Ireland and Irishness: The Contextuality of Postcolonial Identity

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Ireland and Irishness: The Contextuality of Postcolonial Identity

The porous boundaries of postcolonial studies are put to the test in examining the Irish question and its position in postcolonial studies. Scholars have explored Ireland through the themes of decolonization, diaspora, and religion, but we propose indigenous studies as a way forward to push the boundaries and apply an appropriate context to view the 1916 Commemorations, a likely focus of Irish Studies for years to come. To set the stage for Ireland, we will explore the existing literature on postcolonialism and Ireland's place within it first by reexamining the historical narrative, then moving into a postcolonial critique of indigenous articulations presented in the context of the 1916 Commemorations. We ultimately look to embrace a discussion about indigenous studies and its offerings to the Irish question. By analyzing the 1916 commemorations as a celebration of indigenous culture in a post-colonial state, the tensions of reclaiming within certain geopolitical realities reveals an unexplored space for the Irish question. These tensions are smoothed over by a re-claiming of the diaspora, uniting the mobile indigenous to their homeland as part of the ongoing re-imaging of the Irish postcolonial identity.

Theoretical Beginnings

Postcolonial studies offer an alternative to the binary, a way to flesh out the nuances and break boundaries. Edward Said, one of the key voices on the subject, states that "the main strengths of postcolonial analysis is that it widens, instead of narrows, the interpretive perspective, which is another way of saying that it liberates instead of further constricting and colonising the mind" (2003: 179). Given the limited amount of space granted to Irish Studies in academia, allow us here to also widen that lens by carving out a space for theoretical application free from the preconceptions of Irish exceptionalism and insignificance. In this essay, we will seek to fulfil Said's goal by widening the lens of analysis for Irish culture and identity proposing that the 1916 Easter Rising Commemorations would be well placed amongst postcolonial theorisations.

A few of these theorisations are worth highlighting from the outset as points of departure to position Ireland. Postcolonial studies recognise that each colonial experience is unique and shares only the original subjugation by the imperial power meaning that any generalisation across colonial experiences would miss the "uneven development" inherent in the colonial experience (Sidaway 2002: 14) as well as, its complex "aftereffects" (Power et al. 2006: 233). Furthermore, postcolonialism looks "to reveal the mutuality that colonialism sought to hide" in unveiling the discourse between the colony and coloniser as an ongoing negotiation (Noxolo 2006: 256). Most importantly, in applying postcolonial theory to Ireland, the "permeability of its boundaries" (Raghuram, Noxolo and Madge 2014: 122) will be highlighted as the Irish colonial and postcolonial situation blurs lines. In noting that it seeks to permeate boundaries, paramount those between coloniser and colonised, powerful and powerless, Ireland offers a further cross-cutting for postcolonial studies to see the intermixing of cultures in Britain's first colony. The

trauma, memory, cultural discourse, and overlapping of nationalisms opens the investigation of various theorisations within a single relationship.

According to Kearns (2001: 886), national identities have generally built around three 'essentially contestable' (Collini, 1979:15) terms, people, land and history. At the same time, arguments about anti-colonialism implied brutality, dispossession, loss and displacement, which have emerged as being central to issues of ethnicity, culture and identity. Kearns (2001:887) likewise argues that 'ethnicity and citizenship' remain highly contested in the co-creation of Irish identities. As Martinussen (1995) notes that there has been the lack of initial congruence between states and nations across the world which placed immense burden on their political and social systems. Brass (1991) goes on to distinguish between ethnic groups or categories as *ethnic communities and nationalities*. Indeed, we can identify two essential categories whereby there is a close congruence between nations and state and the legitimacy of the state is grounded by the majoritarian perceptions of the state. In the case of Ireland, there is no evidence of limited citizenship as seen among the diverse tribal entities of Africa. The indigenous Irish ethnic communities continue to profess strong emotions of being Irish as a nation. The unity of ethnic Irishness is complete in its sense now more than ever since the Easter Rising.

How then to deal with civic versus ethnic dimensions of the Irish question (see Kearns, 2001; 2001:889; Finnegan, 2014:166). Converging the key cultural and political arguments of Kearns it is significant to note that Irishness defined by their Celtic origins coalesces with arguments of both people and land that they have occupied for generations. This relates well with our considered arguments about residuality and indigeniety of the Irish, of which Northern Ireland

remains, but part of this residual identity. How far is ethnic distinctiveness critical for the establishment and commemoration of Irish Independence? Recognising the cultural identity of Irishness predominates the postcolonial era and becomes a precursor for forging a distinct political identity in a post IMF and now in the post Brexit era. This aspect is reiterated in over the 150 years of 1916 commemorations among the Irish diaspora.

Erasure of Irish indigeniety as the original inhabitants of the 26 counties of Ireland played a critical role in assessing how unsettledness disruptions left a residue of colonialism within the framing of Irish identity (Mullen, 2016). The Irish indigenous are central to our argument in the postcolonial setting, whereby the 'wildness' of Irishness was equated with the romantic primitivism of the noble 'savages' (Canny, 2008; Griffin, 2008). Indigenous to the land one inhabits shapes the identity, constructed and shaped by the livid experiences. It is their geographical identity, of being dispossessed and displaced that binds them as a nation. Irish people's identification with those oppressed by global colonialism has solidified their identity as a nation seeking to chart its own course in global geopolitics as seen in the case of support for the Palestinian struggle or that of the Catalonians or indeed of the Chechens. This Irish claim to affinity transcends the very Irishness and is reflected in its national contribution to global challenges, i.e. "the politics of empathy" (King, 2007:83). The postcolonial conundrum is that of the 'doubleness' of Irish transnational identity which claims affinity with both the Irish indigenous and to those oppressed beyond the Irish shores (see Mullen, 2016:84 for details).

The 'original Irish civilisation' stories in this sense feed into the indigenous and indigeniety debates because of extreme forms of racialisation enforced on the people since the Plantation by

the British. The Irish were de-historicised and de-culturalised as much as the Indians and were never seen as inhabitants nor legitimate owners of the Irish landscape. Cultivating the 'native Irish' identity became central to dismantling the oppressions of the past. The reclamation of the Irish language, and of their ballads, poems and songs reinforced the significance of a common origin (Lloyd, 1987:63). Irishness was associated with its relation and identification to that land-Ireland. Indigeniety therefore assiduously clings to claims of intrinsic kinship relations, of sovereignty that such kinships embody and as an identity positioning. Such an erasure of the sovereign Irishness was to racialise their identity (Barker, 2005; Mullen, 85).

Native Irish identity included Catholics and Protestants, tenants and landed gentry, including Anglo-Irish and Irish. Here the vision of 'property' acquired a cultural slant (Maurer, 2012). Indigeniety of culture and by extension property and all of the lakes and vales came under this narrative. Dispossession and displacement renders this indigenous identity to assume the centre stage in a postcolonial Ireland and has its reverberation across the Catholics in the Northern counties. Can we think of not just Ireland, but of Greater Ireland comprising of the diaspora flung far and wide across the continents? Today Irish trans (nationalism) can be best served when we recognise and reinforce the ethnic uniqueness of Irishness rather than being diluted by the civic identity of the diaspora.

By establishing a credible claim to these three criteria, a national identity can begin to be formed. In the case of the Irish national identity, questions surrounding the legitimacy to certain land claims, namely the six northeastern counties of the island, still exist nearly one hundred years after the formation of the Irish state to house this national identity. Despite these lingering, unanswered questions, we can conclude that the Irish have met these criteria and formed their

national identity. Beyond this formation is the need for maintenance. This maintenance comes in the form of commemoration. For the Irish state, the Easter Rising Commemoration serves to bring together these three components of national identity in the form of celebration and re-presentation to the Irish people.

Fr. Joseph McShane, President of Fordham University recently said to the American-Irish Historical Society Annual Gala,(http://newbelfast.com/sharing-the-burden/ accessed 31.1.2018)

> "We live with the burden of being Irish," he told his audience. "What exactly is the burden of being Irish? The burden of being Irish is rising to the challenge of embracing and living life, as the heroic figures of our past would have us live it. It means living life with the faith-filled bravado of Saint Brendan the Navigator, and with the generosity of heart and warm hospitality of Saint Brigid of Kildare.
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> It means living life with the same fresh, surprised belief that grace is lurking at every turn and in every face that so marked the life of our great Patriarch, Saint Patrick. It means living life with the same indomitable spirit of faith and adventure that led our immigrant ancestors to come here to these shores. It means living life with the same sense of humor and purpose that made it possible for our forebears to turn the language of the oppressor into a vehicle for the poetry of our lives.
>
> It means living life as if the lives of others depended on our mercy and kindness. It means turning the memory of those sufferings that stand at the center of our ethnic identity into a firm and unshakable determination to stand with and to champion the poor and marginalized wherever they are found — even if their names don't begin with Mc or O or Fitz. The burden of being Irish: bravado, wonder, hospitality, mercy, grace, compassion, advocacy, humour".

The point is whether this identity is a by-product of being a distinctive Irish ethnic group or rather that of being part of a political entity?

In this article, we draw upon all three terms and look at the pivotal, creative role each plays. In particular, we focus on the ways they act not only in defining national identity, but also an

indigenous Irish that has been previously overlooked. In defining this Irish indigenous, for whom the national identity and presumably Irish state are built to house, we peer into a space of disconnect created between revolutionary aspirations and actualization. Kearns wrote that, "preparing for revolution left little space for preparing for independence" (2001: 907). Despite how little that space may be, we find it a launching point for the exploration of commemoration through the eyes of an indigenous, unfulfilled Irish national identity. This small space has been neglected and worked around in the postcolonial study of Ireland. While many like Kearns allude to this space, the cave is left dark. More recently, Kearns refers to this space as the, "utopian future" (2014: 130); an unattainable, distant ideal that can never be fully realized except in so much as it serve to inspire revolution. The focus of this article is on the memorialization of this space as a necessity for the maintenance of a national identity built upon it. While precarious, this platform serves to present the national identity through commemoration within a scared Irish, indigenous space for the Irish indigenous. Given the ambiguous place Ireland has held and continues to hold in relation to the United Kingdom portion of the island, this balancing act cannot be presented as the dichotomous manichean representation many other nations rely on. Kearns recognizes this balancing acting in the reconciliation of the three threads of national identity (2001: 885) leading to a good versus evil view to motivate revolution. Our focus recognizes these three threads as long-standing crucial pieces that remain in the fabric of the national identity, but that have been and continue to be re-imagined with the recognition that the manichean storyline is no longer fitting in the current geopolitical atmosphere.

To begin our application of postcolonial theory, some historical narrative must be sketched to reveal Ireland's colonial history as well as the residual effects of this history. It is paramount to

begin with a realization from David Lloyd in which he connects the trauma of colonization to its ultimate, postcolonial recovery as the resulting state is a direct product of what he terms, "the colonial trauma" (Lloyd 2000b: 215). We therefore cannot understand the Irish state without considering that this state is not a "retrieval of a lost self or a lost culture", but rather, part of a process stemming from, "an apprehended loss and its perpetuated damage" (ibid.). While the definition of 'colonial' for our purposes, will be taken in turn, Lloyd draws our eyes to the disruption of a trauma as it hijacks a culture and utterly transforms any future, official colonization or not. In out postcolonial sketch of Ireland, we seek to unveil this fuller, more truthful portrait of a country grieving for a past never realized.

Ireland is a contentious case for postcolonial studies due to the difficulties of defining this long-lasting and evolving relationship[1], so much so that it is often pushed aside for its exceptionality. Unlike other British colonies, the Island of Ireland has a close geographical proximity to Britain. As a member of the western hemisphere it is inhabited by both Anglo-Irish and Irish Scots descendants along with the traditional indigenous Irish-white population. The struggle to define Ireland as a former colony and therefore justifying postcolonial status, arises as the binaries that traditionally characterise coloniser and colonised are obscured by the unique characteristics of the Anglo-Irish relationship. Defining Ireland as a colony blurs the lines, the basic binary

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[1] During the period of famine agricultural resources were traded in unequal terms. Today there is a well-established mutual trading in place, which reinforces the comparative advantage between the nation state. In fact, it is estimated that the volume of trade between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom far exceeds that between the European Union and either Britain or Ireland.

postcolonialism is built on, (i.e.), there is a foreign subjugated group and an imposing

imperialising entity. Recognising Ireland as a distinct definition of being colonial, we rely on two

influential theorists, Homi Bhabha and Joep Leerssen, to illustrate the Anglo-Irish relationship as

postcolonial.

We refer here to what Homi Bhabda describes as "colonial mimicry" defined as,

> the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is
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> almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is
>
> constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must
>
> continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha 1997: 153).

Ireland's colonial institutions mirrored the imperial power, utilized its linguistic construction,

and retained only a hint of indigenous culture; just enough to be not quite British. Bhabha goes

on to state, "The menace of mimicry is its double vision, which is disclosing the ambivalence of

colonial discourse also disrupts its authority…a result of …the partial representation/recognition

of the colonial object" (ibid.: 155). What Bhabha has described is the Anglo-Irish relationship in

noting that these islands are both similar and different, British and not at the same time. To aid in

understanding how colonialism relates to Ireland, Bhabha offers a framework of colonial

discourse as Ireland looks to resemble Britain, rather than part of the British Empire; an object to

represent the imperial power without seeming powerless. How then can we parcel out the

distinctions of what is colonial if it 'mimicked' the imperial power and in the case of Ireland, had

700 years of practice? The constant ambiguities of the Anglo-Irish relationship will be explored

blurring the empire-colony binary as the evolving dynamic of power and identity is outlined in the historical narrative to follow.

Joep Leerssen offers an unveiling of this ambiguity demonstrating how Ireland fits postcolonial theory (and potentially only postcolonial theory can do it justice) in stating:

> The ambiguous case of Ireland, both part of Europe and part of a denigrated colonial periphery, hugely complicates this straightforward binariness. Ireland is subject to hegemonic representation, but also has access to it. English exoticism did not silence the Irish voice as it silenced the native voices from the colonies; conversely, when Ireland uses language of exoticism, it does so in less ethnocentrist ways than in England. With Irish authors, it is not just a matter of watching or being watched, seeing or being seen: Ireland is in the Twilight between First and Third World (1998: 173 quoted in Lennon 2004: xxix).

Postcolonial theory illuminates these distinctions beyond the Manichean definitions and delves into the cultural complications that challenge Irish theorisation. Ireland is exceptional due to both its geographical position (Whelan 2003:94 and Kenny 2004a: 22), long history with Britain and its colonies (Said 1993: 284, Howe 2000: 146; Crosbie 201: 3-5; Cook 1993; Silvestri 2009), and the evolving political situation in Northern Ireland, to name a few. These complexities arise out of the historical circumstances of Ireland's initial conquest and its changing conditions throughout the centuries which is why sketching the historical narrative is vital to understanding the colonial and postcolonial condition of Ireland. The struggle to define Ireland as a colony and

therefore postcolonial, arises from a resistance to qualify the colonised as an identity subservient to the coloniser where these distinctions remain especially blurry in the Anglo-Irish relationship. The ambiguity characterising the Anglo-Irish relationship has been highlighted by both Bhabha and Leerssen as a key feature of the discourse amongst the British Isles and a feature we hope to tease out further in the following sections. We propose that the exceptionalism so many scholars point to, does not remove Ireland from postcolonial theorisations but instead is its key to national survival in their postcolonial world, existing largely truncated from its early imaginings. Further criticism circulates about the field of postcolonial studies that requires address. One in particular, is that postcolonial theory subjugates those it seeks to represent by prioritizing a colonial identity above all others. Stoler and Cooper argue the term 'postcoloniality' itself is problematic for it "suggests an essential quality to the fact of having been colonies, implying colonialism was the one thing of importance to people who live in what were former colonies" (1997: 33). This effort to down play the impact of colonization is the mind set postcolonial studies works to reverse. No longer can the effects of colonization, especially the residual ongoing consequences, be ignored. While most former colonies have moved beyond the colony identity in the eyes of the global and academic community, colonialism is and has been a subtle force. The effects of such an experience cannot and are not wiped away by the achievement of independence. Hence, the 'post' in 'postcoloniality' opens the door to study these aftereffects where they prevail. For our work, this is an important criticism as these tensions within the field reflect the tensions of an Irish postcolonial 'diagnosis' as some critics would claim. While postcolonial studies could utilize theory to pigeon-hole a nation (and it is something to be weary of), the overall theme of colonialism (i.e.), having been subjugate, cannot go unnoticed. In the interest of avoiding pigeon-holing Ireland as only a former colony, the following historical

narrative will shed light on the wider Irish experience focusing specifically on that perspective rather than the dominant dialogue of the coloniser.

In sketching this historical narrative, we will rely heavily on the work of R. F. Foster as a highly-respected historian in the field, to present Ireland's subjection to British imperialism as a dialogue between the two islands. Following this basic framework, we will move into the major themes characterizing this relationship in the twentieth century: decolonization, religion, internal colonialism, and the diaspora to illuminate the complex interplay at work in this postcolonial state. This Irish Studies groundwork will then be layered with the offerings of Indigenous Studies, highlighting the importance of time and space to the indigenous Irish. Finally, these layers will coalesce in the portrayal of this indigenous identity through the Easter Rising Commemorations of the past one hundred years. In doing so we are recognizing the Irish as a postcolonial, indigenous nation celebrating a key moment in their decolonization one hundred years on and amidst its lingering scars.

The Anglo-Irish Historical Narrative

Foster begins his masterful study, *Modern Ireland,* in 1600, the year of the last great resistance to British conquest by Hugh O'Neill in defense of Gaelic Ireland (1989:3-5). Like other British imperialist endeavors, this conquest was justified as a civilizing mission to a backwards people with a "feasting and fighting" culture and Roman Catholic beliefs (Ohlmeyer 2004: 32 and Foster 1989: 33-35). The Irish nation then came to be defined in a Manichean fashion as, "the very antithesis of their new rulers" (Kiberd 1995: 9 quoted in Kearns 2001: 899). To fulfill this civilizing mission, plantations were established bringing the Irish indigenous under the power of

English landowners and introducing conformity in laws and practices by translating English techniques to Ireland (Foster 1989: 65). For the first half of the seventeenth century then, the conquest of Ireland emulates British conquest elsewhere. This meant an experience of "state-sponsored imperialism, which promoted military conquest, plantation and active colonization… alongside more reforming assimilationist policies" (Ohlmeyer 2004: 28). This is the point where the straightforward comparisons end and Ireland begins to stand alone.

Ireland's proximity to England made its conquest unique from others to come, as what occurred in Britain had a more sustained and substantial impact due to the flow of people across the Irish Sea. The most famous example of this exchange came at the end of the seventeenth century with the Battle of the Boyne between William of Orange and James II at the siege of Derry, "the high point of Protestant Ireland's colonial nationalism" (Foster 1989: 147). A battle for the English crown occurred in Ireland with the support of the settler colony; a colony built on ideas of superiority and civility in direct opposition to the Irish "other", "alien", and "inferior" (Cairns and Richard 1988:8). Hand in hand with this superiority, came a dictation of the Irish culture into elements that could be reworked or assimilated with the British culture opposed to those elements that, "must either be erased or encoded as a symptom of under development" (Lloyd 2000b: 219). As a result, all aspects of the colonized culture are transformed through assimilation, erasure, or renunciation.

As the politics of the Empire overflowed to the colony, Ireland became immersed under the Union Jack. Throughout the eighteenth century, the grip of the British Empire tightened as the "Irish language start[ed] its long retreat, the religious faith of the majority embattled and

subordinated, and the customs and social institutions of 'Englishness' [became] strongly identified with status, wealth and power" (Howe 2000: 31). The Irish indigenous held a subaltern position to the English politically, culturally, and ethnically resulting in an altered nation, put on a new, changed historical trajectory.

Prior to the Act of Union in 1801, Ireland was clearly a colonial possession as it lacked the benefits of membership that Scotland exhibited in its ability to trade freely within the British Empire (Bartlett 2004:67). Discourse surrounding the colonization reflects the goals of the British Empire to civilize the 'inferior' Irish with assimilationist policies. The Act of Union, marks a shift in this discourse as Ireland is formally brought into the British Empire. The Union meant the abolition of the Irish House of Commons (Foster 1989: 193) as Ireland would send representatives to Westminster, but it "remained a special case" as the Viceroy, Chief Secretary, and Castle continued to act as governing bodies unlike Scotland or Wales (Foster 1989: 289 and Bartlett 2004: 87-88). While Ireland gained power and privilege in the Union, its relationship with Britain was not one of equal partnership. England remained the dominant, paternal figure as their relationship adapted to the new worldview. As part of the Empire, Ireland was both "subject and agent" of Britain being acted upon and acting within as members of the Empire's colonizing missions elsewhere (Kenny 2004b: 91-92). The "Land League" and "Home Rule" Movements exposed these tensions in the next century as Ireland looked to retain the economic benefits of Empire without the political subjugation of the Union (Jackson 2004: 137).

Following the Act of Union, the pivotal event for the nineteenth century Anglo-Irish relationship was the Irish Famine. For our purposes, the Famine serves to highlight the ways in which Ireland

was not treated as an equal member in the United Kingdom, but rather a colonial possession (Kenny 2004a: 14). One of the ambiguities of this period is how Ireland was viewed as too close not to be part of the United Kingdom, but far enough away that it remained different, distinct, and 'other'. This blurred line grows blurrier with time but in as much as Ireland was a special case in the British Empire, it was in fact a part of the Empire. As it is further teased at and complexities exposed, the basic premise of colonialism and conquering remains. The Famine illustrates this colonial condition as Ireland was "unevenly assimilated…. [to] aspects of British Culture" (Lennon 2004: 168) (e.g.), lacking industrialization and leaving the island dependent on agriculture (Foster 1989: 321 and 345). Such a largely subsistence economy was incapable of providing surplus resulting in increased misery of the population. This misery became a watershed moment in Irish history for the political consequences it spawned as the illumination of the colonial condition shaped calls for reform. Begun in the land agitation following the Famine, it soon became clear that reforms in Ireland were not a priority for the Westminster parliament and calls grew for Home Rule as the next step in the evolving Anglo-Irish relationship (Jackson 2004: 125). The first Home Rule Bill for Ireland granting a Dublin parliament with limited legislative powers subservient to Westminster was introduced and rejected in 1886 (ibid., 128). Thus, the movement gained speed beginning with the Land League seeking privileges and rights for serfs and landed gentry before blossoming into Home Rule as a shift towards self-governance. This had consequences in other colonial possessions such as India, Australia, etc.

The distinctions of Ireland highlighted by the Famine and its consequences have led to a range of theorizations of the Anglo-Irish relationship within the Union attempting to capture the blurry

overlap between colony and Empire with limited success. One widely utilized categorization is that of "internal colonialism" put forth by Michael Hechter whereby modernization creates a core and a periphery to service that core. What makes the internal colony unique is its "degree of administrative integration", "the extensiveness of citizenship", based on "the existence of geographical continuity", and, to some extent, "length of association between periphery and core". On the other hand, colonies have the addition of a "prestige of the peripheral culture" (Hechter 1975: 349). Hechter's categorization is then largely based on a value judgment of the native culture, despite his defense of an economic basis for the binaries of core and periphery (ibid.: 9 and 13). William Sloan offers a similar critique of Hechter's categories differentiated by "cultural prestige" as it turns the work to "simply a narrow examination of ethnicity" (Sloan 1979: 349). Despite the problems with Hechter's definition, internal colonialism has become a common middle ground to avoid the contentious political implications of a colonial classification by recognizing Ireland as unique from the rest of the United Kingdom, without drawing parallels to India and other non-white colonial possessions (Lloyd 2000a: 382-3). However, Lloyd does find the Famine to be the result of, "a distinctly colonial matrix of forces regulated by a racializing discourse on the Irish" (Lloyd 2000b: 220). For all the recognition of a middle ground definition of colonialism, one thing is suffice to say, the Irish existed in a subaltern state requiring British authorization to remedy the Great Famine.

Distinct from Hechter, Anne McClintock's assessment offers a sharpened description of Ireland's internal colonialism as the "dominant part of a country treats a group or region as if it were a foreign colony" (Carroll 2003: 8). Utilizing McClintock's definition of Ireland as a region of the United Kingdom managed as a colony (with the disastrous response to the Famine), we

can conclude that Ireland was a colony at least culturally, while holding disagreement and ambivalence on the nature and content of its political colonialism. Due to the complexity of the British imperial political system and in the interest of casting a manageable net, we will focus our discussion on the cultural ramifications of this entanglement with the political and economic arguments providing only the context. Amidst this ambivalence stands enough distinctiveness, otherness to embolden the Irish to make claims for independence and aspire towards their ideal nation-state (Kearns 2001: 886). Our key argument highlights the cultural distinctions that justified colonization of Ireland and an attempted stamping out or assimilation of Irish culture. Indeed, ambivalence seeks to destabilize the claim for absolute versus relative differences on its authenticity as the 'colonial other' in a specific geographical space (Nandy 1983). Such ambivalence has emerged primarily due to Ireland's engagement with the imperial regime across the empire. In a sense Ashis Nandy presents the persistence of the affects of colonialism on that which is Irish, despite the 1921 break from the Union. Politics was only one battleground for the Irish identity. Perhaps the pressure to be the obverse of everything British helps to distort the traditional priorities of being Irish or it does not? Maybe it binds them even more irrevocably to the European identity than being a vassal of the British. Colonialism therefore becomes a cultural, psychological and an epistemological battleground. Thus it is true that colonial engagement between Ireland and Britain created a demand for a self-image of Irishness, which was distinct from other colonies and appendages. While western consciousness emerged distinctly as non-Oriental, the Irish consciousness sought to establish its own identity, which was not British! What we have here is a 'uncolonised Irish mind', different from the natives in other colonies.

Ireland's unequal membership in the United Kingdom is manifested in cultural colonialism. As Hechter has drawn our attention, the cultural distinctions between core and periphery are an equally important part in colonization akin to what he views as formal political and economic categories of colonialism. Rather than Hecther's value judgement of "prestigious culture", colonialism can be assessed for the aspects of the nation that differentiate core and periphery be it political, economic, cultural or likely a combination of these forces. Ireland stands as a distinct and unequal member of the United Kingdom throughout the nineteenth century. The Irish cultural colonization entailed a marginalization of the Irish language, customs and religion in conjunction with Anglicization. The process of cultural colonization intertwined the British and Irish traditions and complicates the search to define Ireland's position vis-à-vis the United Kingdom as the two nations continue to converge, notably in major sporting events such as rugby, football, golf, and cricket. A political definition of colonialism falls short of encompassing the vast complications of the Act of Union, but a definition focused on the cultural ramifications of colonialism allows for a teasing of the indigenous Irish with the postcolonial fine-toothed comb.

The twentieth century brought an end to colonial rule in Ireland following the landmark events of the Home Rule Movement, World War I, 1916 Easter Rising, the Anglo-Irish War (1919-1921), partition of Ireland, and the creation of the Irish Free State (Foster 1989: Chapter 20). The 1920s in Ireland was dominated by a "self-definition against Britain-cultural and political" (ibid.: 516) as it worked to decolonize and shore up the new state. This included Eamon de Valera's 1937 Constitution and exit from the British Commonwealth in 1949 (ibid.: 566). As this historical narrative outlines, the Anglo-Irish relationship underwent many adaptations making it difficult to

categorize or generalize across time and space. As Gerry Smyth notes, "English colonialism in Ireland is exemplary in the degree to which it was unstable, inconsistent and partial. A corollary is that Irish history reveals a narrative of decolonization which has also been unstable, inconsistent and partial" (1998: 10). Decolonization, as Smyth alludes to, is a continuum that Ireland has progressed upon from the beginnings of the Home Rule movement in the 1880s and one that it continues along, in certain respects still today.

A theme of ambivalence lingers over the status of Ireland throughout the modern period and, even after solidifying its independence, the cultural decolonization remains under construction. Let us pause here and return to Kearn's "utopian future", that unattainable, distant ideal that can never be. In line with the work of David Lloyd's "transformation" due to colonial trauma, we can recognize all the futures for Ireland that never will be as we grieve the past that never could be. In imagining Ireland with its full national identity uninhibited and unquestioned, we see an Ireland without the experience of colonial trauma. Would the questions on Ireland's third thread of national identity, historical justification for land, exist without that traumatic experience? What other events in Irish history would be celebrated in place of the Easter Rising and how would that version of nationalism be presented and re-presented at subsequent commemorations? How would the Irish nation have grown and developed this unaltered, non-colonized national identity? These unanswerable questions serve to highlight the "utopian future" in the minds of the nation through every presentation and defense of national identity. As an Irish nation continues to grieve for the past that never was, the Easter Rising Commemorations offer a shoring up of the national identity's contestable threads, while moving towards acceptance of their adapted future. Ireland, like other postcolonial states, will always retain some decolonizing

initiative in seeking out distinctions to contrast colonial remnants, but its geographical uniqueness gives strength to colonial residuality incomparable to other spaces. The lingering after effects of intense colonialism remains as an after thought, as demonstrated in the recent parleys associated with the run up to Brexit- Northern Ireland and Brussels. This decolonizing initiative can be traced through the 1916 Easter Rising Commemorations at the twenty-fifth, fiftieth, seventy-fifth, and one-hundredth anniversaries investigating the elements held onto in contrast to those forgotten. As exercises in modern-day indigenous articulation amongst the complications of an expansive diaspora, demands of globalization, and redresses of political scenes; each commemoration offers a snapshot of how the decolonizing initiative balanced colonial residuality throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries. Before exploring these snapshots of commemorations, some contexts from indigenous studies is necessary to address the 'Irish Question' particularly in seeking to highlight the indigenous culture that is attempting to re-present a pre-conquest Ireland as a postcolonial identity.

Offerings of Indigenous Studies on the Irish Set

As James Clifford reminds us, "indigenous identities must always transcend colonial disruptions…we were here before all that; we are still here; we will make a future here" (2001: 482). What Clifford has hit upon is the importance of space to the indigenous identity and the duration of being in that space aligned with Kearn's national identity and historical justification model. Given this description, what is indigenous in the Irish context? As mentioned above, Britain and Ireland have a long, tangled history making deciphering any aspect of culture as purely Irish quite challenging. Making matters even more difficult are efforts to represent that indigenous culture in a modern world, a world where it has never existed before. Pulling the past

into the present and projecting it as an ideal for the future; finding roots that may have been

trampled and providing them with viability, and enough viability to build a modern nation-state

on, is the challenge for Irish indigenous representation. David Lloyd expresses this "cultural

nationalism" as an "act of retrieval to reroot the cultural forms that have survived colonisation in

the deep history of a people and to oppose them to the hybrid and grafted forms that have

emerged in the forced mixing of cultures that colonization entails" (1999: 89). Lloyd's "cultural

nationalism" stands as a task for the post-colonial state in which the culture that "survived

colonization" is uncovered and re-asserted. By applying theories from indigenous studies to the

Irish state, we look to identify how a cultural nationalism is accomplished by identifying the

features that survived or were deemed necessary to re-vive, to aid in asserting a distinctly Irish

identity as not only anti-colonial but post-colonial. In addition, the mixing of new identities with

the indigenous as a modern identity is necessary. In the case of Ireland, this new identity

involves European Union membership and participation in the global economy. As the state

wrestles with these two versions of identity, one from the past and the other looking towards the

future, a cultural nationalism remains the goal but one that is at times subsumed by other forces.

Essentially, we are looking to answer the question, what is indigenous about Ireland and how

does it speak throughout Ireland's decolonization?

When thinking of the Irish or what it means to be Irish, some prominent cultural representations

spring to mind: Emerald Isle, Book of Kells, Shamrocks, Guinness, Irish Dance, Gaelic Football,

Hurling, St. Patrick's Day, Irish language, Catholic Church, Yeats, Joyce, and Heaney. These

features are entirely unique to Ireland and together they present an image, an expectation of what

an estimated 70 million people worldwide call their homeland (Ireland Department of Foreign

Affairs and Trade 2015). Regardless of how authentic these symbols are, the Irish identity clings to them. There exists a strong emotional connection as these are utilized and reproduced in celebrations of Irishness, most notably St. Patrick's Day worldwide. Ireland is both eternal and primordial in utilizing symbols of the past to project an ideal for the future as what has always existed and will continue to exist. By indigenous Irish, we look to those on the island who, as Clifford highlighted previously, "transcend colonial disruptions" (2001:482). The greatest Irish colonial disruptions being the plantations of Ulster, upsetting the indigenous Irish and inserting imperial strongholds in the Northeastern corner of the island. The northeastern six counties would then resist decolonization and independence effectively supplanting an Irish indigenous claim to homogeneity of their homeland. The Irish who have ties to the land of the twenty-six county Republic then begin to define and assert a cultural nationalism that survived colonization and is now able to thrive in the Republic, no longer subaltern to a British cultural identity. In decolonizing, the state moves from the political question of how to govern, to the cultural one of defining this nation. As Robert Warrior states in response to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work, "Speaking… is something a former subaltern might do" (2011: 90). How then do the Irish speak as an indigenous that was formally subaltern and who are they speaking to?

It is important to keep in mind the theme of ambiguity characterizing Ireland's decolonization as it attempts a persisting dialogue but is ruptured, both internally and externally, altering the young state's identity. Before examining how this is portrayed in present-day Ireland through the Centennial Easter Rising Commemorations, the field of indigenous studies will be explored highlighting how theorisations can be applied to the Irish Question in a postcolonial state.

Indeed, a postcolonial *"indigeneity"* is enhanced by diasporic roots of Irishness scattered across the globe from Bermuda to Boston and from India to Australia.

Indigenous studies introduced messiness to postcolonial theory begun out of binary distinctions with the work of Edward Said's *Orientalism,* later complicated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Since the rise of these theorizations, they have been translated across time and space, but relatively little of this work has been successfully translated to Ireland leaving it in a state of exceptionalism, ultimately incomparable due to its geographic location, incorporation into the United Kingdom, and continuing relationship with Britain.[2] In opposition to this view, we propose a translation of indigenous studies (keeping in mind the entangled subaltern studies), to Ireland testing the boundaries of postcolonial studies and working towards a further breaking of the binaries. Amongst other conceptualizations of the indigenous, James Clifford's "Indigenous Articulation" will be highlighted and applied to the indigenous representations in Ireland offering an entrance for questions of how the Irish indigenous speak and are heard as a postcolonial state.

The Irish Question has been largely unanswered in the field of indigenous studies, a great oversight due to the prominence of indigenous identity in this postcolonial state. As a result,

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[2] For discussions of this exceptionalism, see J.D. Sidaway (2002) "Postcolonial Geographies: Survey-Explore- Review" in Blunt, Alison and Cheryl McEwan (eds.) *Postcolonial Geographies.* New York: Continuum Publishing. 11-28 and Joe Cleary (2003) "'Misplaced Ideas'? Colonialism, Location, and Dislocation in Irish Studies" in Carroll, Clare and Patricia King (eds.) *Ireland and Postcolonial Theory.* Notre Dame UP. 16-45.

theories arising from other spaces will be translated and evaluated in the Irish context. James Clifford's Pacific peoples offer an interesting comparison with their complex history of colonization, decolonization and postcolonial status entangled with the diaspora and indigenous populations in juxtaposition. By indigenous, we refer to what Clifford describes as having experienced imperialism and then "making strong claims for autonomy" (2001: 472). Like most academic definitions, it falls short of encompassing all the potential complexities, but is necessary as a spring board to theorisations. As the historical narrative has laid out, Ireland fits this definition grounding the Irish as indigenous. Clifford goes on to further explore this conception as he contrasts the diaspora seeing their homeland as past and distant, while the indigenous view is present and future; land connects them while time separates them (ibid.: 482). Both the diaspora and indigenous played key roles in articulating Irish culture. Add Irishness

Rather than push Ireland aside then for its 'exceptional' geographic positioning within the British Empire, we draw upon this, as its geography is the raison d'état for the deeply intertwined indigenous and diaspora. As time accumulates to push them apart, their ties to the land and its prominence to their origin story sew them together. We will return to this discussion of the Irish diaspora's influence in the conclusion, but we wish to draw attention to a distinctly indigenous identity tied to the land from the past to present and into the future, apart from the diaspora's existing in memory, though they can and do intersect.[3]

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[3] Discussions of the Irish diaspora can be found in Tim Pat Coogan (2000) *Wherever the Green is Worn* and R. F. Foster's (1989) *Modern Ireland* Ch. 15: "Ireland Abroad".

Before exploring how the Irish indigenous articulate through the Easter Rising Commemorations, we must take as our starting point, the 1916 Easter Rising itself; a moment the Irish national identity is re-born. Following the transformation of the Irish nation from the trauma of colonization, comes the pulling together of Kearn's national identity. The Irish state that meets emerged from the Rising and Irish Civil War was not a recognizable state for the nation. Due to the presence of the British Empire, an irrevocable shift had occurred. As the "utopian future" of an Irish nation without the British, came into the imagination, so too did the realities of all that could not be undone. The Irish state, whose snapshots of commemoration we flip through, was born out of this reconciling moment; the trauma of colonization, the lagging thread of national identity, and the "utopian future" that was projected from a utopian, unmarred, nonexistent past.

In exploring how the indigenous articulate, Clifford argues it is as a political phenomenon in which they are "finding ways to exist in a multiplex modernity, but with a difference derived from cultural tradition, from landedness, and from ongoing histories of displacement, travel, and circulation" (ibid.: 483). This alludes to the balancing act involved in 'imagining' a modern nation-state based out of a primordial cultural tradition (Anderson 1991). This articulation is further constrained by the historical moment and "power of place" (Clifford 2001: 482) in working to unite history and geopolitical realities, resulting in a precarious articulation. In the case of Ireland, this precariousness is evident in the Anglo-Irish relationship especially that of the twentieth century as the nation matured from a "Subaltern" to becoming a "Speaker". Ireland's cultural nationalism began with what Said termed "antinomian nationalism, which expressed not co-operation but antagonism" (1993: 252) as the nation-state focused more on

what it was not (i.e.), British. Since leaving the Commonwealth though, Ireland has sought what Franz Fanon called a "national consciousness" through assimilation, exoticism and authentic nationalism in piecing together a distinct national narrative (Larsen 2000:36-7 and 49). Throughout this century, the indigenous articulation has changed significantly; interestingly though, it is not what is being articulated but how it is being articulated that has shifted.[4]

Helen Gilbert explained indigenous representations borrowing the simple, poetic phrase that, "time does not pass, it accumulates" (Beaucom 2005: 325 quoted in Gilbert 2013: 199). Gilbert explores indigenous representation through an Aboriginal "community's subtle but enduring adaptability to changes in their physical and social environments by telescoping diverse moments in time" (2013: 205). Like Gilbert's Aboriginals, the indigenous Irish have traversed time and maintained a connection to the land by "accumulating time". The indigenous Irish work to build upon the layers of culture in existence and offer an accessible display of these layers through the Easter Rising narrative. With increased exposure due to globalization, the Irish identity looks to portray a recognizable indigenous to the world without losing the timeline its depends on for authenticity.

In the interest of accessibility, indigenous articulation has changed especially in the context of partition as the state has come to formally accept the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland. As Clifford draws attention to, the indigenous culture does not exist in all or nothing

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[4] Indigenous articulation being influenced by, as Spivak (1988) has proposed, who is listening and changing audience of world stage with Ireland's admittance to the European Union in 1973 could be one factor greatly affecting this change in articulation.

forms of indigeneity, but as one that evolves and survives (2001: 478). Just as the Irish indigenous culture was transformed by colonization, it continues to undergo evolutions as it navigates the boundaries of modern statehood in presenting traditional culture while restrained by its geopolitical reality: partition. With the birth of the Irish state, de Valera's Constitution (1937) claimed the whole island of Ireland for the nation-state (Foster 1989: 544), but this article has since been revoked with the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement as part of the peace process in Northern Ireland causing a critical re-evaluation of the connection between the Irish indigenous and the geographical unit inhabited. Practically it is the difference between the island of Ireland and the country of the Republic, the opposition of geography and politics becomes visible. As Joseph Lennon has eloquently portrayed the evolution of the Irish culture in his work *Irish Orientalism,* stating that,

> Adopted in the realm of culture, the doctrine of synechism implies that our significant cultural tropes will develop new variations, mutate old forms, or revert to supposedly traditional forms without losing traceable historical strands, that elements of culture continue even when rejected. Moreover, a discourse is not only continuous but cumulative-it gathers tropes, tendencies, and political strategies along the way, tropes that continue to help define the culture or help individuals within the culture make sense of the world (2004: xxii).

What Lennon hits upon here is not only the recognition of cultural evolution, but the way it is influenced by various forces. The geopolitical reality of Northern Ireland separated from the Irish

cultural nationalism presented in the Republic has created a variation in which the indigenous territory is re-evaluated as time accumulates.[5]

Falling prey to British imperialism, the Irish nation was both indigenous and subaltern, effectively silenced as a colonial possession for centuries. In line with the work of Robert Warrior, we propose a space for the overlap of subaltern and indigenous studies in Ireland. Building on Spivak's premise that the subaltern can not be heard, and recognizing that the indigenous are often also subaltern, how then are the indigenous heard when they are no longer subaltern? As in the case of Ireland, where the indigenous culture has evolved in response to outside forces, we look to see how it is restrained specifically by lingering colonial forces as it expresses a relationship to the whole island. Byrd and Rothberg note the connection between subaltern and indigenous studies as "both movements struggle with how to articulate the tensions between overweening colonial power and resilient, resistant actors" (2011: 6). The categorizations carry different connotations though, as subaltern is a group fighting for rights while indigenous is looking to overthrow power (Desai 2011: 63-4) indicating the appropriateness of asserting indigenous identity only when it acts as an inclusive force (ibid.: 64). Ireland experiences this struggle of balance as it navigates decolonization and emerges from a subaltern position with an initially exclusionary indigenous identity, that it now seeks to balance and correct. This is being deployed through the gradual integration of new migrants from Europe, Africa among others. Current indigenous articulation will be explored drawing particular attention to how this display is restrained in post-peace process Ireland weakening the theoretical binaries of colonial-postcolonial and indigenous-diaspora. There is a coming of age for the Irish

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[5] With the approaching Centennial of Partition in 2021, their indigenous identity ties to the land will likely return to the spotlight.

diaspora and its indigenous, in-situ population. The rise of the Celtic Tiger and its positioning

within the global G8 community, the fall of the Celtic Tiger and the eventual humiliating

submission to the IMF dictates and more recently, the challenge of Brexit and its relation to the

emergent political economic conditionalities imposed by EU membership, and its geographical

proximity to Northern Ireland and to the United Kingdom are challenges which need to be

worked through. Inclusive indigeniety still remains a work in progress for the Republic of

Ireland as it emerges from the British shadow of subalternity and into an open Europeanization.

Taking hold of the intersection of indigeneity, postcolonialism and Irish Studies at these specific

moments in time requires a recognition of their subtle and partial overlap that serves to blur the

lines just enough that it demands our investigation. As we move amongst these fields, we hope to

continue the blurring of lines, revealing space for further investigation.

Portraying the Indigenous

The Centennial Easter Rising Commemorations are fraught with tension for the Irish

postcolonial state. They offer moments of remembrance for the foundation of the modern state,

the beginnings of decolonization and the trauma involved in the tearing down of the old and

constructing a-new, a recognition of how far the Irish state has come and how far it wishes to go;

balancing between the binaries of remembering and forgetting. The indigenous studies

framework provides a fresh outlook on the Irish identity in a postcolonial state seeking to

articulate the indigenous identity as inclusive without compromising its geopolitical positioning

or historical narrative begun in the Easter Rising. The Commemorations act as landmarks for the

decolonizing initiative as Ireland moves beyond the political and developmental trauma picking

up aspects of cultural nationalism along the way (Whelan 2003: 94-95). This process of

decolonization entails returning to what existed before as a way to "differentiate the primordial nation from those who occupy it" (ibid.: 95). As a result of the Easter Rising and subsequent independence, the Irish nation has the power to re-write history, "the [formerly] contested field where colonisers and colonized struggled for the right to give meaning" (Kearns 2001: 900). As they solidify control of their narrative, commemoration provides a stage for the Irish nation to present its re-imagined origin story.

Geopolitical realities mean the Irish indigenous are working to reclaim and re-imagine what, in practical purposes cannot be reclaimed. As the island was transformed by colonization significantly in economic and political structures, any reclaiming would be cultural, based on language and religion as the key aspects of indigenous culture which survived. Pulling back for a moment, a reminder of Lloyd's transformation from colonization that notes how any recovering is instead a grieving and searching is instead a grieving and searching in a post-traumatic state, comes to gain particular importance in the realm of culture (2000b: 215). This thread of historical justification is a product of the imagination. The state that needs to build national identity out of a trauma then has no choice but to look to the aspects of culture for unlike the political and economic structures; culture can be re-imagined and re-presented with the most viable pieces that survived the colonial trauma. In the case of Ireland, language and religion serve as the cultural bedrock of the nation that were resurrected for the post-colonial state.

Many of these cultural markers were reclaimed in *Eamon de Valera's Constitution* (Ede V Constitution) recognizing the prominence of the Irish language and "special position" of the Catholic Church (Foster 1989: 544). However, as the Irish indigenous have succumbed to

geopolitical pressure, both articles in the Ede V Constitution have been compromised or neglected opting instead for integrationist principles and conciliatory gestures towards those outside these cultural features. Throughout the last century, the Irish nation has re-evaluated its cultural hallmarks continuously as its relationship with their colonizer necessitates in the interest of peace. Does this then constitute a failure to imagine the community because it is "unimaginable" under current conditions (Noxolo 2006: 264)? How has the Irish nation's continual re-imagining occurred, successful or not? Could its exceptionality be the key to this continual re-imagining allowing for the nation's chameleon-like survival resulting in the nation represented today? We argue that what we are viewing in Ireland is not the failure to imagine a community but an ongoing evolution of that community as it works to reclaim amidst colonial residuality. This evolution of the decolonizing initiative is traced through the twenty-fifth, fiftieth, seventy-fifth, and one-hundredth commemoration ceremonies of the 1916 Easter Rising highlighting the Irish indigenous cultural displays under continuous negotiation with the burden of time's accumulation.

Irish Studies is likely to see various theorizations of the Centennial Commemoration from all disciplinary fields for years to come so we will not attempt to reiterate points sure to be made elsewhere. Rather, we wish to position the Commemoration as a "border crossing" in both temporal and spatial fields. The Commemorations cannot exist without jumping from past to present to future and from Republic to Northern Ireland to Britain. We look to locate how these acts of crossing are navigated. How does it leap in ways that connect and balance the differences between these spheres while inherently recognizing that they are different spheres? How is the Irish indigenous identity offered as an inclusive space and for whom it is offered? How does this

discourse play out? These Commemorations are a space where binary distinctions meet and the lines between them are blurred; requiring the blurring of theoretical lines to reflect realities on the ground. Like the Commemorations, we look to highlight the albeit small space where Irish Studies, indigeneity and postcolonial studies intersect; taking in what these fields have to offer so Ireland maybe incorporated in the theoretical discussion no more exceptional than other postcolonial cases.

The 1916 Easter Rising is the violent spark in the Irish independence movement taking it from the conciliatory language of Home Rule to a break from the Union. From 24 April to 29 April, the Irish Volunteers and Citizens' Army held buildings in central Dublin captive (Foster 1989: 613). From the General Post Office, Patrick Pearse read the Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic and the dream was solidified, the goal cemented (ibid.: 481). The present day Irish state that arose from these actions must remember these events, despite the incomplete goals associated with it specifically, the Proclamation's statement to represent all people on the Irish island "oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government" (reprinted in Foster 1989: 598). Kevin Whelan recognizes this balance in his discussion of memory providing links to the past "and its utopian possibilities" while recognizing that "the promise of a historical event is always more than what actually happened" (Whelan 2003: 93). As the Irish national identity is being sewn together tighter and tighter with each passing year, the threads of people with nationalism, land, and historical justification for

Figure 1. *O'Connell Bridge, Dublin, following 1916 Easter Rising. Photograph by National*

Library of Ireland.

Figure 2. *O'Connell Bridge, Dublin, 2016 Eater Rising Commemoration Parade. Photograph by BBC News.*

that land are stretched and straightened until breaking in the Seventy-Fifth Commemoration, only to begin again under the peace process for presentation in the Centennial Celebration. For the Irish indigenous, the Easter Rising is a starting line for independence. This was a moment full of hope where all the wrongs of British rule would be rectified under the Irish Tricolor.

It is worth pausing here before exploring the shifts in imagining over one hundred years, to outline the geopolitical conception of the Irish nation at the time of the Easter Rising. As an island nation, the Irish borders existed with a seemingly unique degree of clarity. Under British rule, the Irish island continued to be treated as one political unit under the Union. The Easter Rising of 1916 sought to overturn British rule and take back Ireland for the Irish. A re-imagining of the Irish nation then sprang from the call to expel the British. Throughout the painful beginnings of decolonization, this re-imagining lost its firm geographical grip with the partition of Ireland inviting backlash of British nationals and sympathizers on the island. The British Empire was no longer the evil conqueror being expelled from the island but one that would maintain a foothold in the north, challenging the dichotomy of a virtuous Ireland that would one day overcome (Kearns 2001: 888). The shift of the Irish identity from a new whole nation-state born out of the Easter Rising, to a state-nation both for the people of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland instigated the beginnings of geographic re-imagining (Kearns 2001: 885). After one hundred years, this British foothold has been legitimized over and over and each time, forced an Irish re-imaging of their nation with further acceptance of its geographical composition. As

the thread of land continued to be challenged, the state presentation of a national identity had to resolve itself to a twenty-six-county land image and a global nation.

Just as with the historical, the geographic has leaned on the power of the diaspora. The key exceptionalism in the postcolonial case of Ireland is its large diaspora beyond the scope of any other and a key piece of the historical narrative. The diaspora creates an international identity tying history and geography to a *'mobile presence'*, or *'mobile indigenous'* that the Irish have become known for. Long a source of pain and suffering, the nation has re-imagined itself around the positivity its vast diaspora can offer. The Irish diaspora has blurred physical, geographic borders for centuries. Through one hundred years of commemoration, we now turn to the ways this mobile indigenous have retained ties to their homeland and served to blur national myth and memory, soothing over inconsistencies in the historical re-imaging as well. The remarkable relationship between the comparably small indigenous and expansive diaspora, sharing ties to land and history, granted the Irish state a blessing in disguise.

Commemorating 1916 is fraught with inherent contradictions between past, present and future yet the state must present a clear narrative of its indigenous history. This is done by blurring the lines, in what Rebecca Graff-McRae describes utilizing "Derrida's concept of the ghost" to analyze commemorations of 1916 as a "foundational myth" for the Irish state (2010: 17). By utilizing the ghostly analogy as the past haunts the present, Graff-McRae explores the disruption caused by remembering events irreconcilable with the present. To illustrate this ghostly concept, we look to navigate the landmark 1916 Commemorations contrasting elements remembered with those that have been forgotten as part of the cultural decolonizing initiative of the Irish

postcolonial state. Mark McCarthy's *Ireland's 1916 Rising* is an invaluable source for this undertaking as the Commemorations are detailed and analyzed alongside a clear historical narrative. By compiling the Twenty-fifth, Fiftieth, Seventy-fifth, and One-Hundredth Commemorations into a decolonizing narrative, the evolution of the indigenous articulation sketches a postcolonial Irish national identity contending with ambiguity and enduring negotiation to uncover the blessings of its exceptional diaspora to pull together Kearn's requirements of people, land, and a historical justification.

The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Easter Rising fell in the midst of World War II in 1941. The Irish Free State was at a point of normalizing, coming together following civil war and developing governance despite the painful scar of Partition. World War II brought new challenges to the state and tested their independence as Great Britain pressured Ireland to join the Allies. Amongst these pressures, the Irish State held its Easter Rising Commemoration consisting of a "large-scale military parade" and a "tempered republicanism" in acknowledgment of the passion surrounding Partition (McCarthy 2012:153). The power of this military display cannot be overstated as it "delivered a timely reminder and political affirmation to the wider international community of Irish military neutrality and independence at a time in which the latter was seriously threatened" (ibid.: 167). The state was able to hold a military parade because unlike the other nations of Europe, their soldiers were home in a neutral country defending that neutrality from powerful neighbors. Ireland displayed its independence through defiance of the British state, an act of decolonization on the international stage. This Twenty-fifth Anniversary was plagued by the circumstances in which it was held, but relied on a specific narrative of the past as a moment to be celebrated. The power the state exercised in neutrality was given a stage

in the Commemorations, being celebrated as the epitome of an independent nation. This Commemoration serves to secure the land thread of national identity with its military show of neutrality in World War II, separating clearly for the world the Irish and British interests. The Irish state exerted their power, still in its infancy, over the twenty-six-counties with a firm stance separated from the British.

The occasion for the Fiftieth Anniversary arrived on the cusp of violence in Northern Ireland, but at a high point for nationalists' pride. Again, a military parade was held but with heightened emotions in this proud, joyous atmosphere (ibid.: 201) and 200,000 people in attendance (Heartfield and Rooney 2015). The 1966 Commemorations celebrated how far Ireland had come in its short life. Despite all the perceived failures of the state with partition, poverty and a decline in the Irish language a celebratory spirit surrounded the events as they remembered the sacrifices made in the Easter Rising and the goals still to be realized of a "United Irish Nation-State" (McCarthy 2012: 208). We see a power of a people with nationalism in this Commemoration for a pride that would not yield and a faith in the nation-state to come. This balancing act of celebrating, mourning and hoping is articulated by former Senator, John A. Murphy in his description of the event.

> On a platform outside the General Post Office in Dublin, the ageing President de Valera spoke of his dreams of a United Ireland and a revived language while behind him his young successors listened uneasily to his embarrassing reminder of their origins (Foster 1989: 595).

Former President and the only living Easter Rising leader, Eamon de Valera represents a past that is owed gratitude and respect within a time that can not accommodate it. De Valera is a past that cannot be rectified with the present, but continues to offer hope for the future. The state has continued its decolonizing initiative but is yet to overcome its colonial roots. The son of Cathal Brugha, an Easter Rising participant, recognized this enduring struggle in his hope that "our children realize that there is more to Ireland than an endless conflict with England" (McCarthy 2012: 273). The generation of children celebrating in 1966 grew up in the shadow of the promises of 1916; promises they hoped to fulfill by moving beyond decolonization but the optimistic spirit of 1966 would be quickly squashed as the Troubles broke out in Northern Ireland.

The Troubles glared a harsh light on the state-building failures of both the United Kingdom and Ireland in Northern Ireland (Kearns 2001: 887). Not only were the Rising participants' dreams unrealized, but now they seemed out of touch and unredeemable. This painful commemoration serves as a clear example of what Gerry Kearns calls, "the dilemmas of dealing with national identities organized around extreme situations" (2001: 888). We argue that all national identities are situated around watershed moments similar to the Easter Rising of 1916, but most are not fraught with such evident and prevailing ambiguity. The issues highlighted with the Fifty Commemoration in particular, illustrate the inabilities to celebrate ambiguity.

By 1991, the circumstances of commemoration had shifted drastically. The country was transformed as a "national reluctance to celebrate" hung overhead and the "Pandora's box of contemporary ethical complications and uncertainties...saw forgetting take the upper-hand in a

struggle against memory" (ibid.: 314). This period is marked by palpable national grievance and reflection on the nation-state imagined versus that which was realized. Only twenty-five years previously the commemoration worked to remind the nation of its past; now it looked to forget it. One reporter witnessing the ceremony reflected that, "The Easter rebels held out for a week in the GPO but it took only fifteen minutes to commemorate the Rising 75 years later" (Heartfield and Rooney 2015). By the Seventy-Fifth Commemoration, most 1916 veterans had passed, Mary Robinson's fresh new politics provided a glimpse of hope, and the Irish language, so important to the previous generation, had almost entirely disappeared (ibid.: 312-4). Reconciling the goals of 1916 with the state of affairs seventy-five years later proved an "impossible task" for the Irish state as *Irish Times* reporter Fintan O'Toole judges for, "the Government has now panicked and decided to pretend that the Northern Ireland conflict never happened" (25 October 2005 quoted in Graff-McRae 2010: 67). Given O'Toole's views, ignoring the geopolitical context of the Commemorations failed to create a seamless historical narrative from Rising to present. The Seventy-fifth Commemoration was stripped down to the basics; no military parade or grandstanding by politicians. The Irish tri-color was raised over the General Post Office, the anthem played and Proclamation read in a brief ceremony reflecting the desire to move away from the past and focus on a peaceful future. Thus, continuing violence and concerns of an overly exuberant nationalism left the state with only the hope for a better future, unable to hold up the heroes of the past or present for the violence they espoused. The search for peace in Northern Ireland stalled any Irish national identity building as a separate and stronger entity removed from the United Kingdom due to the continued suffering from the challenges of perpetual residuality. The efforts to string together people, land, and historical justification where set aside in the hopes for peace.

As the One-Hundredth Commemoration dawned, the contradictions and balances of the promises of 1916, fulfilled and abandoned, are addressed and presented for the Irish nation. Occurring in a similarly joyous atmosphere as the Fiftieth Anniversary, the Commemorations in 2016 focused on the pride of an Irish nationalism with sensitivities to those in Northern Ireland. An estimated 250,000 people lined the 4.5-kilometer parade route while another 1.1 million watched the three hours of festivities at home (McGreevy 2015). Calls for unification have been dropped since the peace agreements, fervent nationalism has been tamed, and while still defined in opposition to Britain in many ways, Ireland is presented as reconciling its colonial past with the independent present. Rather than deny or attempt to gloss over British influence in the state, Ireland is turning to a less contentious group in the Irish diaspora to represent a harmonious collective identity. As in previous commemorations, a military parade was held in all its grandeur, the Easter Rising Proclamation read and the Irish flag waved with clear emphasis on the diasporic element. Through the diaspora, Kearn's historical justification is then met in a quite ironic way. Looking to the people of the past and calling upon their past ties to the land, a national identity is presented whereby the realities of trauma from colonization are accepted and embraced for its creation of the Irish diaspora that exudes a global national identity and tying to the land of its birth.

Today, invoking the rights of the under privileged migrants seeking political and economic asylum reaffirms the principles of this global citizenship and identity. The Irish State's hope for a peaceful future continues as it hits above its weight contributing to peace and further distancing its international identity from the British postcolonial condition. In re-presenting itself to the

world, the Republic turns away from the imperializing image forced upon it towards an empathetic economic partner with continuing commitment to those nations struggling to survive. Ireland's peacetime commitment managed €640 million in 2016 towards overseas development by assuring a consistent portion of their GDP (0.39 percent). This comes down to 39 cents in every €100 that the country produces. Ireland provides the 11th highest percent of its GNP to ODA among the OECD donors, coming in ahead of countries such as Australia, Canada and France. It has been estimated that a total of 49 percent of Ireland's ODA is channeled through carefully selected multilateral partners; 27 percent through Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and 12 percent through national systems of our partner countries. It is heartening to note that 42 percent of Ireland's total ODA is specifically earmarked for sub Saharan Africa. The economic downturn has not caused the Irish nation to waver in its economic commitments as a state continuing to move beyond its colonial legacy helps other countries do the same. The complex interplay of promoting peace as a response to its own violent past and difficulties acknowledging this past, fosters further ambivalence in the Irish identity that can only be understood through the context of a global Irish diaspora and its significance to the national identity.

Given this new emphasis on a global identity and the peace that appeared so elusive twenty-five years previously, how is this Irish nation presented as a unified whole emerging from its celebrated origin story during the Commemoration? As has been touched upon, the relationship between the diaspora and the indigenous is a blurry one, but in the case of Commemorational events, harmony arises across these spaces. The diaspora in fact connects all people of the British Isles, including Europe, Australia, and Africa, thereby positioning the criticality of the

commemorative ceremony towards a common ally in the United States. The Irish diaspora reaches to the annals of history, before the Easter Rising and partition to another trauma of the Great Famine (Kearns 2001: 888). By reaching so distantly into the past, the diaspora recalls memories that unite all Irishmen, retains the option for British blame, and allows for acceptance. The Great Famine is a moment uniting people, land, and history without the present-day geopolitical contentions surrounding issues like partition. The nation can grieve their lost peoples while celebrating their expanse. This unambiguous, all-encompassing identification as 'colonized', branded on the Irish nation by the British colonizers before the Famine and mass exodus, grants the present-day Irish state a unifying symbol to position commemorations. The Easter Rising provided the beginnings of a re-imagined nation, as not British (Kearns 2001: 908). This definition only served the needs of the nation in its infancy but, when it came to commemorating what the Irish were beyond or without this common enemy, the re-imagining had to begin again. As the former British enemy then became an ally, the Irish diaspora was inserted to offer a middle ground of cultural relevance and historical grounding to the commemorations.

A coming home opportunity was presented to the diaspora and many it seems, accepted the invitation. According to Tourism Ireland, between February and April 2016, tourism was up 20 percent from North America, compared with the same period in 2015. Overall, tourism to the island rose 9 percent in 2016 with a 13 percent increase for the United States. In addition, overseas publicity for 2016 was estimated to be worth €385 million (Tourism Ireland 2016). This diasporic appeal has historical significance as the Rising Proclamation appeals to "her exiled children in America", giving the diaspora claim authenticity (Foster 1989: 597). By emphasizing

the force of the diaspora, the ties to America, and a "kitsch" cultural nationalism (Lloyd 1999: 90) ambitions of indigenous authenticity bow to the post-peace process Ireland. The Irish indigenous is thus inclusive by emphasizing ties to the land of the past through the undiluted heritage of the diaspora. The diaspora acts as a mobile indigenous in a modernizing, globalizing state. Indigenous articulations blur lines of temporal and spatial differences by conceding to the inclusivity offered under the diaspora. Far from avoiding the geopolitical realities, the Irish State Commemorations recognize the restraint placed on indigenous representation and offer an alternative identity uninhibited by these limitations. The diaspora unites across physical borders and serves to blur the borders and complexities of celebrating a ghostly Irish indigenous, no longer considered politically correct. The diaspora is an accessible, inclusive and authentic enough vision of Ireland to rectify with an inaccessible, exclusive, but potentially more authentic, indigenous portrayal of Ireland. The Irish diaspora therefore offers an Irish national identity satisfying Kearn's three threads and able to be projected on a global scale with incorporation in state policy and celebration in the states' birth.

Conclusion

Focusing the lens offered by postcolonial studies, we have sought to question Ireland's exclusion from what, in our view, is the prime theoretical positioning for this state. The arguments of Ireland's colonial legacy have been utilized in order to expose the strengths and weakness of these analysis and reconcile them within the appropriate postcolonial frame. As we hope we have shown, a postcolonial Ireland exists plagued by ambiguities of colonial residuality while aspiring to revive and reshape an indigenous Irish identity in accordance with political circumstance. Firstly, we have argued that postcolonial theory offers a unique opportunity to evaluate Ireland's

cultural complexities and allow for the necessary interdisciplinary approach to address questions of identity formation and commemoration. By resisting the urge to view from only one theorisation, combining concepts from indigenous and subaltern studies alongside the historical narrative, a unique discourse is unveiled tracing the roots of national identity formation and questioning the positioning of a postcolonial indigenous identity. To answer this question, we analysed the Easter Rising Commemorations at their pinnacles as displays of indigenous identity actively seeking to decolonize the Irish state before the backdrop of an evolving relationship with the United Kingdom. By placing each commemoration in the appropriate historical context, the effects of geopolitical realities over a hundred-year period is assessed.

How then, we have asked, should the One-Hundredth Commemoration be evaluated in this postcolonial context as a display of indigenous identity? We have argued that the Irish state has turned its focus outward to an inclusive diaspora rather than the more contentious indigenous that has been the focus of the past. That is, in failing to find an acceptable indigenous cultural representation (through the Irish language, Roman Catholic religion, fervent nationalism), and in response to friendlier relations with the United Kingdom (specifically Northern Ireland), the Irish state has embraced a global identity personified by its vast diaspora. In sum, Ireland is not in need of the exceptional theorisations other scholars have prescribed rather, a postcolonial frame allowing for the ambiguities and complexities of Irishness to be scrutinized is required. Our interdisciplinary pulling together of Irish Studies, indigeneity and postcolonialism did not require exceptional theorisations but rather a step back to view exceptions as the unique strengths of the nation, not disqualifiers from the game of theory.

As time accumulates, so too does the indigenous historical narrative and the distance from the foundational myth of the state. From the early imagining of the "utopian future" in the 1916 Easter Rising, to the current imagining of the new utopian future, time continues to accumulate on the ethnic Irish national identity, which is distinct from the civic identity and shapes its presentation. How the state presents its unique identity at a given time signifies political and cultural goals of the present. One example being the role of the Church that has survived colonisation and continues to act as a rite of passage of uniting the Irish to their Motherland-Ireland through baptism, first communion, confession, and confirmation despite an ebb and flow in prominence. Commemorations then offer a unique stage to present the state's goals with a nod to their origins, in this case as a cultural colony denied expression under British rule. Perhaps then the Irish nation would do well to commemorate the words of William Butler Yeats and continue to work towards cultural unity rather than commemorating the violence of martyrs such as Pearse (Kearns 2001: 902). W. B. Yeats captured the cultural aspect of the event that would be commemorated each year in his work, *"Easter 1916",* writing,

> *Too long a sacrifice*
>
> *Can make a stone of the heart.*
>
> *O when may it suffice?*
>
> *That is Heaven's part... (57-60)*
>
> *……………………………..*
>
> *Was it needless death after all?*
>
> *For England may keep faith*
>
> *For all that is done and said. (67-69)*

………………………….

Now and in time to be,

Wherever green is worn,

Are changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born. (77-80)

The decolonising initiative remains, subtler and working in the background but under negotiation as it navigates the past and present towards a future Irish identity realizing the hopes of Yeats. The Easter Rising acts as a dream, an irreconcilable goal for the island overrun by British influence and searching for its own past. Commemorations matter as a projection of identity under constant negotiation and requiring equally intense investigation for the nation they imagine could one day be realized. Today Irish trans (nationalism) can be best served when we recognise and reinforce the ethnic uniqueness of Irishness rather than being diluted by the civic identity of the diaspora. This will enable the Easter Rising and St. Patrick's commemorations to go beyond the trauma-based Irish identity. The expansion of this identity today can be seen in the way the Republic of Ireland has opened its borders and embraced people of all ethnic persuasions not just from the Anglo-Saxon world, but also from all continents including the European Union, Africa and Latin America.

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