance, it should be clear that in lieu of a theatre mirror of the world, today the role of theatre is that of exploring the world as theatrically constructed. The theatrical has a place in everyday life, and performance theatre engages in the representation of life's facets by means of theatre. As much as O'Doherty's performance has theatricalized the burying of hate that has acted, through the years, as a harmonious accompaniment to the "troubles", Barry's play as staged by Fishamble has presented the theatricalization of the life of a separated married couple who, by directly addressing the audience, involve the spectators within the problem of domestic violence. By staging their anxieties and confronting their fears in a one-to-one dialogue disguised as a monologue, both the woman and the man end up recovering one's freedom and one's pride, respectively.

The two working-class people, whose world is limited by their scanty economic budget and education, though often enlightened by common sense and a wise method of reasoning, address, among other minor themes, how gender, sexuality, religion, politics, sport fanaticism, and racial origin inform the theatre of life and demonstrate how art itself – the art of performance theatre – may be opened up dynamically first to opposite voices and perspectives, and later to a new synthesis leading to mutual respect. The performative tool whereby Barry's play is made to work as a rejection of (domestic) violence and, on the other hand, projects a rediscovered sense of respect into the future is a "memory act" that brings to mind hallucinated, hateful, and ineffable events of the past that the emerging society blatantly refuses to accommodate.

Parnell Street is a main Dublin thoroughfare cutting across the top of O'Connell Street, the main North Dublin boulevard. It extends both west and east of the monument to Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), an Irish member of Parliament and a campaigner for land rights and home rule for Ireland. A quote from Parnell, «No man has a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation», is inscribed in the statue itself.

For his new play set in September 1999, on the eve of the Millennium, Barry worked with the process of remembering, which is taking place in the minds of two inner city Dubliners, Janet and Joe, whose marriage has collapsed following the death of their eldest son and a gratuitous violent domestic attack occasioned by Ireland's elimination from Italia 90¹⁵.

Both on the stage simultaneously, the light on each of them when they take turn to speak, she ("Janet") in jeans and a hooded jacket sitting, he ("Joe") lying on a hospital bed, they speak in «the Dublin accent of the area around Parnell Street, north of the Liffey» (7). Through interconnecting monologues the split couple separately revise the individual events in their lives with plenty of details since they last saw each other. The two streams of words and images coming out of their bodies flow and merge in the performance of their past

life with their sorrows, emotions, convictions, and hopes for the future. The culture of Dublin north side, with its meanders, public places, past and present events, its characters and their tragedies, is represented in their language, a lively, contemporary idiom that is encoded, respectively, in the protagonists' female and male genders. All barriers dividing actors from audience fall down when the two voices start their narration: just like everybody else concerned with the production, the members of the audience have walked through the network of Dublin's busy streets to reach the Tivoli at Francis Street, south of the Liffey, and have possibly heard, among the multiple accents of loud passers-by, the local guys, some of them belonging to the same area as the man and the woman on stage who are giving voice to their intimate emotions and feelings for each other. After so many years, they still feel affection, and love for each other, *and* the same affection as ever for the city where they were born and raised.

Janet and Joe speak to the audience directly, as if they were old friends and as if, with people being used today to travelling to different countries, everybody could share, at least in part, their own views of what happened told in their own dialect through a once improbable channel of communication. The *you knows*, the rising intonation, the tag-questions and the rhetorical ones, the occasional "what-do-you-call-it" (by Janet, defining herself a *refugee* or *asylum-seeker* for leaving Parnell Street to go and live to the south side of the city, 28) or the colloquial "Excusing me language" (by Joe making an irreverent borrowing from the Gospel's quote by Jesus who predicts Peter's denial of himself in the early hours of Good Friday, 259), all the linguistic features and idioms – whether conventional or freshly devised – serving the purpose of approaching actors and audience, become emotional appeals to their self-esteem. They both, in fact, wish to ingratiate the participants, i.e. the audience, but also, though indirectly, each other: the victim, in order to be able to grow in strength; the attacker, who has gradually lost «his family, dignity and health»¹⁶, in order to recover his own dignity.

Upon the suggestion of critic Catriona Crowe (to whom the play is dedicated), Barry engaged in writing «about things that we in Dublin would be interested in», covering the decade in which the nation has been marching speedily, with the Celtic tiger roaring through the bulging economic life of the country, towards the deep cultural change that has followed the emigration phenomenon – to the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and many other different countries – thereby inverting the move of the Irish diaspora.

The Dublin inner-city social environment to which Joe and Janet belong comes to life through the two characters' respective voices, each of them deconstructing his/her own soul, unveiling his/her own desire, and revealing his/her own stand at present and future times. The process of remembering is suffered through a text constructed with the substance of memory. Both Janet (the winner, in life) and Joe (the loser) realise that memory is split between the

two sides of one's conscience (the one telling the truth, and the one telling a lie), besides opposing feelings, attitudes and judgements. Janet gradually becomes aware of how this split occurs:

It's funny, when you're saying things, really trying to remember and tell the truth, there's another part of your head listening to it, and the other part of your head just now and then is saying, that is not true. I'm just noticing that now. Just sort a' noticing it. Because the part of you talking is the real part of ya, I mean, angry sometimes, and sometimes kinda weepy, and I suppose very hurt now and then, and oftentimes shy even (57).

A few pages (or minutes, in the performance) from the end, Janet reveals that she wasn't just *told* of the tragic event alluded to in the title of the play that took place when she was a little girl, as she announced; on the contrary, she was a witness to it, and was confronted with a supposed parcel of meat from the butcher's that was, in fact, «a bit of someone» (57). The episode from which the title of the play originates – with Patty Duffy being recalled as «the pride a' Parnell Street herself», namely the woman who «put the pride back into the place after the desolation» (59) – occurs in Janet's mind. Janet, however, lies to herself at first, in her rejection of the past; then she confesses:

But I wasn't just told about it. I shouldn't a' said that because it isn't true. And I only said it because I didn't want to be – going back (58).

In the previous monologue, also Joe admits having told a lie. He too confesses: «Yes I hit her. I smashed her lovely face in, I hit her till I heard bones breaking» (57). He does not seek any undeserved sympathy, at present, for what he did to his wife, «the» (with emphasis) «fucking pride a' Parnell Street» (56), as he defines her with undiminished love. Thus when he becomes aware of the positive achievement of his boys brought up by their mother in «the new Ireland» (60), as he narrates in his final monologue, he can tell himself: «And the pride welled up in me. Pure pride», and call himself, the loser, in life: «The happiest man in Dublin» (64).

Janet admits having been an eye witness to tragedy; Joe admits having hosted evil even before he became a drug addict. For both of them the process of memory has been cathartic. It is when one has lived through an experience that is embodied in the social (that is, «in individuals, families, groups, nations, and regions»), writes Andreas Hussey, that memory, although transitory and virtual by definition, becomes constructive¹⁷. The «emergence of memory», he suggests, is a «key concern in Western societies»¹⁸: in the contemporary world many memories are “mass-marketed” and transformed into entertainment in today's myth of globalisation (the various films on the Holocaust, with memories pillaged from the archives, are an example of such exploitation)¹⁹;

the speed of today's change causes the horizons of time and space to shrink and anxiety to set in; history laments the loss of «stability and permanence»²⁰. There is a difference, he continues, between the «usable pasts» and what he terms the «disposable data»²¹: it is lived time that has to be renegotiated in the interest of productive memory; and that in order for people, he explains, to be able to «remember the future»²². On this point, Sassen argues that new temporalities and new spatialities belong to the global, but the global is only a partial condition²³. The national still exists, and it interacts and overlaps with the global. In the domain of the national (as opposed to the global) Janet recaptures, through memory, the national past to build the future for herself and her children; Joe, on the other hand, does not reject his own identity as a violent aggressor, as a “mad bastard”, and as a loser (like the Irish soccer players and the Irish soccer fans back in 1990, as his wife had bitterly realized).

Their (Janet's and Joe's) telling the truth has to do with the «temporality of the national» (the national, for our purposes, including the local) as Sassen has explained:

The time of the national is elusive; it needs excavating. It is constructed of a past filled with the nation's founding myths and a future set to inherit the state as the necessary consequence of the nation – that is the national is a time that looks to the past and inherits the future. As such, work that interrogates the past and locates it in the present is especially compelling. [...] the [colonial] past is unsettled, not in the sense that it yields only imperfect knowledge or data but in the sense that it lives²⁴.

At the time of Janet's married life Ireland is, of course, postcolonial; its colonial past, however, still reaches into the present and is directed towards the fashioning of the future. It lives on. How should local or national memories, then, be represented in the art field – one wonders – in such a way that an imaginative and constructed future for memory is revealed and guaranteed for the imagination? How does the national memory live on? The answers may lie in the representation of the slowing down of the process of revision, in the expansion of the liveable space and the extension of forms of temporality, and in the interpretation of history in a new key directed at distinguishing a usable past from a disposable past, thus making the future remembered in preference to the past.

In Barry's play all of this takes place symbolically in Janet's and Joe's memory: in the course of the play, while revising the nine years of her life without her husband, Janet recollects her moving away from the violence of her beloved Parnell Street, and setting up residence in the Jewish quarters of Portobello while feeling like a refugee seeking asylum. Furthermore, she refers to living through the nation's usable past as well as the new global society that has contributed to Dublin's multiculturalism in the decade of the nineties and that characterizes today's modernization of the island. Janet's mental recollect-

tion of the gone world and of the circumscribed space of the street where the children were playing within stable boundaries is not a lament for the loss of a better past, nor is it the memento of a place-bound culture with its regular time passing and the certainty of social relationships. That is not a dream to dream with open eyes. Joe, on the other hand, reflects on the meaning of inner city: «The fucking inner city they call it, like it was something inside something, something hidden inside, or safe inside, I don't fucking know» (18), to which he retorts, within himself: «You know in your heart of hearts that what the big fellas, I mean, the politicians, really want to do, is get rid of you, just clean all the shite out of Dublin, like the shite in the Liffey, and have a nice clean fucking perfect Dublin, so clean and so perfect the fucking salmon will climb up the river walls and walk about, happy as Larry» (18). Are they both victims of their postcolonial national/local past? In a way, the answer is: yes, they are. They are occasional victims of their time. As has been written, the issue «is not the loss of some golden age of stability and permanence», but «the attempt [...] to secure some continuity within time, to provide some extension of lived space within which we can breathe and move»²⁵ and learn – in the global world of immigration – from local memories.

As the new ethnicities get settled in Parnell Street beside the local ones, mutually constitutive relations start being at work in the female protagonist's mind. In her second monologue Janet surveys her views of members of her own, and her husband's, family. A multicultural awareness flows through her narrative that focuses upon the new and old communities in different areas of the city. To her mother-in-law's disliking of the Jewish community she opposes her own mother's acceptance, and indeed enjoyment, of her Jewish neighbours, which climaxes in her reflection over the question of emigration, and her identification, following the abandonment of the conjugal abode, with a refugee:

Why do people be leaving their own countries? Wars, I suppose, tragedies, of one sort or another, torture. In me mam's day it was the Jews in Little Jerusalem, now it's the Africans in Parnell Street. I suppose they don't know nothing about Afternoon Men, or the likes of me, or the time in Ireland when the black population was Phil Lynott. Does it matter? They have their own stories I'll be bound, of coming here and setting up little businesses, and surviving. Lovely women that would put braids in your hair if you asked them, and you certainly don't like to think of them being tortured, of anything cutting into that lovely black skin or nothing. Sure a street is only a fucking film set, isn't it, there's new actors coming in all the time, new fucking stories. Thank God. Some day the Africans will be gone too, they'll make their bit of cash, and move on to the nicer parts of Dublin.

And be leaving old Parnell Street.

Jesus, like I done myself.

That's a sad thought. I'm a, what-do-you-call-it? Refugee. Asylum seeker.

No.

Well, I am, sorta.

And I'll never know their stories, no more than they'll know mine. But it's still the same country. We're citizens of the same fucking country, no matter what anyone says. Me fellow fucking Dubliners. That's how it is. Tell that to Joe's ma (27-28).

By responding to the question she poses to herself Janet *proclaims* her acceptance, as a member of the host society, of immigrants and their culture. And so does Joe, as a matter of fact, remembering an episode concerning the way his wife's father encountered death in the locality: «So Janet's da is standing there [...], and he goes down to the '98 and walks up to the kid's da, because everyone knows everyone else, or did in those days, before the Africans came, all along Parnell Street, Cumberland Street flats where we lived, and all about there» (21).

The topographical references in the play are not casual: they are milestones in the track of memory. As a mother who had no bread nor peace for her children, Ireland saw many of her children depart. A *proclamation* is the foundation document whereby the independence and freedom of Ireland was called for, back in 1916 (the year of the Easter Rising) and the premises were set for the configuration of the country into a land of human rights within a liberal democratic framework. Referred to as "she" throughout the document that establishes independence, Ireland assumes a protective role towards her "children," among which are the "exiled" ones "in America." Conceived as a family, whose children that settled across the ocean act as supporters, "she" (Ireland) is projected, in the document, toward victory. Enlightened by western philosophy and political thought, and informed by the spirit of the Catholic religion, "she" assumes a patriarchal role in the offer of security in exchange for obedience.

Throughout her telling of the sad event of her life that forced her to *split* from her husband (him nearly killing her as a consequence of a *lost* soccer game), Janet *proclaims* her solidarity with, and her belief in the future of the new ethnic immigrant groups, thus developing and deepening the significance of victory. She does so by ironically – and, should we add, intertextually – recalling the foundation document's *proclaimed* rhetoric of tight *familiar* bonds and confidence in *victory*. A mother of two boys and a third (prematurely dead) son, Janet has endured the adverse destiny that has killed her child and turned her husband into a mad aggressor, has left her home in Parnell Street, sought protection from the Women's Shelter first, and from her mother later (watching out not to involve the father which would in all likeness lead to another tragedy), has brought up her two boys, and has finally welcomed the changes brought about by the new immigrants. Her social openness is delicately affirmed by means of the image of black women interspersing white women's hair with ornamental braids and, on the opposite level, by picturing the image of tortured bodies of those same black women who must have

been forced to leave their country on account of “wars”, “tragedies”, or “torture”. Immigration, Janet understands though she does not explicitly say so, involves *change* for the immigrant and for the host country, and that change she expresses through the image of the braids. She had already recounted the changes in Parnell Street:

Now thinking about it all these years later, because Janey it must be near ten year ago, before even the Africans came to Parnell Street, and got everyone wearing beads in their hair, and got all shops all new again (12).

The immigrants have improved the look of people and the look of shops. Eventually, their own situation will improve, Janet thinks, as their finances grow larger. And a dynamism sets in, that moves immigrants to “nicer places” and the local woman to the place of the past, where she does not even feel she belongs.

Changing, it is implied, is what cultures do when new situations emerge, and immigration brings about, by definition, a new situation. Not *always* a happy one, however. Not accepted by everybody:

Joe’s ma was always talking against the Jews, funnily enough, even though there were none of them around any more, they were all gone to Cleveland, Ohio, and living in mansions I’m sure. It wasn’t just the Jews she didn’t care for, it was the Africans, and the Chinese, and the Romanians, and what have you (26).

Nobody – let alone the playwright – thinks innocently. «Everything changes» (55) is Joe’s remark at the impossibility to do “business” in Dublin any more. The point is immigration again, with Barry’s anything but a politically correct statement (attributed to Joe, of course) through Joe’s monologue, that is used as a theatrical device to make people laugh:

And anyway, I tell you, the bottom’s fallen out a’ that business. Too many at it. There’s all sorts a’ lads in Dublin now, very nice lads, Russians, Romanians. I think there must be a college for robbing in them countries, because these lads, they’re professionals. It’s like the differ between the Irish soccer league and the English, you know, amateur versus professional. It’s a crying shame, a Dublin man can’t hardly make a living at the robbing any more (55).

«I’m only joshing. It’s just as fucking well» (55), Joe concludes before accepting that the times of *developing* Ireland have passed. Immigrants and local people are all part of the same society, the same city, the same country: they will all have changed a little, having come to terms with new options, new neighbours, and new ideas that will be sewn into new narratives. The national culture would change, and the old habits of the inner city would open up. Speaking of the past, Janet recollects: «In them days was before the Africans came to Parnell

Street and it was only ourselves knocking around and drinking in the pubs there» (9). The view of the world was limited: «The kids played on the pavement outside the pub while we drank so we knew where they were» (9). The history of Ireland, Barry seems to think, cannot be frozen to let the country go on functioning with a past and no concern for the future. There can't be anything like a cultural preservation coming at a standstill; cultures survive only by changing, that is, by producing new experiences and new ideas. Joe, the aggressive, and later drug-addicted husband, turns to memory to remember the future. His constructive remembering is symbolically represented by the headstone for their dead child, Billy, who was run over by a beer lorry before the couple split up: there was no money then, but – eventually – Joe succeeds in having a beautiful headstone made up.

Now a beautiful stone it was, just beautiful, with “Billy Brady” wrote on it, and the day he was born and the day he died, just all perfect, in lovely letters. Good money paid for it, I'd say. And Joe had done that (48),

Janet says. Joe makes his way for Glasnevin, then, «where all the heros are buried» (49) to dig «a hole in the ground with a bit of an ould iron cross» (recalling the Celtic cross of ancient Ireland) «and put the stone in» (50). The encounter of the two occurs later, in the hospital where Joe has been taken, and where the future opens up for him, too:

«The boys are good?», he asks; «Oh, yeh», she says. «They're grand, they're only doing great.» (63)

And further on:

[...] «sure Jack's going out working next year.»

«He should try the power station.»

«What?» she says.

«Try for a job there. You know, in the station, shovelling the coal, and cleaning off after in the ould river of hot water.»

Further down again:

«Well, no, he wants to go on the buildins.»

«To fucking England?» I says.

«No. Joe. Dublin. The Financial Services Centre. The docklands and all» (63).

One may recover, from *The Pride of Parnell Street*, a picture of how Dublin has evolved between 1990 and the eve of the Millennium, with immigration increasing and previous emigrants often coming back to stay, or to bury hate, like Brian O'Doherty, recently.

The play has received phenomenal reviews from the press both in the UK and in Ireland²⁶. Another 2007 work by an Irish writer and director (a film this time) has triumphed, and obtained much praise by, among others, none other than Stephen Spielberg, who said it gave him inspiration for the rest of the year: *Once*, directed by John Carney. The film, focused on Dublin, won the two main actors (musicians in real life: Irish Glen Hansard and Czech Marketa Iglóva) an Oscar. Hansard plays a man referred to as the Guy who plays his music on street corners for petty cash. He meets the Girl, an Eastern European immigrant with her own musical aspirations. The meeting leads to a musical collaboration for the busker and the girl, and finally a potentially brighter future for both.

The title includes a reference to «one time and no more», «any one time», and «an indefinite time in the past» (according to the glosses in Webster's Dictionary for "once"). As in *The Pride of Parnell Street*, memory is involved and it is used creatively, in its leading to new relationships emerged, in this case, from an encounter of a Dubliner with a Czech migrant that will be followed, it is envisaged, by new migrations (the Guy goes to London to reunite with his girlfriend, the Girl's husband leaves for Dublin to reunite with his wife). Personal conflicts, in both the play and the film, are settled, and Dublin is the key for creative memory to function to make the past present and thus remember, or be remindful of, the future in order that a vision of something that hasn't happened yet can be anticipated.

Contemporary Dublin compares well with «them days was before the Africans came to Parnell Street and it was only ourselves knocking around and drinking in the pubs there» (9), with its new energies, and new resources for identity. «Sure a street – Janet says in the passage quoted above – is only a fucking film set, isn't it, there's new actors coming in all the time, new fucking stories» (28). One of them is the story of the Guy and the Girl; a story that happened in the past at one time, but also a story happening at any one time and at any one space, for that matter: in Dublin, thanks to – to use the lexicon of today's cultural theorists – the new global cultural flows, or: in any other of today's ethnoscares and ideoscares²⁷.

Notes

1. *The Burial of Patrick Ireland*, 17-20 May 2008 (the texts published as *Patrick Ireland 1972-2008*, Irish Museum of Modern Art) was edited by Christina Kennedy. It was the privilege of the author of this paper to be among the participants in the occasion at IMMA, Dublin. Brian O'Doherty's work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, and is owned by the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Hugh Lane Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin and the Hirshhorn Museum. It has been included in such international exhibitions as the Venice Biennale, Documenta and Rosc. In 1993 a thirty years' retrospective of his work was held at the Elvehjem Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in New York. Since 1969 he has been an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Art History at Barnard College of Columbia University, teaching art writing and the art film.

2. At the 1972 performance, the artist, masked and clothed in white, was painted head to toe in the charged colours of green and orange by the two assistants, resulting in a glimpse of the tricolour before it was extinguished in the cross-over confusion of colours (*Burial of Patrick Ireland at the Irish Museum of Modern Art*, in artdaily.com/news/24379/Burial-of-Patrick-Ireland-at-the-Irish-Museum-of-Modern-Art-#.UmaotpQjWQk, Wed).

3. M. Kimmelman, *Farewell Patrick Ireland*, in "New York Times", Art & Design section (May 21, 2008), http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/05/21/arts/20080522_IRELAND_SLIDESHOW_index.html.

4. A film documenting the symbolic burial of Patrick Ireland was launched at the Irish Film Institute at 7.00 pm on Friday 8 October 2010. Directed by Sé Merry Doyle, the film was produced by Vanessa Gildea and financed by the Irish Film Board and Loophole Film, http://www.imma.ie/en/page_212327.htm.

5. The notion of authenticity is exposed in J. Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, edited by Eugenio Barba, preface by Peter Brook, Routledge, New York 2002.

6. J. Cage, D. Charles, *For The Birds: John Cage in Conversation with Daniel Charles*, Marion Boyars, London 1981, p. 180.

7. In his article, *What is a Text?* Stephen Orgel states that «all theatrical literature must be seen as basically collaborative in nature» (D. S. Kastan, P. S. Stallybrass, eds., *Staging The Renaissance. Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, Routledge, New York 1991, p. 87).

8. The reference is to Galway "Bealtaine Festival", where Fishamble: the New Play Company presents *The Pride*, Galway, 20 May 2011 with assistance facilitated by Arts & Disability Ireland (audio described and captioned performance) during a five-week long national tour of Ireland, for audiences with disabilities. In its New York 2012 publicity "Culture Ireland", a programme for the promotion Irish art worldwide, includes *The Pride of Parnell Street* by Sebastian Barry among Director Jim Culleton's future work currently in Fishamble's repertoire for international touring (http://www.cultureireland.ie/downloads/CI_APAP2012.pdf).

9. "Spotlight on... Jim Culleton, Artistic Director of Fishamble", in *Meg. music/movies culture/events*, posted February 18, 2012. The interview with Clara Kumagai took place on the occasion of his production of *Bookworms* soon to be opening on the Abbey Theatre stage in Dublin (<http://www.meg.ie/spotlight-on-jim-culleton-artistic-director-of-fishamble/>).

10. American interest in Barry's play is evident in the programme of the 2012 American Conference for Irish Studies (October 18 through 20, 2012) where the panel "Emancipating Identities from the Troubles through the Celtic Tiger Era" features a talk on: The New Old Place: Immigration and Dublin Identity in Sebastian Barry's *The Pride of Parnell Street*.

11. The reference to Charlie Mingus' *Beneath the Underdog: His Life as Composed by Mingus* (Vintage, New York 1971) might be the result of a mental association.

12. S. Barry, *The Pride of Parnell Street*, Faber & Faber, London 2007. References will be supplied in parentheses in the text.

13. The three car bombs that exploded on Parnell street, Talbot street and South Leinster street on May 17, 1974 in Dublin, killed 26 people including a woman in her last days of pregnancy. The Ulster Volunteer Force claimed responsibility for the bombings in 1993; it was alleged that elements of British Security Forces were involved in the attack.

14. A short monologue from *The Pride of Parnell Street* was specially commissioned «as a part of Fishamble's production *She Was Wearing...* for Amnesty International's Stop Violence Against Women Campaign in March 2005. It was directed by Jim Culleton and performed by Catherine Walsh», in Barry, *The Pride of Parnell Street*, cit., unpagged.

15. The actors were Karl Shiels (Joe) and Mary Murray (Janet); the play Company, Fishamble, was founded in 1988 and based in Dublin. The play was on show from Sept 27 through October 14. The circumstance of the unprovidential goal scored by Totò Schillaci at Italia 90 world cup quarter finals caused the elimination of Ireland and the collapsing of any dream of participation in the world cup final.

16. The Post.ie <http://archives.tcm.ie/businesspost/2007/09/16/story26539.asp>.

17. A. Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia*, in A. Appadurai (ed.), *Globalization*, Duke University Press, Durham (NC) 2001, p. 76. The experience is physical, the brain being

involved. He bases the concept of “past present” upon the work of Charles S. Maier, *A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy, and Denial*, in “History and Memory”, 5, 1992, pp. 136-51.

18. Ivi, p. 57.

19. A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, vol. 1, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1996, p. 77.

20. Ivi, p. 72.

21. Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia*, cit., p. 65.

22. Ivi, p. 77.

23. S. Sassen, *Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization*, in Appadurai, *Globalization*, cit., pp. 260-78.

24. Ivi, p. 269.

25. Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia*, cit., p. 72.

26. As Síle Cleary sums up in “The Cork Independent” of April 24, 2008 (<http://www.corkindependent.com/entertainment/entertainment/the-pride-of-parnell-street>). The play was nominated for Best New Play Award at the Irish Times Irish Theatre awards 2008.

27. A. Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in “Public Culture”, vol. 2, n. 2, 1990, pp. 6-7.