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Crossing Ireland's boundaries, real and imagined

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Crossing Ireland's Boundaries, Real and Imagined Áine Mahon and Clara Fischer

The social, political and economic landscape of contemporary Ireland has inspired extensive scholarly debate both within and well beyond the interdisciplinary field of Irish Studies. National and international academic research has struggled to stay apace with a rapidly transforming demographic where shockwaves of economic upheaval and rapid social change have complicated ongoing projects of identity construction. Remarkable about this scholarly work, however, is its distinct lack of a self-consciously philosophical voice. While scholars from literary studies to law have engaged comprehensively with the complexities of a post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, scholars from philosophy have for the most part neglected to intervene.

Acknowledging the important exceptions to this broader disciplinary tendency,¹ this book addresses this prominent scholarly lacuna by developing theoretical work on Ireland that moves beyond the especially dominant literary and historical paradigm. Bringing the resources of philosophy to pressing issues of socio-political and cultural importance, it is the first extended effort to place contemporary Ireland on the philosophical stage.

A central aim of the present collection, then, is to enrich the fields of Philosophy *and* Irish Studies by encouraging a manifestly philosophical exploration of contemporary issues and concerns. Thus far, one might say, the relationship between these disciplines has proven elusive. While Irish Studies as an interdisciplinary research tradition remains overwhelmingly informed by historical and literary approaches, scholarship in Philosophy has for the most part avoided any studied engagement with the contemporary socio-political and cultural scene. Part of our ambition as editors and contributors is to interrogate the sociological and disciplinary reasons behind this mutual avoidance. Has the field of Irish Studies formed through the exclusion of philosophical work? Does the discipline of philosophy not easily lend itself to the study of contemporary Ireland? Have social, economic, or political issues arising in an Irish context simply not interested philosophers? Or have institutional structures and disciplinary pressures dissuaded philosophers from pursuing questions on Ireland? Conceiving the same set of question in more positive terms, the present collection asks whether philosophy might bring a different lens or body of thought to a rigorous theorisation of Ireland – the considerable potential of which has, thus far, been largely overlooked. Given the dearth of philosophical work on Ireland, we thus follow recent calls in other disciplines, including sociology,² to broaden the scope of Irish Studies by developing philosophical work on Ireland that moves beyond the literary and historical fields.

Of course, we are using “philosophy” here as though that term were entirely uncontested – when, actually, in Ireland (as elsewhere) the landscape of the discipline is characterized by marked variation of content, style and method. We might think in this context not only of the distance between analytic and continental philosophy but of the varied and ongoing attempts to legitimize a canon of philosophical thinkers that any undergraduate student might be expected to know (or better still, that they might be able to critique). Exactly which figures are included and which excluded from this canon is the subject of ongoing and lively debate, as hitherto marginalized voices are finally being celebrated and heard.

On the topic of the definitively or the canonically philosophical, Stanley Cavell draws an insightful comparison between philosophy and modernist art. When it comes to modernist music or literature, Cavell writes (among his examples are the works of Samuel Beckett and John Cage), there is simply no stable authority or fixed framework of reference to help us distinguish between what is authentic and what is fake. Cavell underlines in a similar manner the lack of standing discourse for the

procedures of philosophy. There is no special domain for philosophy, he urges, no “special class of persons to be called philosophers, who possess and are elevated by a special class or degree of knowledge.”³ Thus, given that we cannot appeal to a stable Platonic authority, attempts to distinguish between the genuine and the not-so-genuine never reliably get off the ground. Philosophy exists, in other words, in a modernist condition and like all modernist artworks it is highly susceptible to fraudulence. The implicit suggestion is that the discipline must continuously question and continuously re-affirm its own identity.

Recounting the reaction to his first books (*Must We Mean What We Say?* and *The World Viewed* as well as *The Senses of Walden*), Cavell himself suffers the spectre of fraudulence, venturing with painful honesty that his offerings “were treated more like thefts”,⁴ that “I had the unmistakeable sense of having said hello a number of times without anyone saying hello back”.⁵ It is clear from his own extensive oeuvre that Cavell wants both to bring into question the procedures of philosophy, to illuminate alternative modes for philosophy to take, and to remain within earshot of the analytic tradition which trained him. If such an enterprise strikes one as Sisyphean (and Richard Rorty, for one, has asked if the discipline of philosophy has caused Cavell so much trouble why he doesn’t just leave it, why he doesn’t just “slough philosophy off” with happy abandon) one might remember again Cavell’s emphasis on the *difficulty* of philosophy in its modernist condition. Philosophy is no longer to be taken for granted as something with an accepted standard or style to fall back on with untroubled confidence. The writing of philosophy, rather, must be struggled and strained over as we struggle and strain over all authentic expression in our late modernist moment.

This brings us to the mottled history of philosophy as it developed as a distinct discipline in university departments in Ireland. As a general sketch, up until the 1970s most Irish philosophy departments were clerically dominated and typically underpinned by scholarship in a Neo-Thomist vein. The ensuing influx of French and German phenomenology and existentialism made way in more recent decades for analytic, and more recently, pragmatist approaches to develop apace. And although individual schools might choose to align themselves with one philosophical tradition over another, for the most part it is characteristic of Irish philosophy departments to allow all flowers to bloom. By and large, neither continental nor analytic approaches have been allowed to dominate; rather, philosophy departments in Ireland have demonstrated healthy aptitudes for collegiality and cross-pollination.

That much conceded, we would argue that it is still important for philosophy as a discipline to reflect on its practices of boundary-setting and to question its openness to sister disciplines and scholarships. If we acknowledge the contingency of certain styles and tendencies (e.g. if we acknowledge that Political Philosophy might be considered a cornerstone of one philosophy department and barely mentioned at all in another) does this demand in turn a rethinking of the very idea of a philosophical canon? If one department teaches Logic and Reasoning and another doesn’t, are the students of the former better “trained” than the latter? To these considerations of teaching and learning we might add related conundrums regarding research. Does a philosophically-informed work such as the present one – which rubs up at least against legal, historical, literary, and gender studies, and incorporates empirical analysis as well as conceptual work – count *as* philosophy? Does it count *for* philosophy? And who might be in a position to decide? Arguably one of philosophy’s greatest gifts is its encouragement that we think not just clearly but differently – that we grow the confidence to imagine an alternative way – and in this particular instance such meta-philosophical considerations are paramount.

Given the questions raised in this introduction, it is clear that this book is primarily concerned with philosophically addressing social and political debates regarding contemporary Ireland, while simultaneously interrogating the boundaries set by Irish Studies and Philosophy. The process of

assembling the present volume (which evolved from a conference organised at UCD in 2018), and our own (inter)disciplinary backgrounds, have provided us with some preliminary clues that might shed light on why it is that these two disciplines have mainly remained opaque to each other, and why philosophers have, by and large, avoided engaging with the topic of “contemporary Ireland”. As editors of this volume, we are sensitive to the fact that Philosophy as a discipline is - perhaps uniquely - obsessed with continuously ascertaining what Philosophy is, much in the vein Cavell sets out as Philosophy’s constant identity-seeking. Indeed, as Cavell argues, there is no rigid distinction between philosophy and “meta-philosophy” as it is definitive of the subject to continuously question its own remit; in his own words, “philosophy is one of its own normal topics”.⁶ From our own interdisciplinary vantage points, we view this task of questioning as fruitful should it result in efforts to redress a historically too narrow disciplinary boundary-setting and in an attendant greater openness and inclusivity – as, indeed sought in recent years by women and philosophers from minority backgrounds. Readers will note, on that point, a relatively high representation of women authors in this volume.

While we recognise the importance of having conversations about what constitutes a discipline, and thereby about the scholarly and material consequences of whose work should be viewed as canonical, who should be institutionally supported, and so on, we find some of these conversations restrictive and *boundary-setting* in its most negative connotation, resulting in a policing, or, in a Foucauldian sense, a “disciplining” of the discipline itself. We would both strongly urge an end to the traditional disciplining of philosophy as a discipline that eschews engagement with empirical contexts, that avoids interdisciplinarity, and that views reasoning and theoretical clarity as its sole and superior disciplinary preserve.⁷ Such disciplining can too often result in an intellectual impoverishment, and a discouragement of projects such as the present one. Moreover, such unfortunate boundary-setting is also sometimes institutionally underpinned, for instance, with policies that prohibit the hiring of people with interdisciplinary backgrounds and require terminal degrees from Philosophy departments only, thereby perpetuating this cycle of the disciplining of the discipline. Taking these and related practices into account, we can therefore identify at least two disciplinary trends that may be responsible for the astonishing lack of philosophical work on contemporary Ireland: Philosophy’s boundaries have effectively been drawn to eliminate an (interdisciplinary) focus on Ireland, while Irish Studies’ boundaries have been set to mainly encompass Literary Studies and History.

Interestingly, such trends emerge from a consideration of what, exactly, each discipline is or should be, just as work on Ireland frequently examines the normative question of what Ireland – and Irishness – are. Again, we should not proceed as though this were straight-forwardly given, and, indeed, several chapters of this volume call into question how Irishness and Ireland are and have been constructed over the decades. As with the disciplinary boundary-setting of Philosophy and Irish Studies identified here, though, the boundaries circumscribing Ireland and what counts – or not – as Irish, are frequently defined in terms of difference, requiring an Other from which “true” Irishness distinguishes itself. Historically, this Other has often been the former colonial power and its ascribed shortcomings (Anglicanism, sinfulness, impurity), against which the “true” (or idealized) Ireland stood in superior relief. Much recent work on Ireland interrogates this Irish identification with recourse to a defined Other, especially in light of the negative consequences this has had for Others Within Ireland, such as institutionalised women and children, whose failure to perform a certain Irishness resulted in their status as “fallen” or failed Irish subjects.⁸ Given this sorry history of hardships arising specifically from the narrow boundaries set around what it means to be Irish and what Ireland is, we hope that this book constitutes a resource for readers to critically revisit this question.

At the same time, we invite readers to re-examine those other boundaries explored in this introduction – boundaries set by the disciplines of Philosophy and Irish Studies themselves. We hope that the chapters presented here provide stimulating examples of how these two disciplines might

speak to each other, and indeed, other disciplines. For, in keeping with our aim of countering disciplinary disciplining, the essays collected here are inherently interdisciplinary. We hope that they will appeal to scholars working not only in philosophy but in history, education, Irish studies, political theory, legal studies, feminist theory, and literary criticism. They have been commissioned to address a broad spectrum of concern – from thematics of migration, displacement and exile; to complexities of historic injustice and national healing; to political realities of colonialism, conflict and violence; and to considerations of the cultural, the artistic and the possibilities of translation. Running strongly through these chapters are also recurring themes that arise as a direct result of the boundary-setting already discussed, including shame and the construction of Others as shameful, and the role of certain institutions and politico-philosophical commitments maintained by the state and the Catholic Church, in particular. Although our volume spans a large number of topics, explored across different disciplines and philosophical frameworks, it cannot encompass all of the important issues that may be raised by an examination of “contemporary Ireland”. Obvious examples that lie beyond the scope of the present volume include, of course, an interest in the environment as well as the urgent need for, and increasing support of, green policies.

Our book is structured in five sections. Part 1, “Memory, Trauma and Recovery”, focuses on acts of remembering and remembrance, the coming to terms with traumatic histories, and the affective toil this may often take. In his opening chapter, **“The Risk of Hospitality: Exchanging Stories Changing History” (Chapter 2)**, Richard Kearney revisits a cluster of philosophical concepts long central to his academic career: translation; mediation; and narrative and linguistic hospitality. Specifically, Kearney navigates the complexities of Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida to offer an insightful and imaginative commentary on contemporary Ireland. In highlighting the role of translation as a form of intellectual and emotional labour, Kearney defines this labour as “a dramatic human event” in the sense that its outcomes can neither be predicted nor contained. Rather, the work of translation involves an unconscious process of mourning; it is “a letting go of the egocentric or tribalist drive to reduce the alterities of our guest to our own totalizing fantasies”. In the second half of his chapter, Kearney moves from abstract theory to lived practice. He explores translation and its discontents with reference to two Irish-related cultural experiments: 1) the Guestbook Project of narrative hospitality (“Exchanging Stories Changing History”) and 2) the Twinsome Minds project of “Double Remembrance”. Beginning as a series of academic seminars, and now operating as an international non-profit, the aim of Guestbook was to explore the translation of suspicion into solidarity through acts of narrative exchange. It explored, in particular, how young people might “welcome the stranger” through cultural and imaginative work. In a similar vein, the Twinsome Minds project brought together the narratives of 1916 (the Easter Rising) and 1690 (the Battle of the Boyne), arguing for a more complex appreciation of British and Irish histories. Throughout his chapter, Kearney advocates for narration and imagination as central resources for honouring history and transcending difference. For the Irish context, in particular, his conceptual analysis illustrates a move beyond simple dualities of host/guest or friend/enemy, showing how we might make courageous leaps of imagination towards reconciliation and peace.

Kathleen Lennon’s **“In the frail way that people assemble themselves’ (McGahern): Feeling Shame About Tuam,” (Chapter 3)** deftly explores the role shame plays in the constitution - or indeed the undoing, or as Lennon calls it the “unravelling” - of the self. Prompted by her insight of feeling not just horror, but also shame, at the revelations of dead children’s remains discarded at Tuam Mother and Baby Home, Lennon examines shame both in the constitution of gendered Irish imaginaries, as well as in diasporic experiences. Interestingly, Lennon’s reflections trouble the assumption of a straight-forward diasporic Irish identity, instead preferring to elaborate upon a “sense of Irishness” that is complicated by hybridity. Lennon outlines the dominant, “shameful imaginaries” which have long structured Irish womanhood, noting that “no woman in the Irish state, or brought up within the

Irish diaspora...is untouched by these imaginaries, the possibility of such shame productive of what it is to be an Irish woman.” While also mentioning important alternative, progressive imaginaries, Lennon points to the damage shameful imaginaries have done in their effacing of especially “illegitimate” children and “fallen” women, and their enabling of such atrocities as Tuam. Lennon carefully intersperses personal memories indicative of her sense of Irishness - objects left on the sideboard, such as photographs of Irish relatives, or mythical childhood constructions of Irish places - with reflections on intersectionality and stories in order to illustrate the “frail strands from which we are assembled.” Returning to Tuam, and her surprised recognition of feeling shame, despite a previous distancing from other abuse revelations, Lennon attributes such feeling to “a painful apprehension of the self.” Such “self-reckoning” is due to shame’s intrinsic constitutive relation to the self, and beyond the common ascription of hiding and covering, to shame’s capacity to also uncover and reveal.

In Part 2, “Citizenship, Injustice, and the Law”, chapters continue to interrogate past and present traumas and the unjust policies and laws underlying same. Authors in this section examine historic policies’ capacity to reach into the present, or to be reconfigured in the contemporary moment, with distinct implications for how we stand in relation to citizenship, policy, and legal intervention in the current Irish context. **“Take me to Church’: Sexual Citizenship and Spatial Justice in Ireland” (Chapter 4)** by **Aideen Quilty** offers an important and timely reflection on the construction of sexual citizenship in modern and contemporary Ireland. Quilty explores a more expansive understanding of citizenship beyond the traditional focus on legal status or state membership. Indeed, Quilty seeks to expand the definition of citizenship quite considerably to include the complexities of the sexed and gendered body. As she points out, an increasing body of queer and feminist scholarship has worked to trouble the construct of citizenship and to expose its normative assumptions about sexuality. A truly liberated understanding of the political subject must recognize, in her words, “the simple yet often-ignored face that humans are undeniably sexual”. In interrogating the construction of the sexual citizen in Ireland, Quilty’s chapter takes its inspiration from two recent constitutional referenda: Marriage Equality in May 2015, and Repeal of the 8th Amendment in May 2018. If Marriage Equality promoted a sanitized and respectable version of the queer Irish body (i.e. as white, cis, monogamous and middle class), the Repeal campaign brought into sharp relief how the abortive subject is variously responded to depending on the circumstances of the abortion, i.e., a premium is placed on narratives of trauma involving either sexual violence or fatal foetal abnormality. In this way, both the “Marriage Equality citizen” and the “good mother subject” became legitimized as the ideal sexual citizen. Though celebrating the role of these referenda in the construction of a more spatially just Ireland, then, Quilty’s chapter is nonetheless critical of their dependence on certain constructions and hierarchies of sexual citizenship.

In their contribution, **“State Shame, Sovereignty, and Legal Responses to Historical Institutional Abuse,” (Chapter 5)** Ring and Enright examine the complex interrelation between shame and the State’s legal response to abuses uncovered in Irish institutions. By tracing the prevalence of obfuscating, cumbersome, and even adversarial, legalistic practices, such as limited inquiries and narrowly focused monetary redress, Ring and Enright show that such practices are motivated by a galvanising of state sovereignty. This, for the authors, is what distinguishes the shame professed by the Irish state, “state shame,” from the genuine, or “true shame” of victim-survivors. “State shame,” *contra* survivor shame, protects the State from loss of sovereignty. Via an exploration of the State’s responses to victim-survivors of child abuse and of the Magdalen Laundries, Ring and Enright thereby highlight a variety of problematic legal strategies employed by the State to establish “unitary official histories,” to “monetis[e] and commodif[y] harms raised in victim-survivors’ testimony,” and to leave unchallenged “old hierarchies of power between state, religious orders and victim-survivors.” Drawing on recent work on epistemic injustice, Ring and Enright deepen their analysis of this economy of shame by arguing that distinct testimonial and hermeneutical injustices lead to the prioritisation of a State narrative over and above victim-survivor testimony and a general framing of historical injustice

in State sovereign terms. Ring and Enright thus provide an insightful reading of the “unaltered legal technique” deployed by the State as it navigates shame and the demands made to address Ireland’s history of institutional abuse.

Vittorio Bufacchi's “Ireland After the Celtic Tiger: A Study in Social Injustice” (Chapter 6), examines social injustice in contemporary Ireland set against the background of the well-documented economic Celtic Tiger boom and the ensuing bust. Bufacchi combines prominent political philosophical ideas and doctrines with empirical analysis focused on Ireland, and mounts a defense of egalitarianism against prioritarian critique. The chapter opens with a helpful set of definitions, outlining the exact meaning of key terms such as domination, poverty, egalitarianism, and prioritarianism. Armed with these concepts, Bufacchi then proceeds to provide an outline of social inequality and injustice in the recent past, which, he notes, Ireland is at risk of repeating in the present context. Introducing the Levelling-Down Objection, a critique of egalitarianism, Bufacchi argues that contra the idea that this forms an objection at all, levelling-down should be viewed as “a strategy” with moral and political merit, indeed, as a necessary “correction.” The need for such levelling-down on matters such as climate change soon becomes apparent, as Bufacchi makes the case for levelling-down as a rational approach to the “human-made evil” of climate change, but also of inequality itself. Exploring the idea of limitarianism - the limiting of resources to no more than one requires for a fully flourishing life - Bufacchi notes that limitarianism and levelling-down can be accommodated by each other, and maintains that “levelling-down is the best antidote against inequality.” To illustrate this, Bufacchi proposes two policy changes to redress inequality in Ireland, the first being a maximum wage cap to counter the increasing chasm between rich and poor, and the social and political instability this is likely to breed, given the new populist movements in evidence also in the U.K. and in the U.S. The second change proposed by Bufacchi is a rethinking of Ireland’s approach to private property, which, he says, is treated in absolute terms, despite the ongoing homelessness crisis. As such, Bufacchi’s chapter forms an impassioned argument for egalitarianism as a means of redressing social injustice in Ireland.

In Part 3, “Nation-Building and Post/Coloniality: Ireland North and South”, authors examine the legacy of partition on the island of Ireland, the Troubles, and the contemporary significance of peace building efforts, constitutional arrangements, militarism and gendered self and other relations. **“Civil Society and Nonviolent Political Action in Northern Ireland” (Chapter 7) by Iain Attack and Dong Jin Kim** constitutes an exploration of nonviolence as a particular type of political intervention in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Attack and Dong examine, in detail, the activities and contributions to nonviolent political action by civil society organisations, illustrating their analysis with examples drawn from, *inter alia*, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and the Peace People. Attack and Dong identify three complicating factors in their articulation of nonviolence in Northern Ireland, including friction “between civil resistance, political violence, and constitutional politics”; “strategic ambiguity” concerning the Northern Ireland civil right movement; and the deployment of “only a limited range of methods of nonviolent political action.” Ultimately, for Attack and Dong, civil society organisations’ efforts to engage nonviolent political action in Northern Ireland have to be read within the particular limitations set by the central problematic of the conflict itself, posed by the constitutional question. As Attack and Dong see it, the “legitimacy of the Northern Ireland state,” its constitutional positioning within the U.K., and its complex relation to the Republic of Ireland are, and remain contentious, at least since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Attack and Dong rightly point to the precarious power-sharing mechanisms in Northern Ireland, which are currently suspended, and to the potential for an escalation of paramilitary violence “in response to perceived failures of state-based politics” as issues that should be of deep concern to us in the contemporary political setting. Attack and Dong thus develop a timely reading of nonviolent political action in Northern Ireland that can highlight nonviolence as a political tool for civil society to address such current concerns.

In **“Is Irish Reunification Republican?” (Chapter 8)**, Adam Fusco shows that republicanism and nationalism have been conflated in the Irish context. Noting that republicanism “has become almost virtually synonymous with the politics of the nation,” Fusco, in the opening part of the chapter, decouples these two terms, highlighting the significant differences between republicanism and nationalism in political theory. Setting out republicanism’s roots in the Roman Republic, and its focus on the individual’s freedom, Fusco argues that by the mid- to late 19th century, Irish nationalism effectively took over republicanism, which was associated “with revolutionary politics” and was thus commonly interpreted as “a radical and often violent sub-species of nationalism.” Driving Fusco’s analysis is the question of whether Irish reunification is characteristically republican. Fusco argues that any such linkage between reunification and republicanism should be viewed as contingent, and he presents nine other constitutional arrangements for Northern Ireland beyond unification - including direct rule, joint authority, Northern Ireland independence, and Euro-federalism - to examine whether they might accommodate republican principles. Ultimately, Fusco maintains that “UK or Irish federalism, in concert with membership of an empowered British-Irish Council, provide the most plausible options to institutionalise republican liberty in Northern Ireland,” although the issue is a complex one which requires addressing additional questions - a task that, Fusco asserts, can be done by both unionists and nationalists with recourse to republican political theory.

Dianna Taylor’s chapter, **“Irish republican masculinities: The politics of humiliation” (Chapter 9)**, explores the complex dynamics of the self-relation of Republican men in Northern Ireland. Taylor focuses specifically on humiliation in this self-relation, and its interplay with masculinity and normalisation. Developing a Foucauldian analysis of Irish Republican masculinity, Taylor elaborates upon normalisation in terms of the set patterns it engages and the circumscription it entails in terms of one’s relation to oneself and others. On the other hand, Taylor maintains that the self-relation involves an openness and unpredictability with regard to others and a world beyond one’s control. Humiliation, for Taylor, operates within this space of “openness and exposure of the self-relation in reductive, reactive, and therefore normalising ways.” In her reading of Irish Republican masculinity, however, Taylor identifies a particular engagement of humiliation by men during the prison protests, which interrupted the predictable, normalising patterns of masculinity, thereby resulting in significant potential for changes in the self-relation. Taylor illustrates her analysis with quotes from interviews conducted with former Republican prisoners, ultimately arguing that “the self-relation’s openness, exposure, and relationality...provide the conditions for the possibility of humiliation” while at the same time, however, also establishing “the conditions for the possibility of counter-humiliating resistance and solidarity.”

Part 4 of the collection, **“Irish Cultural Imaginaries: Dislocation, Diaspora and Home”**, explores ideas of home and belonging as these have been complicated in the Irish case. The contributors to this section interrogate the importance of place and landscape to a country increasingly transnational and cosmopolitan. In his chapter, **“Coast-Modernism, Wittgenstein, Primitivism, and the West of Ireland” (Chapter 10)**, Luke Gibbons explores the many significances of Wittgenstein’s trips to Connemara in the 1930s and 1940s. Wittgenstein was drawn to the wildness and solitude of the Irish western seaboard as he drafted the final version of his famous *Philosophical Investigations*, a work published posthumously in 1953. In highlighting the historical importance of these visits, Gibbons draws in his wide-ranging chapter on philosophy as well as anthropological and cultural theory, working to place Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language within a broader theoretical and cultural space. He explores the potential links between the philosopher’s anti-foundationalism (his emphasis, particularly, on background social practices and “forms of life”) and contemporaneous developments in anthropology and social science. Moreover, in drawing attention to the prevalence in Wittgenstein’s writing of metaphors of landscape (his language of “bedrock” and “rough ground” particularly), Gibbons posits that the west of Ireland is present in the philosopher’s writing “as form rather than content”. This is a landscape that “lacks foundations”, Gibbons remarks, and so it is importantly apposite to the

philosopher's imagination. Gibbons concludes that Wittgenstein's visits to the west coast of Ireland offered intellectual ventilation rather than straightforward escape. Crucially, these visits allowed the philosopher to explore central notions of foundationalism and primitivism as these were re-imagined along "the wilder shores of modernity".

In **"Exile, Dislocation and Home-Spaces: Irish Narratives" (Chapter 11)**, **Danielle Petherbridge** explores the evergreen tropes of exile and dislocation and their importance to the Irish cultural imagination. Drawing on the philosophical work of Agnes Heller, she considers how notions of "home" and "dislocation" might be re-imagined in a contemporary era of global movement and technological advance. In further exploration of these ideas, Petherbridge turns also to the modernist prose of James Joyce, to the contemporary poetry of Vona Groarke and to contemporary narratives of dislocation recounted by Muslim immigrants in Ireland. Particularly interesting about Petherbridge's contribution is her exploration of the Irish experience as quintessentially "liminal". Such "liminal" or "exilic" existence is based on long histories of emigration as well as immigration and finds expression in literature both modernist and contemporary. Indeed, it has been characteristic of Irish writing, argues Petherbridge, to resist simplistic notions of identity (as necessarily tied to landscape or place or language, for example) for a more complex account acknowledging Irishness as transnational and cosmopolitan. This complex account fits also with the oral narratives of new immigrant arrivals to Ireland and their experiences of struggle and dislocation. It is testament to the nuance of Petherbridge's work that these experiences are included in order to offset any simplistic account of Ireland as straightforwardly welcoming. In her concluding section, Petherbridge reflects on notions of homeliness and hospitality as these are explored in the work of Derrida. Not wishing to downplay the very real racisms experienced by newcomer groups to Ireland, Petherbridge still ends on the hopeful note – echoing Kearney indeed – that Derrida's rich notion of hospitality might find particular expression in the Irish case.

When speaking of Ireland, the issue of who counts as Irish necessarily emerges and this issue divides on linguistic and ethnic as well as geographical and religious grounds. The final part of the collection, **"Language, Identity and Erasure"**, deals precisely with these issues as it presses further on the sensitivities of geographical displacement and linguistic loss. In a sense, this focus on identities that are troubled, misplaced or regained brings our book full circle. In **"Racisms, Identity and Anti-Racist Learner-Citizenship" (Chapter 12)**, **Karl Kitching** explores the fraught relationship between rights to education and rights to formal political citizenship in contemporary Ireland. Citizenship, as Kitching points out, is a dynamic and multi-layered phenomenon. It involves multiple affiliations and encounters, constituted not only by nationality but by identities that might be political, sexual, religious, environmental or even "learner-based". With this more complex understanding in mind, Kitching explores the construction of citizenship in Irish education settings. His chapter is informed by the philosophies of Said, Mouffe, Foucault, Butler and Braidotti (among others) and he is motivated particularly to outline a philosophy of citizenship sensitive to the intersections of power, resistance and plurality. Importantly, there is a strong empirical aspect to Kitching's chapter in which he interrogates the discourse of education as well as the power dynamics of everyday educational encounter. It is the central ambition of his work to highlight the multiple ways in which young people in Ireland – through their everyday acts of learner-citizenship – reclaim spaces, articulate identities, counter expectations, and by so doing challenge everyday racism and religious discrimination.

In her chapter, **"Who's Afraid of the Irish Language? The National-Philosophical Possibilities of a Lost Tongue" (Chapter 13)**, **Lisa Foran** sets Derrida to work in explicating the complexities of the Irish language in Ireland. Foran begins her chapter by pointing out the uniqueness of the Irish situation, in that it is a *de jure* bilingual state but has produced a *de facto* monolingual population. The majority of Irish people speak English as a first language and only a minority speak Irish fluently. Foran traces the historical and political reasons for this sociolinguistic situation and draws particular attention to

its philosophical import. She is interested in what it means both to possess and to lose a native language. Foran is interested further in the intersection between nationality, language and philosophy – what it means for Irish philosophy, in particular, to take place in and through English – and she explores this intersection with detailed attention to the work of Derrida as well as Fichte. In this context Foran offers an interesting discussion of “national identity”, taking from Derrida’s work important distinctions between a “good” and a “bad” nationalism; if the former is future- and other-oriented, the latter is “concluded, closed, complete, and pure”. Foran concludes her piece with the intriguing suggestion that Irishness – given its dependence on a language that is not its own and its subsequent brand of hospitable nationalism – is in fact a peculiarly philosophical identity. With this illuminating idea, Foran echoes the work of many of our contributors and closes the collection on a fittingly aspirational note.

For the philosopher Mary Midgley, who died in 2018 as we worked on the earliest stages of this project, the boundaries of philosophy are not a matter of historical contingency. They are not to be positioned or policed by the privileged few. Midgley argues, rather, and here certainly she echoes the ambitions of Cavell, that philosophy goes to the very heart of our present moment. It is not dry or abstract but electrically alive in the ordinary and the everyday. For Midgley, philosophy is like plumbing. It is an activity that arises, Midgley argues, “because elaborate cultures like ours have beneath their surface a fairly complex system which is usually unnoticed, but which sometimes goes wrong”.⁹ So if our concepts are working badly; if, as in Midgley’s imagination, our concepts begin to drip audibly through the ceiling and swamp visibly the kitchen floor, it is at this moment that we call for the philosopher. It is at this moment that we endeavour to salvage, to clean and to *tighten* our thinking. As editors of this book, we have wished to bear Midgley’s ambition for philosophy in mind. Aiming for a significant contribution to contemporary theorisations of Ireland, we have worked to address a broad audience of scholars and practitioners not only in academia but in policy and civil society domains. We have been motivated to highlight works of sensitivity and imagination and so to advance our country’s ongoing project of ethical and political self-definition. We hope that this completed project delivers on these ambitions to animate contemporary Ireland in new and insightful ways.

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¹ There are rare but important examples of philosophical work that engages the theme of “contemporary Ireland”, especially work by Richard Kearney (also a contributor to this volume) - see Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1997), and Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988)..

² Linda Connolly, “A New Vision of Irish Studies,” in *Are the Irish Different?*, ed. Tom Inglis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 230–40.

³ Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 161.

⁴ Stanley Cavell, *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 497.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 521.

⁶ Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), xviii.

⁷ Such classic tendencies in philosophy are well documented, and have been critiqued by many philosophers themselves. For instance, pragmatists and feminist philosophers have written extensively about philosophical dualisms, such as theory/practice, mind/matter, reason/emotion, and the denigration of the latter oppositional, with distinct implications for what counts as philosophical work and who counts as a philosopher – see, for example, Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: “Male” and “Female” in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993). John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (London: Macmillan, 1951).

⁸ For more on women as “the Other Within” the Irish Nation, see Clara Fischer, “Gender, Nation, and the Politics of Shame: Magdalen Laundries and the Institutionalisation of Feminine Transgression in Modern Ireland,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41, no. 4 (2016): 821–43, p. 838. On Irish identity established with recourse to an Other (especially the former coloniser), see Louise Ryan, “Sexualising Emigration: Discourses of Irish Female Emigration in the 1930s,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 25, no. 1 (2002): 51–65.

⁹ Mary Midgley, *Utopias, Dolphins and Computers: Problems in Philosophical Plumbing* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.