



A University of Sussex PhD thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

Thomas MacGreevy: Poetry, Art, and Nation

Alanna Lee Green

Ph.D. English Literature

University of Sussex

September 2017

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
ALANNA LEE GREEN Ph.D. ENGLISH LITERATURE
THOMAS MACGREEVY: POETRY, ART, AND NATION

Thomas MacGreevy was a Catholic, an Irish nationalist, and an international modernist who lived through two world wars. His life and work marks him as an active voice in the contentious cultural debates about art, poetry, and modernity that emerged in Ireland immediately after the First World War. This thesis examines the ways in which the three critical components of his life - modernism, Catholicism, and nationalism - interact with each other to distinguish MacGreevy as a poet.

MacGreevy's life has been approached in broadly chronological order. The thesis is not an intellectual or literary biography, but a critical study of his life and published works. His role as a volunteer in the British Army during the First World War, especially as an Irishman fighting on behalf of the British, is crucial to understanding him as a poet. The theological questions and nationalist ideology with which he returned to Dublin after the war greatly influenced his role as a literary critic and writer, as well as his career as an art historian and art critic while Director of the National Gallery, Dublin. His literary career in London and Paris in the nineteen twenties and thirties was crucial to his development as a modernist. His literary associations with other modernists of the interwar period, including W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and T.S. Eliot, were highly influential. The physical detachment from his homeland during these periods of his life crystallised his sense of nationalism, whilst also creating space for an international identity to emerge.

Of the three constants of MacGreevy's life examined in this thesis - nationalism, Catholicism, and modernism - nationalism progressively evolved from a creed to an institution. His Catholicism too became progressively stronger, and in the latter half of his life was a decisive factor in the work he produced and published. His modernism was determined by the European locations where he lived, and by his professional associations. By aligning himself with the cultural nationalism of Yeats and the modernism of Eliot, MacGreevy aligned himself with a new mainstream modernism.

What makes MacGreevy distinctive is that he was an international nationalist who remained throughout his life a deeply-rooted Catholic. The context in which MacGreevy operated transformed itself over the course of the twentieth century as a nation-based nationalism came into conflict with modernist internationalism. MacGreevy's response to this conflict produced a combination of his international culture and the religion of his homeland, the international religion of Catholicism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Chapter I: War and the Emerging Poet	9
Early Days	11
Radicalisation of Ireland	13
Enlistment	17
Active Service	18
Returning from the Front	30
Chapter II: Demobilisation and Re-entry into Dublin	36
Finding New Beginnings	36
Writing as Renewal, Celtic and Catholic	41
Writing Freedom in the Free State	46
Seeing his Way with Writers and Artists	55
Modernisms	63
Irish and Anglo-Irish	68
Chapter III: National and International: Ireland, Catholicism, and Modernism in Dublin and London	72
MacGreevy's Search for the Young Eagle of Ireland	73
Finding His Way	79
MacGreevy in London	85
The Emergence of MacGreevy's Modernism	91
'The Man about Town'	94
Looking beyond London	96
Chapter IV: The Possibilities of Paris	100
Paris in the Belle Époque	100
Paris after the War	102
The Beginnings of Modernism	106
MacGreevy's Expatriate Circle	110
'The Catholic Element in <i>Work in Progress</i> '	113
MacGreevy the Mentor	116
Negotiating Irish Catholicism within an International Frame	119
Chapter V: 'Cron Trath na nDeithe' or 'Twilight of the Gods' and T.S. Eliot's <i>The Waste Land</i>	124
Eliot, Joyce, and Pound: The Triumvirate Making of <i>The Waste Land</i>	124
The Wagnerian Influence in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe'	129
The Prelude	133
Section I	139
Section II	148
Section III	153
Section IV	155
Section V	161
Chapter VI: The Poet Among Paintings	164
MacGreevy: Critic and Lecturer	164
<i>Poems</i>	168
Fighting for Nationalism: The publication of <i>Jack B. Yeats</i>	170
The City of God: An Experience and an Interpretation	174
Back By Necessity: MacGreevy in Dublin- The Later Years	176
MacGreevy in the Public Sphere	179
MacGreevy and Wallace Stevens: An Epistolary Friendship	183
Right Place, Right Time: A Dream Fulfilled	190
Conclusion	196
Bibliography	199

Introduction

Thomas MacGreevy was one of many voices including W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett in the contentious cultural debates about art, poetry, and modernity that emerged immediately after the First World War and contributed to the emergence of the newly independent Irish nation in the twentieth century. My thesis will focus largely on the distinctive if largely neglected role Thomas MacGreevy played in the formation of Modernism, the extent of his contribution to the Nationalism of his day, his international outlook, and most importantly, the ways in which he was distinguished among, yet influenced by, his contemporaries. The thesis highlights the centrality of MacGreevy's life and work as an art historian and art critic, and helps establish broader intellectual genealogies amongst his contemporaries throughout his life and career as an Irish modernist and international Nationalist.

The starting point for my research has been the pioneering work of leading MacGreevy scholar Susan Schreibman. Her book, *The Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy, An Annotated Edition* (1991) is the first of its kind for MacGreevy scholarship. Schreibman is the mastermind behind *The MacGreevy Archive*, which includes an exhaustive collection of published articles spanning the course of MacGreevy's life. Some can be found at Trinity College, Dublin, and the National Gallery of Ireland. The archive also contains many unpublished documents located in private collections and unavailable to the public. It is the only source that pulls all of MacGreevy's published articles together in a digitised format. All have been made available through digitisation and can be found online (www.macgreevy.org). Finally, my research has also utilised *The Life and Work of Thomas MacGreevy, A Critical Reappraisal* published by Bloomsbury Academic Press and edited by Schreibman (2014). Apart from these books little of substance, apart from a few essays, has been published about MacGreevy: if he features at all in recent criticism and scholarship it tends to be in passing references or footnotes in work on Yeats or Beckett or Wallace Stevens. This is regrettable as some of his poetry still lives on in anthologies such as the Field Day Anthology and Gerald Dawe's *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945* (2008).

Unpublished sources have illuminated both the life and the work, particularly material in the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The National Gallery (London), and The National Archives, Kew (London). Resources

located at Trinity College, Dublin, and the National Library of Ireland were accessed through the use of *The MacGreevy Archive*. A collection of MacGreevy articles published in *The Irish Statesman* in the 1920s was accessed at the University of Sussex Library. MacGreevy's largely forgotten prose writings such as his contributions to the *Irish Statesman* are of considerable interest not just as background to the poetry but in their own right as essays in cultural criticism.

The chapters explore the life and work more or less chronologically, though the chronology of formative experiences is rather different from the chronology of published work that gradually emerged from his experience and intellectual and imaginative development, particularly in the case of the war poems. The first chapter, 'War and the Emerging Poet' provides a contextual analysis of MacGreevy's role as a poet *entre deux guerres*. The chapter will engage with MacGreevy's early life and enlistment in the army, the role that his participation in the First War had on his career, and will trace the beginnings of his nationalist outlook on life. The military records held at the National Archives, Kew, made much of this research possible.

MacGreevy lived through two events that were to change the course of his life: the Great War and the Irish civil war. The second chapter, 'Demobilisation and Re-entry into Dublin' narrows in on literary works, political affiliations, and theological questionings after MacGreevy's demobilisation from the war when he re-enters civilian life in Dublin, and attends Trinity College. The chapter examines the extent to which the civilian MacGreevy would seek to render meaningful to himself the experience of war at the Front while also responding imaginatively to the political fallout of his return to Ireland at war, first with Britain and then with itself.

The third chapter, 'National and International: Ireland, Catholicism, and Modernism in Dublin and London' explores MacGreevy as a poet who aligned his concept of a newly-independent Ireland with many of Europe's most influential cultural and artistic movements. It explores his life in cosmopolitan London as a literary editor and emerging art critic. His deeply felt Catholicism and sense of Irishness as part of a greater European literary and artistic heritage would not only enable him to forge Catholic and continental resonances into a distinctly modern sensibility, but would also pave the way for his emergence in Paris as a leading Irish figure.

'The Possibilities of Paris', the fourth chapter, concentrates on MacGreevy's life in Paris in the 1920s, when it was the heart of continental Europe and the

emerging Modernist scene. It explores his life amongst fellow émigrés and Irish expatriates, and analyses how these relationships affected his literary style and artistic contributions. The links he forged between post-colonial Ireland and the artistic concerns of the European continent during the Modernist era would greatly inform his identity.

The fifth chapter, “‘Cron Trath na nDeithe’ or ‘Twilight of the Gods’ and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*”, challenges the assumption of MacGreevy’s indebtedness to Eliot, and asserts that Joyce provided a greater influence in the creation of the Irish poem, ‘Cron Trath na nDeithe’. In so doing, the chapter explores the influences that went into the production of ‘Cron Trath na nDeithe’ (such as Wagner), and asserts that MacGreevy’s aesthetic and artistic background enabled him to bring something of his own to the poem.

The sixth and final chapter, ‘The Poet Among Paintings’, chronicles the last twenty years of MacGreevy’s life. The chapter highlights the impact that the outbreak of war had on MacGreevy’s financial circumstances and his subsequent relocation to Dublin. This would prompt him, out of financial necessity, to write for publications that could provide him with the financial means necessary for survival. In Dublin, MacGreevy focused on his career as an art historian and critic, writing to a readership that was concerned with national cultural issues from a predominantly Catholic perspective. He wrote and lectured regularly about the visual arts in Ireland, and, in Dublin, found himself at the height of his creative and intellectual power. His discussions on art history would seek to dismantle existing norms for exhibiting and assessing art and to offer alternative principles based on the needs of the newly independent nation. His legacy would be fulfilled by his position as Director of the National Gallery, Dublin.

MacGreevy’s theological questions and nationalist ideology were pervasive influences throughout his life and career. His growing understanding of Irish Nationalism greatly impacted his role as a literary critic and writer. His distinct view of Europe united by Catholicism crystallised his identity as an Irish Catholic, a part of the greater tradition of European Catholicism. The physical detachment from his homeland for distinct periods throughout the twentieth century, and the European locations where he travelled, lived, and worked, would create space for an international identity to emerge. This thesis explores the connections, experiences, and locales that went into the formation of Thomas MacGreevy- a forerunner of Irish

Modernism who remained throughout his life an international nationalist and deeply-rooted Catholic.

Chapter I

War and the Emerging Poet

However one reads MacGreevy's writing life, it is clear that his capability as a writer was greatly stimulated by his military career in the First World War. The way in which MacGreevy views the world, as art critic as well as man of letters, and the point of view of his published poems, owe much to his direct experience in the war. As with other writers affected by the war such as Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden, Richard Aldington and Ernest Hemingway, it took him some time to absorb the traumatic but also formative experiences of war and to convert them to publishable form.

Over a decade after the war ended, MacGreevy began to publish his writings. The First World War and the conflicted feelings he would later face as an Irish nationalist are inscribed in his books in the 'Dolphin Book' series, published by Chatto & Windus in 1931. These include *T.S. Eliot: A Study* (published in January) and *Richard Aldington: An Englishman* (published in September). In May 1934, William Heinemann published the only volume of MacGreevy's poetry to appear during his lifetime, a slim blue book entitled *Poems*.¹ The collection represented the work of an eight-to-ten-year period, from the mid-1920s to 1934, when MacGreevy was discovering his poetic voice.²

Poems is certainly war-haunted. MacGreevy's poetic achievement rests upon approximately fifty poems and translations, of which a significant and substantial thematic focus is war. MacGreevy's ability to work through the personal and political effects that the First World War had on him is present not only in these poems but also importantly in his monograph on Richard Aldington, fellow war veteran and writer, which is also a kind of indirect memoir of MacGreevy's own experiences of war.³ MacGreevy's poem 'Winter,' a singularly elegant statement on grief, is dedicated to Aldington, who is now remembered mainly as the author of the novel *Death of a Hero* (1929).

In the early 1900s, Irish culture was overwhelmingly respectable, provincial, and Victorian. MacGreevy noticed how the war, closely following the fin-de-siècle

¹ Later that year the sheets were sent to New York and the Viking Press published an edition

² Susan Schreibman, *Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy, An Annotated Edition* (Dublin: Anna Livia Press, 1991), p. xx. All future references will be abbreviated '*Poems*'.

³ Aldington was a close friend of MacGreevy's throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s.

and end of the Victorian era, had gone right to the centre of the established social mores and ‘bust-it-all-up’.⁴ This included the destruction of the elements that comprised conventional poetry from the pre-war era. MacGreevy strove to develop his own voice in his poetry: Irish and modern but independent of both the late Romanticism of the ‘Celtic twilight’ in Ireland and prevailing mainstream influences – such as the mainly Romantic, Victorian, and late-Victorian ‘decadent’, influences – of British poetry from Tennyson to Swinburne. Much of his poetry has urgent contemporary subject matter: the Great War, war and civil war in Ireland, and the formation of the Irish Free State.

MacGreevy was indeed at the heart of his time, and critical approaches to his work reveal particular and challenging examples of interacting literary and visual modernism. As Susan Schreibman, Professor of Digital Humanities and MacGreevy scholar, notes, ‘MacGreevy was an extraordinarily visual poet...he painted words on the page, sometimes like an impressionist, but more often like a cubist, juxtaposing the real and surreal in disturbing and unfamiliar ways’.⁵ His modernist retreat from straightforward realism suggests what modernist scholar Lee Jenkins describes as ‘the need to experiment with form in the rendering of events too disruptive to be contained within a conventional grammar or prosody’.⁶ It was as if MacGreevy was attempting to create a poetic structure that could isolate his war experience as a part of his past.

Although MacGreevy was cautious about speaking about the war, the experience left an indelible scar. It should be borne in mind that MacGreevy’s first impulse to write poetry was a direct result of the First World War. Many of his poems mirrored the essential irrationality of war. However, no matter how heartfelt his attempts to capture his experience, none could ever measure up to the reality of having lived through and survived the war.

⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, *Richard Aldington, An Englishman* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), p. 11. All future references will be abbreviated ‘*Richard Aldington*’.

⁵ Susan Schreibman, *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*. Cited in Sandra O’Connell, “‘Ghosts Matter’: Thomas MacGreevy and the Last Generation in Paris”, in *The Life and Work of Thomas MacGreevy a Critical Reappraisal* ed. Susan Schreibman (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 155-170, (p. 165). All future references will be abbreviated ‘*Life and Work*’.

⁶ Lee Jenkins, ‘Thomas MacGreevy and the Pressure of Reality’, *The Wallace Stevens Journal*. Fall 1994. Pp. 146-156, (p. 154).

Early Days

To understand MacGreevy's military experience, one must first trace his career from the beginning. In his youth, MacGreevy attended and was educated at the national schools in Tarbert, County Kerry, where he grew up. He received instruction that would eventually have helped him to become a schoolmaster. When the MacGreevy family's limited means made continued parental support impossible, young Thomas took a correspondence course to prepare for the entry-level grade of the British civil service. When he completed the full programme of national school at the age of sixteen, the young MacGreevy studied in Tarbert privately and sat for, and was successful in, the civil service examinations.⁷

The examination was highly competitive and candidates were chosen from all over the British Isles. They sat for five or six subjects, a process similar to taking A-levels for university today. MacGreevy placed in the top fifteen of one hundred and forty-six candidates and was offered a position in Dublin.⁸ His private study was supplemented with some help from a civil service 'grinder', a person or school providing coaching for the civil service exams and distinct from general education. MacGreevy travelled to Dublin to sit the boy clerks' examination in September 1910.⁹ After passing this exam, he received his first civil service posting.¹⁰ In February 1911, at the age of seventeen, he moved from his family's home in County Kerry to begin work as a boy clerk with the Land Commission in Dublin.¹¹ He was a country boy so the civil service took him into a very unfamiliar world. It was in Dublin that MacGreevy began to acquire a broad foundation in the arts which he built on for the rest of his life. Largely prompted by his own interests, MacGreevy began to visit art galleries and attend plays, concerts, and operas in the capital city.¹²

Sometime between 1912 and 1913, MacGreevy sat and passed the assistant clerkship examination and was offered a place with the Charity Commission for

⁷ John Coolahan 'Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work', *The Listowel Literary Phenomenon* (Connemara, 1994), pp. 60-82, (p. 63).

⁸ Susan Schreibman, 'Thomas MacGreevy', *Dictionary of Irish Biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002*, v. 5. James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 1064-1065 (p. 1064). All future references will be abbreviated 'MacGreevy', *DIB*.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ MacGreevy Service Record MS no.64448 National Archives, Kew.

¹¹ 'MacGreevy', *DIB*, p. 1064.

¹² Coolahan, 'Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work', p. 64.

England and Wales in London.¹³ He was transferred to London as a second division assistant clerk in the civil service. While in London, he continued his education by attending courses at Birkbeck College, an adult education college associated with the University of London. It is likely that this education was voluntary further education, and not professional instruction.

His transfer to London allowed him a greater opportunity to extend his experience and deepen his appreciation of the arts. According to his memoirs, MacGreevy was not unhappy during this time.¹⁴ During the day he turned up for his job, and at night he read, went to the theatre, the opera, and classical music concerts. In simplest terms, his job in London created space for a period of apprenticeship for his later career as writer and art critic.

Unusually, MacGreevy's war experience had started when he was still a civilian and long before he sailed for the Western Front: this included Belgium as well as France. Soon after Britain's declaration of war on 4 August 1914, MacGreevy was assigned to Intelligence where he worked as assistant to Sir William Reginald 'Blinker' Hall, Director of Naval Intelligence from 1914 to 1919. Together with Sir James Alfred Ewing, the Scottish physicist and engineer, Hall helped establish Room 40, the Royal Navy's code-breaking operation that decoded the Zimmermann Telegram.¹⁵

The move to the Admiralty provided MacGreevy with a more central location of workplace, and provided him with the cultural benefits of living in London. His transfer to London to work in the wartime Admiralty section of the civil service allowed him even greater opportunity to extend his experience and deepen his appreciation of the arts in one of the greatest art centres of the world. This was an opportunity he explored to the full. There is, however, no record of any contact with

¹³ 'MacGreevy', *DIB*, p. 1064.

¹⁴ Susan Schreibman and Maire Mhac an tSaoi, 'Maire Mhac an tSaoi and Susan Schreibman on Thomas MacGreevy' in *Poetry Ireland*, (Summer 1991), pp. 73-83, (p. 77).

¹⁵ The Zimmermann Telegram was an internal diplomatic communication issued from the German Foreign Office in January 1917 that proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico in the event of the United States entering World War I against Germany. The telegram was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence, and was a leading factor in the entry of the United States in World War I. MacGreevy's memoirs mention once delivering a message to Room 40, albeit through a misunderstanding. Although his contact with the operations in Room 40 was minimal, his brief access nevertheless enabled him to claim a minor role in the British struggle against Germany. See also, Susan Schreibman, "'When we come back from first death' Thomas MacGreevy and the Great War", *Stand To* (January, 1995), pp. 15-18 (p. 15).

the civil servant and patron of the arts Edward Marsh, who would have been very much his senior in the Admiralty.

Today, the voluntary enlistment of adult males to participate in the Great War seems an irrational act.¹⁶ Why men, especially Irish men, volunteered for service in the First World War is difficult to understand. Among the motives for enlistment was a widely accepted moral justification for opposing Germany. It has been described as the war for Big Words: King, Country, Freedom, Duty, Democracy, Liberty, and Civilisation. Indeed, the inscription on the victory medal awarded to all British servicemen reads: ‘The Great War for Civilisation 1914-1919’.¹⁷ Clearly these words were useful and perhaps even essential to encourage recruitment; they are part of the vocabulary political leaders habitually use in times of great national crisis. But in the summer and autumn of 1914, there is evidence that concepts of national duty and high moral motivation had real meaning among volunteers, including MacGreevy.

Radicalisation of Ireland

Early in September 1914, veteran Nationalist MP William O’Brien told a meeting in Cork that ‘in fighting England’s battle in the particular circumstance of [the] war... they were fighting the most effective battle for Ireland’s liberty’.¹⁸ This enabled John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the dominant nationalist politician of the day, to pledge the Irish Volunteers – already committed to home defence – fully to the war effort. In a speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, on 20 September 1914, Redmond declared, ‘the interests of Ireland – of the whole of Ireland – are at stake in this war’. These were true and prophetic words indeed. He drew on grand causes:

The war is undertaken in defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country, and a reproach to her manhood, and a denial of lessons of her history, if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and shrunk from the duty of proving on the

¹⁶ Keith Jeffery, *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 9. See also Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story* (Belfast: The Black Staff Press, 1987) p. 38.

¹⁷ Jeffery, p. 10.

¹⁸ *Cork Constitution*, 3 September 1914 (quoted in Dermot Lucey, ‘Cork public opinion and the First World War’, (MA thesis, University College, Cork, 1972) p. 47.

field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history.¹⁹

It was believed that the danger to Great Britain and her Empire was Ireland's opportunity; both an opportunity to rebel, (hence the 1916 Easter Rising), and, through the Redmond line, an opportunity for Ireland to show how truly valuable it was to the cause of a just war, and deserving of fair treatment. While on a high public level the offer of Irish recruits appeared unconditional, in practical terms the need to secure political advantage remained strong.²⁰ By the end of September 1914, one-third of the total of Irish volunteers in the British forces in the First World War had enlisted.²¹

On 17 October 1914, the *Westmeath Examiner* claimed that Ireland 'is at war with the forces of despotism'.²² In the context of Irish political and military history, it can be argued that the despotic forces Ireland was at war with were both German and British. Those Irishmen enrolled in the services fighting on behalf of the British Empire were fighting against the despotic forces of Germany. However, the Irishmen in Ireland, who had been growing increasingly anti-imperialist since the Boer War, viewed the British Empire as despotic and Germany as Ireland's ally.

Irish political history is important to bear in mind when considering MacGreevy's involvement in the civil service at the time. As Irish historian Roy Foster explains, the Boer War at the beginning of the century 'focused much more moderate Irish opinion into an anti-imperial mould, and provided a mobilising "cause" against the government'.²³ The most extreme example of this was Major McBride's recruitment of troops to fight against the British Army – which included Irish troops – in South Africa. This opposition to the Boer War led to a radicalisation of Irish politics in the early twentieth century that was further encouraged by the outbreak of the European war in 1914.²⁴ By the beginning of the First World War, the conditions of Irish politics had been altered 'beyond recognition'.²⁵ This period of

¹⁹ Denis Gwynn, *The Life of John Redmond* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1932), p. 391.

²⁰ Jeffery, p. 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²² 17 October 1914 (quoted in Paul Bew, *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 131.

²³ Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989) p. 433.

²⁴ Foster, p. 456.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

change was crucial to the development of MacGreevy's place within Irish society, and the formation of his understanding of Irish nationalism, as 'the radicalisation of Irish politics (and, to a certain extent, of Irish society) took place between these two events, and largely because of them'.²⁶

The socio-economic context of Ireland is also a crucial factor in the increasingly anti-imperialist stance many Irishmen felt towards England and the British Empire. Living conditions in Ireland were horrific; surveys before 1914 showed '25 per cent of Dublin families living in one-room tenements occupied by more than four people, with at least 16,000 families living below the poverty line'.²⁷ A soldier's pay was more than many could earn by other means. These appalling statistics encouraged working class enlistment for the European War of 1914 and created a space where an Irish socialist movement could push towards an independent Irish state,²⁸ albeit in alliance with other politically engaged groups and leaders such as the poets Thomas MacDonagh (1878 – 1916) and Patrick Pearse (1879 – 1916). The growth of the new nationalism, with its different socio-economic, cultural and political strands, 'has traditionally been seen as the necessary prelude to the separatist struggle that began with the 1916 Rising'.²⁹

During his first few months of employment as a civil servant, MacGreevy simply initialed and passed on the War Office's direct appeals for recruits that had begun to circulate in government departments. By mid-1915, however, the newly-formed Ministry of Munitions decided to compile a National Register of all persons, male and female, between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five. On 15 July 1915, the Act of Parliament received Royal Assent and Sunday 15 August was set aside for the 'populace to provide particulars of age and occupation; the names of those of military age were copied onto pink forms, and a star was placed against the names of those in essential occupations'.³⁰ MacGreevy's occupation was one of those designated as essential.

During the autumn of 1915, as the second winter of the First World War approached, MacGreevy wrote his first poem. It was about the 'beauty of the world and the tragedy of war', and although he had 'some appreciation' of the one, he (as

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 437.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 443.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 461.

³⁰ Schreibman, "'When we come back from first death', p. 15.

yet) had no ‘first-hand knowledge of the other’.³¹ MacGreevy generally worked nights, twelve hours on and twenty-four hours off, with an officer of the Marines Section, Major (afterwards Colonel) Sinclair, as well as an officer of the Naval Section, a Latinist named Johns.³² Their work consisted of sorting telegrams as well as diplomatic and military reports for the day staff. Although cots were made available for quiet periods during the night shifts, MacGreevy would stay awake, preferring lively and pleasant conversation. On his rounds, he would first stop in Johns’ office, before moving on to Sinclair’s and concluding with the messenger, until all had fallen asleep or more work came in.³³

1916 was the year in which the perception of the war, by both the general public and those fighting, changed radically. It was also a pivotal year in charting a future for MacGreevy.³⁴ Conscription in Britain, though not in Ireland was introduced in January 1916.³⁵ The 1916 Rising, which had a profound impact on so many in Dublin, had little impact on MacGreevy's life as a civil servant in London. However, the arrest, trial, and subsequent hanging of Sir Roger Casement, a British diplomat of Irish birth, humanitarian activist, and distinguished member of the Consular Service who had become increasingly involved in the cause of Irish nationalism, seemed to mark a turning point in MacGreevy's perception of Irish national identity.³⁶ Casement’s treatment provided the impetus for MacGreevy’s first short story: an imaginary dialogue between the gaoled Casement and Sir Arthur Nicolson, a British diplomat and Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs between 1910 and 1916.³⁷ It was, in fact, under the orders of Admiral Hall, Director of Naval Intelligence and MacGreevy’s superior at the Admiralty, that Casement was caught off the Kerry coast on 22 April.³⁸ Casement’s hanging and prison burial for his role in the 1916 Rising inspired MacGreevy to write ‘The Six Who Were Hanged’.³⁹

³¹ Susan Schreibman, ‘The Unpublished Poems of Thomas MacGreevy: An Exploration’ in Patricia Coughlan and Alex Davis, *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), p. 129.

³² Schreibman, “‘When we come back from first death’, p. 15.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Jeffery, p. 16.

³⁶ Schreibman, “‘When we come back from first death’, p. 16.

³⁷ Jeffery, p. 16

³⁸ Schreibman, “‘When we come back from first death’, p. 16.

³⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 136.

Enlistment

On 2 March 1916, the ‘appointed date’ under the Military Service Act introducing conscription, MacGreevy enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery.⁴⁰ His military records show his ability to ride (horses), presumably because of his rural childhood. This was important because there were still cavalry regiments, though it gradually emerged that they had no major role to play in modern warfare. The bureaucratic wheels were set in motion once he applied for admission to an ‘officer cadet unit with a view to appointment to a temporary commission in the regular army for the period of the war, to a commission in the Special Reserve of Officers or to a Commission in the Territorial Force’.⁴¹ The unit MacGreevy wanted to be appointed to was the Royal Field Artillery (R. F. A.) leading to a temporary commission in the artillery or Royal Garrison Artillery.⁴² He would have needed to produce evidence of an educational background in order to be admitted.

Just before he was to return home for his summer holiday in 1916, MacGreevy was asked to take notes ‘on the state of political feeling’ in County Kerry and prepare a report.⁴³ This report was of particular significance: the Easter Rising of 1916 had occurred while MacGreevy had been working, and MacGreevy’s findings were to be presented to the Prime Minister. MacGreevy objected to this, claiming that it was because he wanted to leave work behind while at home, rather than for political reasons.⁴⁴ However, by opting out of the report, MacGreevy was disengaging himself from the Irish Nationalist struggle and remaining politically neutral. This was a wise move for the Irishman with roots in rural County Kerry. The government was not fooling anyone. It was widely believed that the register was the first step towards conscription in Ireland.⁴⁵ Though many Irishmen fought in the British Army, conscription would have been politically difficult in Ireland, particularly after Easter 1916, and in fact it was never introduced there. The incident, perhaps only in retrospect, provides another step along MacGreevy’s road to political awareness.

Motivations for enlisting in Ireland, as in England and Scotland, were quite mixed. ‘Economic conscription’ was another issue. The demands throughout the

⁴⁰ ‘MacGreevy’, *DIB*, p. 1064 and MacGreevy Service Record MS no. 64448 National Archives, Kew.

⁴¹ MacGreevy Service Record MS no. 64448 National Archives, Kew.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Schreibman, “‘When we come back from first death’, p. 15.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

United Kingdom for more and more men to feed the apparently insatiable needs of the Western Front had an impact in Ireland in 1916 as the introduction of conscription in Great Britain drove some fervently nationalist Irishmen back home.⁴⁶ Economic rationality became a staple explanation for Irish recruitment in the British armed services. For those who took the king's shilling, it is argued that money was the important component of the contract, not whose it was. Soldiering was viewed simply as another job, steadier than most, if occasionally more hazardous. British colonial exploitation had so depressed employment and wages in Ireland, according to Irish socialists, that some men saw no alternative to enlistment. It was simply economic conscription.⁴⁷ It has been claimed that Fighting at the Front were

many thousands whose soul revolts against what they are doing, but who must nevertheless continue fighting and murdering because they were deprived of a living at home, and compelled to enlist that those dear to them might not starve.⁴⁸

Hundreds of working class Dubliners, signing up largely for economic reasons, were among the '45,000 men who joined the various battalions over the four years of the conflict.' In a society with a high incidence of emigration, the army was viewed as an assisted passage away from home and gave many of the men who joined their first experience of travel, even within Ireland.⁴⁹ With steady employment and a pension at the end,⁵⁰ economic rationality drew men from all classes and quarters of the Irish community. From the fashionable centres of Dublin and from the slums, economic conscription marked a 'turning point in the history of the relations between Ireland and the Empire'.⁵¹

Active Service

In December 1916, MacGreevy was released from his duties at the Department of the Admiralty and began training for active service. He became no. 206347 in military records and trained as a gunner at the Royal Horse Artillery depot

⁴⁶ Jeffery, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁷ *Workers' Republic*, 18 December 1915, (reprinted in James Connolly, *A Socialist and War, 1914-1916*, ed. P. J. Musgrove (London: Lawrence, 1941), p. 102.

⁴⁸ Myles Dungan, *Distant Drums: Irish Soldiers in Foreign Armies* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1993), p. 54.

⁴⁹ Jeffery, p. 147.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

⁵¹ Bryan Cooper, *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1918) p. viii (foreword by John Redmond).

at Woolwich.⁵²

He was posted to the Royal Field Artillery (R. F. A.) depot at Woolwich. As an artillery cadet, MacGreevy's training was much longer than for other would-be officers, as it included detailed instruction in gunnery as well as the usual officer training. As MacGreevy's work with the Admiralty was considered essential to the war effort, he was not called until 17 March 1917. After a short time at a training school in Bloomsbury, MacGreevy was posted early in May 1917 to No. 1 Officer Cadet School at St. John's Wood. It was probably here that he met Geoffrey England Taylor, a cadet five years his junior, to whom he dedicated his early poem 'Nocturne'. He was awarded his commission as second lieutenant, R. F. A. on 4 November 1917.⁵³ On New Year's Day 1918, MacGreevy was attached to the 148th Brigade, 30th Division Artillery in Flanders as a second lieutenant.⁵⁴ He served as a gunner in the Ypres Salient (Belgium), a site of appalling casualties since 1914 and described as a 'death-trap'.⁵⁵ He explains in his memoirs,

As surely as our position was known to the Germans... the location of German battery positions was known to the English command. These routine winter bombardments were but reminders that the gunners on both sides were not asleep. They constituted what was called 'harassing fire'.⁵⁶

On the night MacGreevy reported to his battalion for duty the Germans launched a full-scale bombardment. Most of his time was spent in the front line of the Western Front at the Somme, a river about halfway between Ypres, Belgium, and Paris, France. He had been wounded on 25 April 1918 during a violent gas and high-velocity shelling at Kemmel Hill.⁵⁷ He served with the 148th Brigade until almost the end of the war, until 2 October 1918, when he was wounded at Comines, France. His wound was severe enough to have him sent back to England to recover.

Geoffrey England Taylor was MacGreevy's closest friend during the war. Both men were sent to the same division in France. MacGreevy was assigned to the big guns; Taylor, to the smaller and more immediately vulnerable trench mortars.⁵⁸ As MacGreevy put it in his memoirs, being transferred to trench mortars was 'the

⁵² The MacGreevy Service Record. National Archives, Kew.

⁵³ 'MacGreevy', *DIB* p. 1064.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 99.

⁵⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, (undated). *Memoirs: Amateur Humanist*, Unpublished. In a Private Collection. Pp. 344-5. All future references will be abbreviated '*Memoirs*'.

⁵⁷ 'MacGreevy', *DIB*, p. 1064.

⁵⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 97.

greatest misfortune to befall a gunner-officer. A trench mortar battery was regarded with horror by all artillery men' and referred to as nothing less than a 'suicide club'.⁵⁹

The shocked reality of recovering from war and the loss inflicted upon ordinary young men can be read into MacGreevy's 'Nocturne'.⁶⁰ The setting of the poem inhabits the wide unpeopled landscape of the battlefield after the battle. MacGreevy dedicates his poem to his friend Geoffrey England Taylor who was 2nd Lieutenant from the Royal Field Artillery when he 'Died of wounds'.⁶¹ In the poem, MacGreevy writes:

I labour in a barren place,
Alone, self-conscious, frightened, blundering;
Far away, stars wheeling in space,
About my feet, earth voices whispering.

In the first version of the second line he had written, 'Afraid, aware, blundering, lonely thing'. This re-write typifies his ability to 'capture exactness of phrase and perfection of rhythm that is a hallmark of MacGreevy's poetry'.⁶² The different word-order gives more emphasis to the blundering.

In this poem, the lament is existential, emphasised by replacing the earlier 'afraid' with the existential isolation of 'alone', though the dedication is specific and individualises the grief. The act of remaining alive conveys an abstracted posthumous world where 'blundering' is the best that can be done for the 'lonely thing' who feels 'self-conscious,' 'frightened,' and 'aware'. This 'blundering,' is spurred by the haunting (trench) voices, earth-bound, and whispering. Merriam-Webster defines 'blundering' as 'to move unsteadily or confusedly', 'to make a mistake through stupidity, ignorance, carelessness', and portrays 'moving in an awkward or confused way'.⁶³ This blundering contrasts with the geometrical orderliness of the 'wheeling' stars in the 'constellation's remote spatial theatre'.⁶⁴ This moment, that MacGreevy captures so eloquently, 'is an unforgiving quatrain of calm realisation and almost

⁵⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 98.

⁶⁰ There are three typescript versions of this poem entitled, 'Nocturne, Saint Eloi, 1918'. It was published as 'Nocturne, Saint Eloi, 1929' in *The Irish Statesman*, II: 4 (28 September 1929), page 69. 'Nocturne' was written in late 1928 or early 1929. It had not been reprinted until the Schreibman edition published in 1991. For more information, see Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 97.

⁶¹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blundering> [accessed 9 February 2016].

⁶⁴ Gerald Dawe, 'Nocturnes: Thomas MacGreevy and World War One' in *Life and Work* pp. 3-16, (p. 10).

resignation as the 'I' sees the immediate world come and go without consolation'.⁶⁵ MacGreevy has frozen a moment from the front line in time, capturing his sense of fear whilst immortalising the 'earth-voices' that are coming from the terribly wounded and the rotting corpses at his feet, the shell-shocked comrades, and the penetrating, nauseating smell of the trenches.⁶⁶

While MacGreevy was recovering from his shoulder wound in Manchester, he found Taylor's name in the *Died of Wounds* section of the Casualty List.⁶⁷ The death of Taylor, to whom he dedicated 'Nocturne' and viewed as 'one of the most sensitively gentle' of men, represented to MacGreevy the worst horror of war: the destruction of 'life's hopes and dreams,' 'intelligence and beauty'.⁶⁸ *The Irish Statesman* version contained the dedication: 'For Geoffrey England Taylor, 2nd Lieutenant, R.F.A., died of wounds September 26, 1918, aged 19 years'.⁶⁹

Saint Eloi, who appears in the original title, is one of the most popular saints of the Middle Ages. Saint Eloi founded a monastery near the present village of Mont St. Eloi, five miles northwest of the city of Arras in northern France. The ruins of the monastery remain, and in 1917-1918 were close to the Western Front. There is also a British military cemetery nearby. Eloi may also be a reference to the words of Christ on the cross: 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? ...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34).⁷⁰ 'Nocturne' could be an ironic reference to Whistler's painting 'Nocturne in Black and Gold' and/or to Chopin's Nocturnes or night-pieces composed for the piano – though the night sounds and sights in the trenches were hideously different. Whistler's influence on MacGreevy was visual as well as psychological here, as occurs often in his poetry.

The day MacGreevy joined his Brigade at Halebast, near Dickebusch, it was supporting the front line in battle. In his memoirs, MacGreevy describes his first night on the Ypres Salient:

We were being shot at, being shot at steadily and accurately. The stuff, heavy stuff, was coming down on us hard and fast. Twice the sandbagged roof of the dugout was hit with five-nines, German high explosive shells. The light went out both times; the whole dug-out shook. Still it did not fall in on us. We were able to light up [cigarettes] again. If this was war it was not a battle. To the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jeffery, p. 97

⁶⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 98.

⁶⁸ MacGreevy, *Memoirs*, pp. 318-319.

⁶⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 98.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Germans it was only a routine 'shoot'. We would send them back their ration of shells when the scheduled hour came round. Meantime we had to take what was coming to us for the half-hour or forty minutes the bombardment lasted.⁷¹

No wonder then in looking back ten or more years, as he wrote his 'war' poems, there is a feeling that the observer in both 'Nocturne' and 'De Civitate Hominum' is precisely that- a spectator who *survived*.

During those first days in the salient, MacGreevy witnessed something that over nine years later he would inscribe in poetry. The second poem in *Poems*, 'De Civitate Hominum', about a British airman being shot down near the front line, was only the first of such deaths that MacGreevy would witness. There are three versions of this poem, one in manuscript and two in typescript form, entitled, 'Death of Somebody's Darling' and 'The Earth is Somebody's Darling'. The first draft was written almost a decade after the war ended, between May and July 1927. In *Poems*, 'Nocturne' appears along with 'De Civitate Hominum' in a separate section, marked 1917-1918, set apart from the body of the collection that follows as 1920-1930. 'De Civitate Hominum' is one of his earlier poems and is dedicated to Alexander Stewart Frere Reeves (1892-1984), the managing director of Heinemann who accepted *Poems* for publication (1934). Frere was not only MacGreevy's publisher but also a close friend, and served in the Royal Flying Corps in the Great War. 'De Civitate Hominum' is a powerful reminder that even in the thick of battle there can be a sense of remoteness, as in W.B. Yeats's critically acclaimed poem 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death'. MacGreevy's poem seems to invite comparison with Yeats's but it is more strongly visual, an early example of what Professor Leo Mellor has identified as 'a cultural fascination with aeriality, or air-mindedness'⁷² more characteristic of the 1930s.

This poem is less visual than MacGreevy's 'De Civitate Hominum', and in a way, more personal. In "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death," Yeats writes:

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate

⁷¹ MacGreevy, *Memoirs* pp. 342-3, republished in Susan Schreibman, "'When we come back from first death" Thomas MacGreevy and the Great War', *Stand To* (January, 1995), 15-18. *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive* [accessed 22nd June 2017].

⁷² Leo Mellor, *Reading the Ruins: Modernism, Bombsites and British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 32. For more on 'aerial perspective' see also Eric J. Leed in *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 134-8.

Those that I guard I do not love;
 My country is Kiltartan Cross,
 My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
 No likely end could bring them loss
 Or leave them happier than before.
 Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
 Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
 A lonely impulse of delight
 Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
 I balanced all, brought all to mind,
 The years to come seemed waste of breath,
 A waste of breath the years behind
 In balance with this life, this death.⁷³

In MacGreevy's poem, the narrator acts as an honest witness of the Somme, who does not gloss over 'the absurdities, obscenities, and immoralities' of the conflict, and eloquently urges the audience to listen to 'the mundane but authentic voice of the ordinary human being whom circumstances thrust into the crucible of violence'.⁷⁴

In *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*, Historian Modris Eksteins explains how soldiers watched from the trenches 'a purity of combat [in the air] that the ground war had lost'. The 'knights of the sky', as pilots were endearingly referred to, 'were engaged in a conflict in which individual effort still counted, romantic notions of honour, glory, heroism, and chivalry were still intact. In the air, war still had meaning'.⁷⁵ The invention of flying was a relatively new phenomenon, ushering in modernity and the new age. World War I was the first major conflict involving the large-scale use of aircraft, and aeroplanes were just coming into military use at the outset of the war. Flying was associated with 'freedom and independence, an escape from the horrendous collective slaughter of a war of materiel' fought on ground.⁷⁶ In the heat of conflict, one could maintain values that 'lay at the foundation of civilisation' and that the ground war appeared to be negating, including 'respect for one's enemy'.⁷⁷ The introduction of 'the most significant technological achievement of the modern world' into battle was thus also seen as 'a

⁷³ W.B. Yeats, 'An Irish Airman Foresees his Death' *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: MacMillan, 1982) p. 152.

⁷⁴ Orr, p. 227.

⁷⁵ Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan, 1990) p. 355.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

means of affirming traditional values'.⁷⁸ Consequentially, pilots were known as the 'aristocracy of war' and the 'resurrection' of battle.⁷⁹

In an essay on 'Irish Cultural Responses to the Great War' published in 1993, Irish historian Keith Jeffery identifies two main themes in both the literary and the visual representations of the conflict. The first was the 'utter degradation and demoralisation of the war, which sprang from the artists' concern with the human costs involved'. The second was 'one of distance, disengagement or detachment from the war'. As Jeffery explains,

There is nothing particularly *Irish* about the first; it is a common theme which draws together such people as Wilfred Owen, Henri Barbusse and Erich Maria Remarque. But for the second, the combination of Irishness, with the sometimes ambiguous and qualified enlistment in the war effort, and the natural detachment of the artist, especially the visual one, enhances the distance, a fact which is especially apparent in the works of William Orpen.⁸⁰

Both *German Planes Visiting Cassel* by William Orpen and *Daylight Raid from My Studio Window, 7 July 1917* by Sir John Lavery present battlefield visions of distant conflict. Together they are visual reflections of Yeats's detached expression of involvement in the Great War contained in his famous poem 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death', where 'A lonely impulse of delight/ Drove to this tumult in the clouds'.⁸¹

In his second poem, MacGreevy's sense of godless horror is registered in a title changing Augustine's City of God (*De Civitate Dei*) to City of Men, *De Civitate Hominum*. Augustine contrasts the City of Men, the ungodly society, with the City of God, ruled by righteousness.⁸² St. Augustine, along with *The City of God*, wrote the more personal and autobiographical *Confessions*. 'De Civitate Hominum' was highly experimental, reflecting themes and techniques that were only beginning to make an appearance in avant-garde writing and in the breaking down of traditional boundaries of genre. In his study, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, Irish literary historian Declan Kiberd summarises 'De Civitate Hominum' as a war poem 'which runs well beyond an outraged Georgianism and whose fragmentary method

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Jeffery, p. 79.

⁸¹ Jeffery, p. 85.

⁸² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 99.

was far more adequate to the dislocations it reported'.⁸³ Kiberd also suggests that MacGreevy's 'brilliant deployment of *vers libre* was his way of 'retaining some kind of hold on a world no longer felt to be regular'.⁸⁴ The 'devotion to an epiphanic moment in the midst of a fallen universe'⁸⁵ as found in 'De Civitate Hominum', was a vision MacGreevy shared with James Joyce.

The first thirteen lines of 'De Civitate Hominum' act as background for the main focus of the poem as MacGreevy draws the reader's attention to various spots of colour.⁸⁶ The first four lines begin with a crystalline image of brilliant sunlight reflected off the snow-covered ground:

The morning sky glitters
Winter blue.
The earth is snow-white,
With the gleam snow-white answers to sunlight,

This then draws the reader into a darker reality:

Save where shell-holes are new,
Black spots in the whiteness-

A Matisse ensemble.

The shadows of whitened tree stumps
Are another white.

And there are white bones.

'De Civitate Hominum' is a recording of the soldierly life. The *artistic* reference point, 'A Matisse ensemble', abstracts the contrasting of black and white, that similarly contrasts with the surreal placement of local soldierly everyday life with the carnage and wreckage, waste of mortal life on full view. As soon as we realise that this is no ordinary landscape, MacGreevy takes us out of reality by likening the scene to 'A Matisse ensemble'. Throughout the early stanzas of the poem he alternates between describing the scene and then stepping back to analyse it in painterly terms. By the eighth stanza, the distinctions crumble and the artist becomes art: 'the *nature morte* accessory'.⁸⁷

⁸³ Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of The Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1995). p. 461.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Kiberd, p. 462.

⁸⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxii.

⁸⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

Zillebeke Lake and Hooge,
Ice tray, gleam differently,
Like the silver shoes of the model.

Unlike the transcendental 'Nocturne', 'De Civitate Hominum' names actual places in Flanders, western Belgium- Zillebeke Lake, Hooge, and Gheluvelt. 'Zillebeke Lake and Hooge' are in the Ypres Salient, which as mentioned already was regarded as a 'death trap'. 'Gheluvelt' is a town in the region of the Salient, north-east of Zillebeke Lake. The familiar comforts of the surrounding countryside have become frighteningly replaced by images of horror: 'shell-holes', 'black spots in the whiteness' of the snow, 'tree stumps' mangled with decaying flesh and rotting 'white bones'; a 'cold' wintry world –and war-zone– within which death occurs. The cities, towns, and villages, along with the surrounding landscape, - the lakes and hills and forests- once scenes of natural beauty, 'had by the winter of 1917 become locked into a deadly endgame'.⁸⁸ The German spring offensive of 1918 was an unsuccessful attempt to finish war before the American troops arrived in large numbers. Only with the arrival of fresh American troops did the tide of the war finally turn against the Germans on the Western Front.⁸⁹

The model is our world,
Our bitch of a world.
Those who live between wars may not know
But we who die between peaces
Whether we die or not.

The airman in this instance serves as a reminder to MacGreevy of death, as he reconciles faith in God with the carnage in front of him. The pilot is his 'model' of the 'bitch of a world' to resurrect life on the front line of the trenches. A striking point about MacGreevy's verse that is very much part of the modernist context in which he wrote, is that his poetry is not merely a confession of his personal experience, but 'brings in the greater society and that society's preoccupations'.⁹⁰ Further, after having served in the Great War and returning to the Civil War in Ireland, 'the question of how one reconciles faith in God with trench warfare and half a city destroyed' became 'a major preoccupation' of his verse.⁹¹

It is very cold

⁸⁸ Dawe, 'Nocturnes: Thomas MacGreevy and World War One', p. 11.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Schreibman and Mhac an tSaoi, *Poetry Ireland*, p. 80.

⁹¹ Ibid.

And, what with my sensations

And my spick and span subaltern's uniform,
I might be the famous brass monkey,
The nature morte accessory.

In November 1917 MacGreevy held the rank of second lieutenant, or subaltern. Because of his low rank, MacGreevy degrades himself; 'I might be the famous brass monkey, / the nature morte accessory'. The phrase 'brass monkey' refers to the weather being 'cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey'. A brass monkey was a metal fixture used to hold cannon balls on wooden naval ships and the phrase is commonly thought somewhat crude. In very cold weather the brass would contract, thus causing the iron balls to slide off.⁹² By suggesting that he 'might be the famous brass monkey' MacGreevy degrades himself to the position of a mere 'accessory' of life. He acknowledges that it could just as easily have been him who was shot instead of watching the pilot with the higher rank crash to earth in front of him. This irony of status baffles him, the 'brass monkey'. In still life (*nature morte*) painting, an accessory is any object or figure not belonging to the principal subject of the picture, but added solely to furnish background. As 'a nature morte accessory', MacGreevy degrades his position on the battlefield to that of an accessory to the picture. Here and in the next lines, he plays on the meanings of the French word 'morte', and on the meanings of the English 'still life'. In French, the word 'morte' means dead, but can also refer to 'still life' – artists' paintings of inanimate natural objects such as pieces of fruit. In English, 'still life' can suggest not death or something in a painting but a kind of life that is not very rich or lively.

Morte...!
'Tis still life that lives,
Not quick life-

A still life painting captures a moment in time of an object on display and freezes this moment through painted imagery. Here, 'quick' is used in the old sense of 'active', 'lively', which is the formal opposite of 'dead' in the expression 'the quick and the dead' in the Nicene Creed. MacGreevy acknowledges that a painting of a still life, which is immortal, lasts longer than the 'quick life' of a mortal.

There are fleece-white flowers of death
That unfold themselves prettily

⁹² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 100.

About an airman
 Who, high over Gheluvelt,
 Is taking a morning look round,
 All silk and silver
 Up in the blue.

The unfolding of colour compares with the unfolding cycle of life that ends in transitory death. MacGreevy uses 'fleece-white flowers' to represent bullets, contrasting feminine-associated images with masculinity to add to the surreal imagery of the ethereal scene 'up in the blue'. The plane becomes 'silk and silver', silk of course being an ironic use for a symbol due to its delicate and soft nature. In this case, it becomes the perfect target because of the simplicity with which a destructive force can shoot it down with accuracy and ease.

I hear the drone of an engine
 And soft pounding puffs in the air
 As the fleece-white flowers unfold.

I cannot tell which flower he has accepted
 But suddenly there is a tremor,
 A zigzag of lines against the blue
 And he streams down
 Into the white,
 A delicate flame,
 A stroke of orange in the morning's dress.

The abstract painterly beauty of the impression these colours (white, blue, orange, silver, and black) make is ruptured by the shelling of the airman. The gunfire striking the pilot's plane is described as, 'fleece-white flowers' that 'unfold themselves prettily'. There is a kind of numbed aestheticism on display here that climaxes into horror; the horror experienced by the sergeant who stands idly watching. There have been many paintings of girls in white dress, including Whistler's series "Symphony in White" (from 1861-62). On realising that he is as useful to the scene dead as alive, the narrator retreats into descriptions that simulate the soft edges of an impressionist painting, the delicate lace of the 'morning's dress'. By characterising the plane crashing to earth as 'A delicate flame... In the morning's dress' MacGreevy depersonalises the horror of the scene in front of him and transforms it into the vividly surreal.⁹³

My sergeant says, very low, 'Holy God!
 'Tis a fearful death.'

⁹³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiii.

Holy God makes no reply
Yet.

The airman's death is recorded in the voice of 'My sergeant' who says – another earth voice whispering – 'very low', 'Holy God!', 'Tis a fearful death'. A supervisory voice ironically and mournfully acknowledges, 'Holy God makes no reply / Yet'. Alongside the unvoiced trauma and disillusionment of the older man, there remains the shock and inescapable realisation of loss that may well have been filled in MacGreevy's mind by his increasingly religious sensibility of his mature years as the artful deferral of the last line suggests- for 'Holy God makes no reply / Yet'. The first death, the spiritual death that occurred in the trenches, brings 'second life', a coming to terms with life, war, and God, who can no longer be viewed in the same way. MacGreevy's dynamic verse, ranging between the personal and the human condition more generally, sets himself up as a modern Augustine, writing about the new collapse of a modern earthly city; not Rome, but Dublin and all the modern cities associated with fragile western civilisation.

In 'De Civitate Hominum' MacGreevy captured the mood after the Great War, particularly for those who fought in it. He also anticipated the economic and social depression of a decade that would draw to its close with the outbreak of the Second World War.⁹⁴ As a survivor of the Great War, he never forgot that it was only by chance that he was not in a British graveyard somewhere in Flanders. The Germans very nearly won with the spring offensive of 1918 because more German troops were available after the defeat of Russia. They wanted to exploit their numerical superiority while they still had it. It was not until large numbers of American troops joined the British and French that the tide turned in favour of the allies and by the summer of 1918 the war's outcome was assured.

In 1918, moreover, Irishmen were encouraged to enlist in non-combatant branches of the armed services based at home. The army, too, seems to have been held increasingly in low regard, an attitude that had perhaps developed since the 1916 Rising, but also one that displayed a healthily pragmatic appreciation of the risks accompanying enlistment. In 1918, 56 per cent of the recruits went to the recently established Royal Air Force; attracted, among other things, by the labouring and

⁹⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxii.

technical opportunities.⁹⁵ Only 36 per cent went to the army, and the rest to the Royal Navy.⁹⁶

It was during this time that MacGreevy was wounded twice, the second time (September 1918) more seriously at Comines, where he received a shoulder wound. The second wound required his transfer back to England for medical treatment and years later it still sometimes bothered him. In a letter to George Yeats, MacGreevy wrote:

At present I am bothered with a return of the soreness where I was 'wounded' in the war and I can't move my head without hurt, result wakeful nights and tiredness as well as the discomfort. It was some tendon or other running from the base of the skull to the right elbow that was snapped by a piece of something... Odd that it should return for except when I was in London last November twelve months it hadn't hurt seriously during the years since 1918.⁹⁷

When the armistice was signed on 11 November 1918 officially ending hostilities, MacGreevy was still deployed. It took months after the signing of the armistice to get all the troops home and to discharge those who had enlisted for the duration of the war. At the end of the war, MacGreevy was to 'resign the commission and retain the rank of lieutenant'.⁹⁸ He could still call himself 'Lieutenant MacGreevy' as all ex-commissioned officers could retain their rank as a title in peacetime after 1918; they could not, however, after 1945.⁹⁹

Returning from the Front

The fact that he survived to see the end of the war is a triumph in itself. The appalling number of fatalities, Irish and other, particularly of junior officers such as MacGreevy, meant about one in ten of those who served survived.¹⁰⁰ In fact, the minimum number of Irishmen known to have served in the British armed forces was

⁹⁵ The Royal Air Force, established on the 1st April 1918, was previously a minor division of the army known as the Royal Flying Corps.

⁹⁶ Patrick Callan, 'British Recruitment in Ireland 1914-1918', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 48 (1963), pp. 41-50.

⁹⁷ NLI MS 30,859.

⁹⁸ The MacGreevy Service Record. National Archives, Kew.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ One record suggests that the [British] army secured about 134,000 men from Ireland. Another suggests about 210,000 as Ireland's 'aggregate male contribution to wartime forces'. For more information, see David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-1922', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 379-406, (p. 388).

nearly 300,000. There was, ‘no doubt about the number of dead’ and, since statistics of casualties for the Great War ‘show a ratio of 1:10 deaths to the total numbers engaged, the figure for Irish enlistment must approach (at least) half a million individuals’.¹⁰¹

Irish fatalities from the First World War are commemorated in Islandbridge, Dublin.¹⁰² It is worth adding that, as Irish poet Gerald Dawe points out, until recently the site was badly neglected as the fledgling nation-state sought to suppress its connection with England’s war, a complexity which Irish combatants such as MacGreevy had to negotiate.¹⁰³ Like many Irishmen, MacGreevy had fought in the British Army in World War I in a bid to guarantee the rights of small nations (Belgium, for one, being a small Catholic country like Ireland).

Since British practice was to bury war dead on the battlefield, or as close as possible to the place of death, ‘the bereaved had no local grave to visit’ and ‘[f]ew were able to go from Ireland to Flanders or France, let alone Gallipoli, Salonika or Palestine. So war memorials served as surrogate graves’, and an ‘occasion for the bereaved to grieve and try to make sense of, or at least come to terms with, their loss’.¹⁰⁴ Eventually, a War Graves Commission was established to oversee the vast military ceremonies for France and Flanders that are still visited.

War memorials were also created through poems that enabled the bereaved to grieve and try to make sense of feelings of guilt from having survived the war. In his poem ‘Winter’, dedicated to Richard Aldington,¹⁰⁵ MacGreevy immortalises the feelings of grief he must have felt on the battlefield:

The swans on the leaden coloured water
Look like hostile ghosts
Of kings
Who resent our presence.

Are they not right?
How should we
Whose hearts are with the dead
Come here
And not die?

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Gerald Dawe, *Of War and War’s Alarms, Reflections on Modern Irish Writing* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015), p. 11.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ For more information see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 52.

On first reading, one might think that the poem commemorates the death of a common friend of MacGreevy and Aldington, but since both men served in the war, perhaps a wider reading might be considered, one that encompasses the feelings of those who served in the war and their subsequent disillusionment.¹⁰⁶ At this point, both men have lost their naïve faith and trust in the purpose of their role in battle. ‘The swans on the leaden coloured water’ may be an ironic reference to Yeats’s Irish-based 1919 poem ‘Wild Swans at Coole’ [Lady Gregory’s home]. Many mythologies, including Celtic, use the symbol of a swan as a medium of communication between the supernatural and natural worlds.¹⁰⁷ MacGreevy’s swans could perhaps serve as a medium, enabling him to communicate to those lost but not forgotten. Since they are merely resentful, this suggests an ironic treatment of the comforting formalities the swans might have provided.

The reference to kings suggests a much older world, the long dead world of ancient Ireland with its long-dead kings, drained of all its vitality now like war-born survivors MacGreevy and Aldington. It also references Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. Both MacGreevy and Eliot grapple with their own metaphorical Waste Land in the confines of disjointed texts. Their plight is the recognition of a breach of continuity of life caused by factors outside their control. It is the subsequent uprooting of life with which modernism grapples. This ‘uprooting’ has a peculiar aptness for each poet, for what Eliot and MacGreevy are seeking to come to terms with in their texts is different for each.¹⁰⁸

The title for Eliot’s epic poem comes from Miss J. L. Weston’s anthropological book, *From Ritual to Romance* that explores a fertility ritual alluded to in ‘The Burial of the Dead’.¹⁰⁹ The presence of a fertility ritual, which is pagan in concept, contrasts with the characteristics of Victorian culture and the state of civilisation after the Machine Age. Traditions and cultures have mingled and rituals serve to satisfy a taste for the historical by making the past contemporary. However, no one tradition can digest so great a variety of materials and the result is a breakdown of forms and an irrevocable sense of loss which seems necessary to a

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁰⁸ F. R. Leavis, ‘The Significance of the Modern Waste Land’ in *T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land*, Michael North (ed.) A Norton Critical Edition (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2001). Pp. 173-185 (p. 174) All future references will be abbreviated ‘North’.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 173.

thriving culture.¹¹⁰ This thriving culture would not have come about without the incessant rapid change that characterises the Machine Age.

The 'Burial of the Dead' was in part inspired by the works of Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), one of the best-known and most influential anthropologists of his era.¹¹¹ Frazer's work *The Golden Bough*, (first published in 1890, expanded into a twelve-volume edition cited by Eliot in 1911-15, and then abridged in 1922), affected Eliot primarily by suggesting parallels between ancient and modern beliefs.¹¹² Eliot's use of the title 'Burial of the Dead' plays on this parallelism. In particular, Eliot combines the title of the burial service in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, Burial of the Dead, with Frazer's analysis of ancient rituals and vegetation ceremonies.¹¹³ These analyses describing the sacrificial death of an old king and beliefs associating the new king's potency with the fertility of the land left its impression:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.¹¹⁴

The 'dull roots' conjure up the images of dead trees as desolate images of life damaged and destroyed, used in MacGreevy's 'De Civitate Hominum'. MacGreevy's contrast of tree stumps with bones, 'The earth is snow-white / With the gleam snow-white answers to sunlight, / ...The shadows of whitened tree stumps / Are another white. / And there are white bones' may recall Eliot's verse:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats.
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,¹¹⁵
And the dry stone no sound of water.

In his note on this passage, Eliot cites Ecclesiastes 12.5, as the source of some of his images of desolation. The chapter is devoted to the sorrow of old age and decline, when it is discovered that 'all is vanity' (Ecclesiastes 12.8). Unlike MacGreevy, Eliot

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹¹ North, p. 21.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

has no direct front-line experience or imagery before him. In the passage, he's being generally gloomy about life as a whole. There is no connection that makes 'The Burial of the Dead' specifically about the men who had fallen in battle. MacGreevy's 'Are they not right? / How should we / Whose hearts are with the dead / Come here / and not die?' from 'Winter' echoes the general gloomy sense of inescapable association and involvement with death conveyed by the speaker in Eliot's poem, 'I had not thought death had undone so many' (line 63, adapted from Dante's *Inferno*), but draws on MacGreevy's war-time experiences.¹¹⁶

As a poet, MacGreevy aligns himself with individuals who had gone through the war and understood its transformative effect that resulted in a darkened spirit. The poetry he writes places him as one of the '*lost generation*', a generation of men who, as editor and writer Sandra O'Connell explains, are 'permanently marked, both physically and mentally, by the experience of war'.¹¹⁷ Many of MacGreevy's poems mirrored the essential irrationality of war. It was as if he was isolating his war experience within a poetic structure that was drawn upon his past. In his monograph on Aldington, MacGreevy writes:

If you have been placed suddenly on the other side of the grave and left there for months and years, you do not forget it. And you do not forget those you left there when you came back. Sometimes you bring back not only a darkened spirit but a maimed body from there, and that reminds you. The war had been won and the German fleet handed over, but the price had been too great. Nearly a million young men of the British Empire had given their lives, and yet not only was life in England more uneasy than ever before, but the United States had taken up where Germany had left off, and with their enormous wealth could obviously outstrip the British navy in no time. The war had not been worthwhile from any point of view. It had been a ghastly mistake.¹¹⁸

This paragraph is poignant in its recall of the struggle many men felt over their motives for engaging in battle. In this passage, MacGreevy comes to terms with his place in Irish society by questioning the relationship of the British Empire with other global powers, and wondering what the point of it all was – an Irish puzzle he shared with the Irish airman in the Yeats poem quoted earlier. MacGreevy's inability to forget what it was like for him to 'have been placed suddenly on the other side of the

¹¹⁶ MacGreevy felt distanced from those of his generation, who had not gone through the war experience, which helps to explain his complex attitude towards T.S. Eliot.

¹¹⁷ O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 165.

¹¹⁸ Thomas MacGreevy, *Richard Aldington*, p. 6.

grave' reveals a great sense of connectedness with humanity that is irreplaceable. Certainly, MacGreevy would be reminded of this by his battle-maimed body, having been wounded twice. Even if he had struggled with what would be considered now as post-traumatic stress disorder (then known as shell-shock), his ability to feel empathy, by not forgetting those he had left when he came back, shows that his experience in the war had not been in vain, even if the war itself seemed pointless. As Jeffery explains, 'For many of the soldiers condemned to the horrors of the Western Front, their motives were mixed, and in the heat of battle such loyalty as they had was mostly reserved for their immediate comrades or, in some cases, only for themselves'.¹¹⁹ Jeffery is commenting on Irish soldiers, whose motives were more mixed than most, perhaps a theme explored by modern Irish writers such as Sebastian Barry. The loyalty MacGreevy felt was not reserved for his immediate comrades, or only for himself. Rather, his sense of loyalty was reserved and honoured by the recognition he placed on 'nearly a million young men of the British Empire' who had 'given their lives'. In this, space must be given for Ireland without conceding that Ireland is inherently British. There were other non-British combatants – from India, in particular – who were from the British Empire. For MacGreevy, the war had not been worthwhile. It had been a 'ghastly mistake'. The enormous scale of fatalities could not hold back an empire in decline.

When MacGreevy was demobilised in January 1919, there seemed no question of him returning to London and a civil-service career.¹²⁰ However, in February 1919, the course of his life changed when he chose instead to take advantage of a scholarship for ex-officers at Trinity College, Dublin.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Jeffery, p. 148.

¹²⁰ 'MacGreevy', *DIB*, p. 1064

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Chapter II

Demobilisation and Re-entry into Dublin

Thomas MacGreevy's time in Dublin falls into three distinct terms of residence: an early period before the First World War (1910-12), a post-war period of study when he began to develop his artistic abilities and engage critically with the arts (1919-25), and a long final period of artistic and cultural endeavours, culminating in work with primarily administrative and curatorial responsibility (1941-67). By far the longest period of his Dublin years was the last, during which he served as Director of the National Gallery of Ireland (1950-63). Yet of all his years in Dublin, the period that probably had the most significant impact upon his life, thought, and development was the tumultuous and productive years 1919-25 as the Irish Free State emerged with difficulty from war and civil war. This chapter will examine MacGreevy's life, thought, and activities during this time of personal development and vast national tribulation.

Finding New Beginnings

Social and political upheaval at this time both followed from and helped to transform the literary revival. Aware that his country had changed in the years he had been in London and on the Western Front, MacGreevy wanted to investigate. After his demobilisation in 1919, he attended Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), on a scholarship for ex-officers. He was twenty-five years old by the time he enrolled in university and so was considered a mature student at TCD.¹²²

It was at Trinity College where MacGreevy re-began his life. His active involvement in the war made him eligible for the scholarship without which he would have been unable to attend university. He chose Trinity College instead of University College, Dublin (UCD), because TCD was more amenable to officers returning from the British Army¹²³ as it offered shortened courses for returning ex-servicemen. It is possible that credit from Birkbeck College, London, further shortened the time it took to complete his degree. He graduated with a joint honours degree in political science and history, concentrating on the French Revolution.¹²⁴ It is important to note that the

¹²² John Coolahan, *Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work* (Connemara: The Listowel Literary Phenomenon, 1994), pp. 60-82, (p. 65).

¹²³ Schreibman and Mhac an tSaoi, *Poetry Ireland*, p. 77.

¹²⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xv.

French Revolution was viewed as a model for many subsequent revolutions including the Easter Rising of 1916.

Except for several references in MacGreevy's memoirs to poems written during the war, the earliest poem that can be dated with accuracy is six lines written during the Hilary Term of 1919 while he was enrolled as a student.¹²⁵ From 1919, he began to write and publish literary journalism and art reviews and to plunge into Dublin's vibrant literary milieu. When he began his university education, MacGreevy

entered a cultural atmosphere in which Wilde was dead and disgraced; Synge was dead and honoured; Yeats divided his time between Ireland and England; Shaw was firmly rooted in England; Moore had returned, written, then left again; Joyce had disappeared more than a decade earlier, and was rumoured to be in Zurich, writing some vast book of pornography; O'Casey was still the unknown John Casey; and Beckett was not contributing much to the literary arts, being 13 years old.¹²⁶

In 1919 the later accomplishments of the modernists and post-modernist writers, which often seem to support and advance the earlier work of the Irish literary renaissance in Dublin's cultural life, were yet to come.¹²⁷ There were, of course, people of cultural significance still to be encountered daily in Dublin – WB Yeats, AE (George Russell), Oliver Gogarty, James Stephens, Lennox Robinson, Lord Dunsany, and Lady Gregory were all active at this time.¹²⁸ Their relevance for the study of MacGreevy is significant in that they demonstrate the context of several of his major intellectual inclinations at this time. They also provide context for his growing Irish artistic nationalism.

His experience as a British soldier during the First World War and the trauma of that time would have complicated MacGreevy's return to post-revolutionary nationalist Ireland. He did not 'suit the metanarratives of either nationalism or unionism',¹²⁹ and upon returning to Dublin, never quite came to terms with his military role. As Dawe explains,

when the soldiers of the First World War returned, among them MacGreevy, they quickly discovered that far from being seen as heroes, their experiences of war- their uniforms, their war records, their medals, the bric-a-brac of fighting at the front, in effect their entire army lives- would have to be locked

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

¹²⁶ Andrew Goodspeed, "'Stale Voluptuousness": MacGreevy in Dublin, 1919–25' in *Life and Work*, pp. 127 – 139, (p. 128).

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, pp. 128-9.

¹²⁹ Dawe, *Of War and Wars Alarms*, p. 11.

away.¹³⁰

Furthermore, some of the men who returned suffered ‘mental anguish from what they had seen; others, including MacGreevy, bore physical scars and damage from which it would take most of their lives to recover’.¹³¹ In addition to the physical and psychological damage they suffered while serving, those who returned sometimes had problems re-integrating into civilian life and MacGreevy’s re-entry into civilian life was uncomfortable. In his memoir, *On Another Man’s Wound*, the militant Republican Ernie O’Malley – actually five years younger than MacGreevy – reports meeting a quite young MacGreevy, back from the war in France. On the lookout for recruits for the nationalist cause, O’Malley knew instinctively that MacGreevy had had his fill of war. He thought MacGreevy desperately anti-British, which is what he wanted everyone to be, rather than necessarily anti-war: ‘I knew enough never to raise this past, for Tom, when I knew him, had been infused with a heavy dose of nationalism and its corollary, a hostility to things British’.¹³² MacGreevy responded to this internal conflict through his poetry. Both his wartime experience and his role as spectator of the self-inflicted Irish civil war are at the heart of his writing.

The generation that came to maturity during the war and survived bore an indelible impress of the war. As an American contemporary observed, “This generation ‘had something, if possible, even worse than war to face: namely, after War chaos, a spiritual chaos, marked by the seeming breakdown of reality itself’”.¹³³ From this came a foreshadowing of the post-war age, the imminence of a new order. While working in London and then serving as a second lieutenant, MacGreevy had been relatively unaware of the significance of the 1916 Rising and the stirrings towards a war of independence.¹³⁴ For MacGreevy, while World War One would become a source of deep imaginative challenge, the reality of his re-entry into Irish life came at precisely the time that Dublin was becoming the cockpit of another kind of war- guerrilla war- and the focal point of the dreadful though short-lived Civil War that followed the Treaty signed as a political settlement of the struggle between Irish nationalism and the British government in Westminster.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Brian O’Doherty, ‘Tom’ in *Life and Work* pp. 251-260, (pp. 252-253)

¹³³ Samuel Putnam, *The European Caravan: An Anthology of the New Spirit in European Literature* (Brooklyn: Braunworth & Co., Inc., 1931), p. v.

¹³⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

The legacy of Irish veterans of the British Army such as MacGreevy would remain problematic while military and political developments in Ireland were moving inexorably towards the violence of the War of Independence and the Civil War. MacGreevy had become increasingly alarmed by Britain's treatment of Ireland and felt these difficulties compounded on his return to Dublin and his attempts to assimilate into the culture of the 1920s.

In 1920, MacGreevy began one of his most substantial personal friendships of the period – with the playwright and theatre-manager Lennox Robinson.¹³⁵ Their association included the sharing of rooms in Clare Street, just to the rear of Trinity College Dublin, a flat that would, later in 1920, host one of the more dramatic events of MacGreevy's post-war life.¹³⁶ It was there that Sean MacBride and Ernie O'Malley – both on the run from the British – took refuge on the night of the notorious 'Bloody Sunday', a day in which British soldiers shot civilians during a Gaelic Football match in Dublin during the Irish War of Independence. Robinson recorded:

Early in the afternoon a lady, a friend of mine, asked me if I would give refuge to two men for the night, she swore they had nothing to do with the shooting of the officers but they were 'on the run' and their lives were in danger. One of the men I knew, I wasn't even told the name of the other nor did I ask it. I agreed to her request rather dubiously.¹³⁷

It is well to remember that Robinson was a prominent man at the time and this sheltering of fugitives was dangerous for both him and MacGreevy. O'Malley memorably records the same experience, from the perspective of the hunted, in his memoir *On Another Man's Wound*. The passage is worth quoting at length as O'Malley gives us an unusual portrait of MacGreevy – at that time, a British Army veteran who was now complicit in concealing Irishmen from the British authorities:

We were welcomed. I was introduced to Lennox Robinson, whom I had often seen at the Abbey, and to Thomas MacGreevy. They did not object to us remaining there the night. It was risky to be outside now. Robinson played Beethoven on a pianola; MacGreevy took his turn to press on the wide wooden pedals... Robinson closed the pianola. We sat in front of the fire. MacGreevy talked. He had been a gunner officer in France. He had a sensitive face; he must have suffered in the hell of the World War... There was a feeling of uncertainty as if something was going to happen. We talked in

¹³⁵ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 130.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Lennox Robinson, *Curtain Up* (London: Michael Joseph, 1942), p. 125.

whispers as if afraid of the sound of our own voices; outside in the street the noise of heavy cars and sharp commands.¹³⁸

The night was stressful, but the men escaped undiscovered the next morning. Later in life O'Malley and MacGreevy resumed contact, united by a shared interest in the visual arts.¹³⁹ According to Kiberd, 'more had died in the Civil War than in the War of Independence, but once again out of the ashes of defeat the republican phoenix arose'.¹⁴⁰ At the same time as Great War memorials were being erected, Irish War of Independence and even Civil War memorials were being commissioned.¹⁴¹ What is clear, however, is the extent to which the civilian MacGreevy sought to render his war experience meaningful while also responding imaginatively to political fallout on his return to an Ireland at war, first with Britain and then with itself. The strain recalls Yeats' claim that it is out of the quarrel with ourselves that we make poetry.

In December 1920, MacGreevy moved on to his professional career when he was appointed assistant secretary to the Irish Advisory Committee of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (CUKT), and began work as county organiser under the supervision of Robinson, who was the Irish secretary.¹⁴² Robinson was also a dramatist and former director of the Abbey Theatre long associated with Yeats and Lady Gregory. Robinson was Secretary and Treasurer of the Irish Advisory Committee, which included among its members Lady Gregory and George Russell (AE).

It was during this time that MacGreevy co-founded as a Carnegie undertaking the Irish Central Library with Robinson and Christina Keogh.¹⁴³ From December 1920, throughout the difficult period of the civil war, during which library buildings were favourite targets of attack,¹⁴⁴ MacGreevy continued his work with the CUKT. According to Professor of English Terence Brown, the basic impetus behind the Trust was: 'establishing and financing, with the help of a local rate, centres for the

¹³⁸ Ernie O'Malley, *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin: Anvil Press, 2002), p. 238.

¹³⁹ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 131.

¹⁴⁰ Kiberd, p. 359.

¹⁴¹ Jeffery, p. 13.

¹⁴² 'MacGreevy,' *DIB*, p. 1064.

¹⁴³ Christina Keogh was an influential member of the Library Association of Ireland. She served as its honorary treasurer for twenty-two years, and later became its first female president in 1958. When the Irish Central Library for students was founded in 1923, Keogh was appointed librarian and technical adviser. For more information, see Pat Walsh, *The Curious Case of the Mayo Librarian* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2009), p. 151.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

distribution of books in many parts of Ireland'.¹⁴⁵ MacGreevy's life in 1921 centred upon his ongoing work with the CUKT. This work reveals much about his priorities: he was trying to build and stock libraries even as his countrymen were resorting to arson and terror. This was a duty to which he devoted most of his professional time while in Dublin.¹⁴⁶ According to Irish Scholar Robert Tobin, the Carnegie Trust worked with local communities 'to make library resources available and to encourage a respect for learning [which] became an obvious way for idealistic Irishmen to contribute to the National Being'.¹⁴⁷ Robinson recalled MacGreevy's importance in this work: 'Above all, I had as my assistant the man who had the difficult task of persuading counties to strike a library rate. This was Thomas MacGreevy, who after a month or two of working together became one of my closest friends'.¹⁴⁸ For almost three years, MacGreevy devoted himself to the work of the Carnegie Trust library scheme and remained loyal to Robinson.

Despite his busy schedule at the CUKT, much of 1921 was, for MacGreevy, devoted to art. It was also during this time that MacGreevy began writing prose fiction, largely unpublished, and began his eclectic career as a writer, critic, lecturer, translator, and art historian. Indeed, it was during this year that he began his friendship with Jack Yeats, the Irish artist for whom MacGreevy maintained the highest respect. Jack was the older and more established figure, and their friendship lasted until the artist's death in 1957.¹⁴⁹ Their friendship encouraged within MacGreevy a 'a sense of national artistic revival in his own country',¹⁵⁰ through developing a 'critical interest in the dramatic life of Dublin, as well as deepening his contemplation of the relation of visual art to national aesthetics'.¹⁵¹

Writing as Renewal, Celtic and Catholic

Although MacGreevy's career was beginning to flourish, the unsettling truth was that his wartime experience in the British Army had not endeared him to post-

¹⁴⁵ Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–1985* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 74.

¹⁴⁶ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 133.

¹⁴⁷ R. Tobin, *The Minority Voice: Hubert Butler and Southern Irish Protestantism 1900–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Robinson, *Curtain Up*, p. 111.

¹⁴⁹ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

revolutionary nationalist Ireland. His eventual rehabilitation came through his poems that sought to address the moral impact he felt on return from the trenches to a tense and politically fraught, indeed fracturing, homeland. In these poems, he sought to reconcile his war experience with the hostility of many Irish towards the British upon his return. It was in a turbulent Ireland that MacGreevy's war-troubled imagination had to find expression.

MacGreevy found expression through poems such as: 'The Six Who Were Hanged', referring to Irish Republicans hanged by the British following the Easter Rising¹⁵²; 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch', about the hanging of Kevin Barry, the first Irish Republican to be hanged after the leaders of the Easter Rising; 'Autumn 1922', about the formation of the Irish Free State; and 'Homage to Vercingetorix', a poem published after a fifteen year silence and in which MacGreevy examines the differences in perception dividing the English and the Irish in both the colonial and post-colonial periods.¹⁵³

One of the earliest and specifically Irish poems that MacGreevy published was 'Dechtire', written around 1919 or 1920.¹⁵⁴ Originally written on the back of a Trinity College, Dublin, book list, 'Dechtire' can be dated to MacGreevy's days at Trinity, or soon afterwards.¹⁵⁵ The title invokes Irish legend by referring to the mother of the legendary Irish mythological hero Cú Chulainn, while the content indicates an early desire to put a Catholic stamp on his professional publications. This desire was further achieved by publishing his early works under a Catholic pseudonym, L. St. Senan.¹⁵⁶

MacGreevy was in favour of publishing under St. Senan, which he used on more than one occasion: while writing for *The Criterion*, *The Irish Statesman*, as well as in some of Sean O'Casey's publications of the time. In a letter MacGreevy wrote to George Yeats, dated 27 April 1926, he explains his reasons for publishing under the pseudonym. He recalls correspondence between himself and George (AE) Russell, a friend of W.B. Yeats and a minor painter, in which AE had questioned MacGreevy about the use of L. St. Senan for the publication of his poem, 'Aodh Ruadh O

¹⁵² The Rising was mounted by Irish Republicans in 1916 to end British rule in Ireland and establish an independent Irish Republic while the United Kingdom was heavily engaged in World War I. It was the most significant uprising in Ireland since the rebellion of 1798.

¹⁵³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 161.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁵ There are three drafts of this poem, one in manuscript form and two in typescript.

¹⁵⁶ Some of his best poems, such as 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill', were first published under this pseudonym.

Domhnaill'. In the letter to George Yeats, MacGreevy encloses copies of the letter AE wrote when he found that MacGreevy authored the poem, and his response. In his explanation, MacGreevy reveals:

For the present, I prefer to use the name St. Senan. If the poem has any lasting value the lustre will come to the name MacGreevy [sic] in time. A nom de plume gives one more freedom I think. Jack Yeats was saying the other day that all art ought to be anonymous and in a commercial age at least I incline to agree. St. Senan and his island have meant much to me all my life. He was a Christian when Christianity did not mean Jesuitry and his island which was only a couple of miles across the river from my home determined my earliest conception of Hy Breasil. Gathered up into an evening sun it was very exciting.¹⁵⁷

St. Senan, the founder of the great monastery on nearby Scattery Island, in the Shannon Estuary, was the celebrated patron saint of the area. Senan founded the monastery during Ireland's 'Golden Age' in the first half of the sixth century. Its 120-foot high round tower on the island is a striking landmark in the Shannon Estuary to this day. The monastery was a centre of prayer, devotion, and learning for over a thousand years, until Elizabethan forces finally destroyed it in the sixteenth century. MacGreevy was also conscious of the Norman influence on the area.¹⁵⁸

The use of a 'nom de plume' enabled MacGreevy to go along with the artistic views of his prominent contemporary and friend, Jack Yeats. It also gave him 'more freedom' to articulate theological ideals without publicly holding his name to controversial theories. Within Ireland, MacGreevy's Catholicism would have run with, not against the general current; yet, in England he would have been in the minority. However, this would not have been against the current of Protestantism so much as of the religiously disillusioned and largely agnostic secularism of many postwar intellectuals. By contrast, Eliot notably reacted against this by becoming a Christian. At the time, it was particularly important that MacGreevy remain 'anonymous...in a commercial age'. In his explanation to AE, MacGreevy references his 'earliest conception of Hy Breasil'. Breasil was a magical and mythical island some two hundred miles off the western coast of Ireland. By using a nom de plume strongly associated with his Catholic faith, MacGreevy was putting a distinct mark on his early publications that continued as an emblematic theme for the rest of his career. The first draft of 'Dechtire' reads:

¹⁵⁷ NLI MS 30, 859.

¹⁵⁸ Coolahan, *Life and Work*, p. 120.

I do not love you as I loved
 The many loves I have loved;
 As I may love many more.
 You are not fair
 You are not strong
 And yet there is no love but you
 No truth but you
 No beauty but you
 No Mary beside you
 And oh, there is no agony but you¹⁵⁹

In sharp contrast to the original, the final version reads:

I do not love you as I loved
 The loves I have loved —
 As I may love others:

I know you are not beautiful
 As some I loved were beautiful —
 As others may be:

I do not hold your counsel dear
 As I've held others'
 As I still hold some:

And yet
 There is no truth but you
 No beauty but you
 No love but you —

And oh, there is no pain
 But you and me¹⁶⁰

The change from the line 'No Mary beside you' in the draft version, to the ambiguous 'No love but you' (line 13) in *Poems*, along with MacGreevy's decision in draft III to title the poem 'Dechtire', demonstrates the interworking of two of his most prevalent themes. Dechtire, the mother of Cú Chulainn, and Mary, the mother of Christ, are used in the poem almost interchangeably as symbolic of Ireland's Celtic and Catholic heritages. Dechtire, the spelling of the name of Deichtine in the earlier, lesser-known version of the hero's birth, is one of the preliminary tales of the Ulster Cycle centered on the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Later versions use the spelling Dechtine, and Cú Chulainn is not born once, but is conceived three times.¹⁶¹ By subsequently dedicating the poem

¹⁵⁹ TCD MS 7989/57.

¹⁶⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

to Dechtire, MacGreevy identifies Ireland's distinctive inheritance more strongly with her Celtic past — a position confirmed in the poems 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch', 'Exile', and 'Homage to Vercingetorix'. He does this through evoking the heroic image portrayed by Cú Chulainn, whom many Irish nationalists saw as the most important Celtic Irish hero.

In the earliest version of the story, Dechtire (sister of Conchobar, king of Ulster) and her fifty maidens elope from Emain Macha, Ulster's royal residence. They are away from Ulster for over three years but come back in the form of birds and destroy the vegetation. The Ulstermen set out in pursuit of them. During the pursuit, the men take shelter in a small house. One of the warriors, Bricriu is instructed to go back to Conchobar and tell him that his sister has been found, but, withholding part of the truth, he speaks only of the beautiful woman and her entourage: whereupon Conchobar, as king, asks to speak to her. On the journey, she goes into labour. A respite is granted, and in the morning the warriors awake to find the baby Cú Chulainn in the fold of Conchobar's cloak.¹⁶²

While later versions of the tale differ, the image of Cú Chulainn as the dying hero who saves his people is what made him so appealing to other Irish poets, notably Yeats, and to Lady Augusta Gregory. Lady Gregory retold many of the legends of Cú Chulainn in her 1902 book, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, which was very popular during the Celtic Revival movement. It featured an introduction by Yeats, who wrote several plays based on the legend, including *On Baile's Strand* (1904), *The Green Helmet* (1910), *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), *The Only Jealousy of Emer* (1919), and *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939), as well as a poem titled 'Cuchulain's Fight With the Sea' (1892).¹⁶³ Yet, it is the image of Cú Chulainn the hero combined with the image of his mother as married to an otherworldly husband and inaccessible to mortal men that becomes easily fused with that of Christ the redeemer and his mother, the Virgin Mary.¹⁶⁴ Although it is perhaps slightly too elliptical and allusive for general popularity, it is nonetheless notable for the symbolic equation of Dechtire- Cú Chulainn and Mary-Jesus, which again provides evidence of his basic conviction that Irish traditions can be juxtaposed against, and intertwined with, non-native traditions

¹⁶² Tom Peete Cross and Clark Harris Slover (eds.), *Ancient Irish Tales* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936), pp. 134-36.

¹⁶³ James MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 104.

¹⁶⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 131.

at the heart of European culture.¹⁶⁵ It is worth noting that MacGreevy selected Mary as the Madonna or mother-figure rather than the younger Virgin Mary, engaged to Joseph, as she first appears in the Bible.

Writing Freedom in the Free State

In theory, two images of freedom were available to the Irish in the post-war age: the return to a past, pre-colonial Gaelic identity, still yearning for expression if long-denied, or the reconstruction of a national identity, beginning from first principles all over again. The first discounted much that had happened, for good as well as ill, during the centuries of occupation; the second was even more exacting, since it urged people to ignore other aspects of their past too. The first eventually took the form of nationalism, as sponsored by Michael Collins, Éamon de Valera, and the political élites; the second offered liberation, and was largely the invention of writers and artists who attempted, to make themselves citizens through the construction of the world that they craved.

James Joyce's *Ulysses*, published in 1922, is often treated as 'a definitive account of the mind of modern Europe' at the beginning of the nineteen twenties, and is considered to be 'one of the first major literary utterances in the modern period by an artist who spoke for a newly-liberated people'.¹⁶⁶ As Kiberd explains, 'the fear which gripped Pearse, MacDonagh, and Desmond Fitzgerald in 1914 – that a great historic nation was about to disappear as tens of thousands of its men went willingly to the slaughter of another country's war – had also assailed Joyce'.¹⁶⁷ Joyce responded to these feelings by pursuing the ancient Gaelic notion that the consciousness of a people can only be revealed in literature. Beginning 'from the premise that to be Irish [meant] to be modern anyway', Joyce saw his art as a 'patriotic contribution' to the moral history of Ireland and believed that through his post-imperial writing he had 'done more than any politician to liberate Irish consciousness into a profound freedom of form'.¹⁶⁸ For Joyce, it was 'the shattering

¹⁶⁵ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, pp. 129-130.

¹⁶⁶ Kiberd, p. 327.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

of older forms' that permitted a breakthrough in new content and post-imperial writing.¹⁶⁹

The nationalism of the politicians enjoyed intermittent support, but inevitably, neither model was sufficient in itself.¹⁷⁰ As Kiberd puts it, influential Irish modernists such as James Joyce and Thomas MacGreevy 'recognised the extent to which nationalism was a necessary phase to restore to an occupied people a sense of purpose', and these artists 'distinguished sharply between the xenophobic nationalism of the imperial powers and the strategic resort to nationalism by the forces of resistance'.¹⁷¹ Kiberd's distinction between English/imperial nationalism and Irish/Gaelic nationalism challenges the idea that there can be any tenable middle ground between imperialism and more or less separatist nationalism.

MacGreevy remained committed to Gaelic and nationalism, and did not get anywhere close to imperialism, which was usually hostile to nationalism and attempted to find a way of presiding over different national cultures. On an impersonal level, MacGreevy could not forgive the British for their iron-fisted treatment of his own small nation which was daring on its right to self-determination, and 'paying dearly for it'.¹⁷² 'The Six Who Were Hanged' records one of these instances, the hanging of six young Irishmen by the British on 14 March 1921; four for 'High Treason by levying War' and two for complicity in the assassination of British officers.¹⁷³ It has also been associated with those executed (in May 1916) for taking part the Easter Rising and the execution of Casement (August 1916). In her book *The Irish Republic*, the Irish Nationalist historian Dorothy Macardle relates the incident in graphic prose:

March 14th was a day of public mourning in Dublin, all business was suspended until 11 a.m. Before dawn crowds began to assemble outside Mountjoy Jail; sacred pictures and candles were set up in the streets and around these about twenty thousand people stood, praying and singing hymns. When the bells tolled at six o'clock for two executions, again at seven o'clock and again at eight, the people fell on their knees to pray for the dying; their emotions of grief and anger were overpowering. An impression remained which nothing could efface.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 343.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 344.

¹⁷² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 101.

¹⁷³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv

¹⁷⁴ Dorothy Macardle, *The Irish Republic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966), pp. 424-425.

Though a devout Catholic, MacGreevy's experience in the Great War caused him to challenge his faith, a very common experience among former combatants. Divine justice, if any, was hard to understand, and so was human justice, especially in Ireland. The vigil outside Mountjoy Prison while the hangings took place inside reminded him how little control Ireland had over her own destiny, and how after seven hundred years of English domination, God was still maintaining silence.¹⁷⁵ For MacGreevy, the situation in Ireland was almost a personal affront; Irish soldiers in the British Army had been told that one of the reasons for the Great War was to guarantee the sovereignty of small nations.¹⁷⁶ 'The Six Who Were Hanged' is a testament to the men of Mountjoy Gaol who paid dearly for Ireland's right to self-determination.¹⁷⁷

There are three manuscript and seven typescript drafts of this poem. Draft nine was dedicated to Jack B. Yeats. Previous titles are: 'Paris Notes', 'Walking to Mountjoy', 'England Hangs Six Young Irishmen', and 'Six New Constellations'.¹⁷⁸ In the poem, MacGreevy writes:

The sky turns limpid green.
The stars go silver white.
They must be stirring in their cells now –

Unspeaking likely!

Waiting for an attack.
With death uncertain
One said little.

For these there is no uncertainty.

In this passage, MacGreevy shifts between present and past tense. The present evoking the setting of the young Irishmen waiting to be hanged– 'they must be stirring in their cells now' –and the past evoking his experience on the Western Front and the uncertainty of day to day living while in the trenches – 'Waiting for an attack

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 101.

¹⁷⁷ Mountjoy Gaol was a medium security prison just north of the centre of Dublin. It was designed by Captain Joshua Ebb of the Royal Engineers and opened in 1850. Originally intended as the first stop for men sentenced to transportation, a total of forty-six prisoners, including one woman, Annie Walsh, were executed within the walls of the prison, prior to the abolition of capital punishment in 1964 and the prohibition by statute law in 1990. Execution was by hanging, after which the corpses were buried in unmarked graves within the prison grounds.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 100. The poem was written between 1927 and 1929, but was being revised until 1930. To Schreibman's knowledge, it has not been reprinted.

/ With death uncertain / One said little'. The use of the word 'One' in this passage tends to generalise the experience, and could be referring to MacGreevy's personal experience. While dawn raids were common on the Western Front, the unpredictability of the raids meant the men in trenches were forced to await the uncertainty of death. However, for the men in their cells, 'there is no uncertainty', as their days ended in the cells they occupied.

The sun will come soon,
All gold.

'Tis you shall have the golden throne

'Tis you shall have the golden throne' comes from the fifth stanza of James Clarence Mangan's patriotic poem 'Dark Rosaleen' in which the poet addresses Ireland:

Woe and pain, pain and woe,
Are my lot, night and noon,
To see your bright face clouded so,
Like to the mournful moon.
But yet will I rear your throne
Again in golden sheen;
'Tis you shall reign, shall reign alone,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
'Tis you shall have the golden throne,
'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,
My Dark Rosaleen!¹⁷⁹

Although the quotation comes directly from 'Dark Rosaleen', it is important to note the connection MacGreevy makes to the New Testament of the Bible. The golden throne references the throne of King Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:17) as well I Kings 10:18.

It will come ere its time.
It will not be time,
Oh, it will not be time,

In this section, MacGreevy refers to both the executions' time of day and the prisoners' untimely death.

Not for silver and gold,
Not with green,
Till they all have dropped home,
Till gaol bells all have clanged,

¹⁷⁹ Donal MacDonagh (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Irish Verse: XVIIth Century- XXth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 57.

Till all six have been hanged.

And after?
Will it be time?

There are two to be hanged at six o'clock,
Two others at seven,
And the others,
The epilogue two,
At eight.
The sun will have risen
In green, white and gold,
In a premature Easter.

MacGreevy, always aware of 'visuality' in his writing, evokes the passage of time through the movement of sun and stars; the moment of dawn when 'The sun will have risen', as the dark sky grows pale with the coming light. MacGreevy also utilises the visual by focusing on the tricolour flag of Ireland by interweaving 'green, white and gold' into the imagery of the poem. He chooses gold, rather than conventional orange, in deference to the popular nationalist custom of alluding to the papal flag of gold and white. Orange represents the Protestant Order, because earlier versions of Irish nationalism aspired to incorporate Protestantism, while green represents Catholicism. White is neutral and balances the two. The poem's recurring religious motif is a meditation on the scene he witnessed that morning, punctuated by the responses of the crowd (*Hail Mary* and *Pray for us*) as the Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin are recited repeatedly.¹⁸⁰ The phrase, 'a premature Easter' is a symbolic reference to the hangings that took place on Monday 14 March, a fortnight before Easter (which, in 1921, fell on 27 March).¹⁸¹ Easter represents new life and resurrection. However, in 1916 and the period to which this poem refers, resurrection had yet to happen.

The white-faced stars are silent,
Silent the pale sky;
Up on his iron car
The small conqueror's robot
Sits quiet.
But *Hail Mary! Hail Mary!*

Hail Mary is a prayer for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ: 'Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord is with thee. Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray

¹⁸⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 101.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.’ ‘At the hour of our death... Hail Mary!’ The women prayed by reciting fragments of the beginning and the end of consecutive Hail Marys.

They say it and I say it,
These hundreds of lamenting women and girls
Holding Crucified Christs.

Daughters of Jerusalem...

‘Daughters of Jerusalem’ is a New Testament biblical reference to the Gospel of Luke: ‘And there followed him a great multitude of people, and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them, said: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves, and for your children”’.¹⁸² In the following stanza, MacGreevy continues, ‘Perhaps women have Easters’. For the ‘Daughters of Jerusalem’, Easter provides hope of the resurrection.

There are very few men.
Why am I here?

At the hour of our death
At this hour of youth’s death,
Hail Mary! Hail Mary!
Now young bodies swing up
Then
Young souls
Slip after the stars.
Hail Mary! Hail Mary!

Alas! I am not their Saint John –

Saint John, the only male follower of Jesus present at the Crucifixion, is usually regarded as the disciple who Jesus loved (see John 19:21:1). Jesus asked him to look after his mother the Virgin Mary after his death (see John 19:26-7). MacGreevy may be alluding to the fact that he cannot carry that kind of responsibility.

Tired of sorrow,
My sorrow, their sorrow, all sorrow,
I go from the hanged,
From the women,
I go from the hanging;
Scarcely moved by the thought of the two to be hanged,
I go from the epilogue.

Morning Star, Pray for us!

¹⁸² Luke 23:27-28, Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 102.

Representing Venus, the ‘Morning Star’ guided wise men seeking Jesus, and symbolised new beginnings. Like Eliot in ‘The Hollow Men’ (1925) and ‘Ash Wednesday’ (1930) MacGreevy shares a broad resemblance to Eliot in his poetic composition. His interspersed fragments of traditional prayers throughout the poems express or at least provided glimpses at moments of painful and discordant modernity. It had been seven hundred years since the Anglo-Norman occupation of Ireland;¹⁸³ seven hundred years of occupation. MacGreevy mixes secular and religious symbolism throughout the poem. The seven hundred years are secular, while the ‘morning star’ and ‘pray for us’ have religious associations. It is worthwhile to mention that Eliot uses the same formulation – ‘Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death’ at the end of the first section of his ‘Ash Wednesday’. In the litany that follows the rosary, the Virgin Mary is invoked as the morning star.¹⁸⁴

What, these seven hundred years,
Has Ireland to do
With the morning star?
And still, I too say,
Pray for us.

Mountjoy, March, 1921.

For all the loyalty Ireland has always shown to the Catholic faith and to the Virgin Mary, what new life, what morning hope, has it brought her? This seems to be part of what the poem is concerned about. By asking the reader to ‘pray for us,’ MacGreevy establishes deliberate ambiguity here: the echo of this Catholic prayer could still be addressed to the Virgin, or to the reader, or both, and the very ambiguity conveys a kind of desperation – ‘will SOMEONE listen to our prayer?’. MacGreevy incorporates the traditional prayer in the poem, which then becomes a desperate prayer of his own.

The morning star, the star of hope, the symbol of the Virgin Mary, had very little to do with Ireland in 1921. The Irish were in the midst of a bloody war and the British still dominated the island. Those like MacGreevy, who had joined the British army hoping that a victory would help in negotiating a settlement for an independent Ireland, were disillusioned. The 1916 Rising had been put down and many of its leaders shot. By January 1921, eight southern counties in Ireland were under martial

¹⁸³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 102.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

law. These comprised: Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wexford. Although the city of Dublin was not under martial law, there were frequent ambushes by the Republicans and house searches by the British in reprisal.¹⁸⁵

The Irish War of Independence, or Anglo-Irish War, of 1919 to 1921 was a guerrilla war between the Irish Republican Army (the army of the Irish Republic) and the British security forces in Ireland. As a Catholic citizen of Ireland and a veteran of the British Army, MacGreevy responded to events of the war and the political violence in a rather unique way – serving for the British Forces in France, maintaining a safe distance from Ernie O'Malley, the IRA and hard-line republicanism, unlike other ex-British soldiers such as the novelist Liam O'Flaherty – even while questioning its authority at home in Ireland. He faced difficulties on his return to Dublin and his attempts to re-integrate into the turbulent cultural and political climate of the time were seen as questionable and untrustworthy. It was during this time that Ireland was looking towards a post-independent sovereign Irish state although it did not achieve any form of independence until the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Soon after demobilisation and MacGreevy's arrival in Dublin, Ireland exploded into armed conflict with the British and then, in the summer of 1922, into civil war. MacGreevy's position in Dublin after life in London and on the Western Front was that of a returned exile. The time MacGreevy served in World War One on behalf of the British Empire and his experiences in the front lines of the European battlefields are critical elements to understanding his work.

His wartime experience fighting for the British detached him from the dominant 'native' traditions of home and created space for new methods of writing to emerge.¹⁸⁶ Much of MacGreevy's early poetry touches upon these wars to record a post-war reality in which the golden summer of 1914 was inexorably followed by exhaustion and despair. A later composition, titled 'Autumn, 1922', evocatively depicts the period just after the battles in Dublin and the start of the Civil War. This poem, a meditation on the uncertainties, despair, and weariness of a nation torn by political strife, captures the atmosphere that must have settled over Dublin after MacGreevy's return from the Front.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Macardle, pp. 416, 423.

¹⁸⁶ He returned to writing poetry in 1923, a year after *The Waste Land* was published in *Criterion*.

¹⁸⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiii.

There are four TS versions of this poem. The others are entitled 'Ireland Autumn, 1922', 'Civil War', and 'A Short History of Our Own Time'.

The sun burns out,
The world withers

And time grows afraid of the triumph of time.

The alternative titles quoted above provide the key to this very short poem. The Irish journalist and politician Justin McCarthy had published a very popular *Short History of Our Own Times* in 1895, with subsequent editions up to the 1920s; and, 'The Triumph of Time' is the title of a Victorian poem by Algernon Swinburne published in 1866. Prior to that, Handel composed a moralising oratorio on *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757). The confident, celebratory theme, sadder in Swinburne than in Handel, had become deeply ironic in MacGreevy's world. The juxtaposition of the end of the story ('The sun burns out, / the world withers') with the beginning of the story (triumph of time) provides a narrative arc that traces contemporary Irish politics into history. In the late nineteenth century, there was a horrified fascination with the idea of a cooling sun and ultimately dying universe. This cultural theme was reflected in H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895). 'The triumph of time' references the fifth of six allegorical triumphs in Petrarch's *Trionfi*. Petrarch's Triumphs were frequently represented by Baroque and Renaissance artists and were often depicted as Father Time in his chariot surrounded by symbolic devices such as the scythe and hourglass. MacGreevy, however, may be thinking of one or more of the paintings he saw during his visit to the Prado in Madrid in 1924. One is Goya's *Saturn [Time] Devouring His Son*, and the other is Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *Triumph of Death*, which, using imagery from the Apocalypse, depicts a whole society visited by death riding a pale horse against a background of barren landscape and a darkened sky.¹⁸⁸ The final line, 'And time grows afraid of the triumph of time', seems to support and echo Joyce's line, 'History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake'.¹⁸⁹

By the autumn of 1922, over six years had passed since Patrick Pearse had proclaimed the Irish Republic at the General Post Office in Dublin. The country had seen the heart of its capital destroyed by the fires of Easter 1916. This was followed, after the Sinn Féin victory in the 1918 election, by an extended campaign of guerrilla

¹⁸⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁸⁹ James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000). p. 42.

warfare against the British with its reprisals and counter-reprisals. In the end, nationalist Ireland was divided into bitterly opposing camps and engaged in civil war over the terms of the agreement reached in London in December 1921. The new national institutions that emerged did so more through the passage of time than as the expression of any national ideal or vision. MacGreevy's poem captures the despair and weariness of a nation torn apart by war and bitter political divisions.¹⁹⁰

In the mid-1920s, as he started responding to events through his poetry, MacGreevy also began to distance himself from his military career. At this point, many artists and intellectuals started coming to 'the bleak conclusion that Ireland was no longer an interesting place in which to live', and they began to leave Ireland for London, continental Europe, and North America.¹⁹¹ By the late 1920s MacGreevy had, like many hundreds of thousands of men, sought ways to reconcile his own military past as the personal experience of war, and his recollections of them had left him wounded in body and in spirit as he tried to resume his life. As one exile after another came to the conclusion that they were responsible not only for their own fate but also the renovation of the Irish consciousness, it was widely considered that this would be achieved 'in the free zones of art rather than in the far-from-free state'.¹⁹² As MacGreevy became emotionally detached from the dominant 'native' traditions at home, his estrangement increased his desire to travel throughout Europe, seeking all that the world had to offer him.

Seeing his Way with Writers and Artists

It was during this time that MacGreevy made many friends, the vast majority of them lifelong, including writers, artists, and poets. Harry Clarke (1889-1931) was an Irish stained-glass artist and book illustrator, and a leading figure in the Irish Arts and Crafts Movement. Eric Robertson (E.R.) Dodds (1893-1979) was an Irish classical scholar and published writer. Pádraig de Brún (1889-1960) was an Irish clergyman, poet, classical scholar, and leading mathematician (tutored in mathematics by Eamon De Valera). Mary Harriet Jellett (known as Mainie Jellett, 1897-1944) was an Irish painter and leading abstract artist. Stephen MacKenna (1872-1934) was an Irish linguist and writer associated with Irish nationalism. MacGreevy's friend and

¹⁹⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 103.

¹⁹¹ Kiberd, p. 264.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

colleague Lennox Robinson (1886-1958) was an Irish dramatist, poet, theatre producer, and director, involved with the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Hester Dowden (Hester Travers Smith, 1868-1949) was the daughter of Edward Dowden, a friend of the Yeats family and Professor of English at Trinity. She was an Irish spiritualist medium and writer who claimed to have contact with the spirits of Oscar Wilde, William Shakespeare, and other writers, and had close links with the Irish literary world. W.B. Yeats (1865-1939), Irish poet and senator, was a driving force behind the Irish Literary Revival and founder of the Abbey Theatre, and his brother Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) was an Irish abstract expressionist painter and nationalist sympathiser.¹⁹³

One of the most commercially successful Irish artists of this generation was Major Sir William Newenham Montague Orpen, (1878-1931), a fine draughtsman and a popular, commercially successful painter of portraits for the well-to-do in Edwardian London. During World War I, he was the most prolific of the official artists sent by Britain to the Western Front. There he produced drawings and paintings of privates, dead soldiers, and German prisoners of war along with portraits of generals and politicians. Most of these works feature surreal landscapes destroyed by heavy artillery. The influence they had on a modernistic aesthetic, fragments and shapes rather than the conventional reality, mirrors his commitment as a war artist. As Foster explains, ‘Historians have recently interrogated the complex inheritance left by Ireland’s involvement in the Great War, and the way that conflict exposed the “suspicious and conditional” loyalty of many Irishmen’.¹⁹⁴ Foster continues, ‘Orpen took a different route to most of those whom he had observed in the years of “cultural ferment” between the wars’.¹⁹⁵ Orpen’s use of imagery helped to make him different as a war artist, particularly in his use of visually incongruous surrealist imagery. The way in which MacGreevy perceives the world around him owes something to Orpen’s sharp sense of incongruity, which extends to the conflicted loyalties of Irish combatants.

MacGreevy’s most obvious representation of surrealist imagery is his poem, ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’, an artist usually associated with the medieval and

¹⁹³ ‘MacGreevy’, *DIB*, p. 1064.

¹⁹⁴ Roy Foster, ‘Orpen and the New Ireland’ in *William Orpen, Politics, Sex, and Death* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2005), pp. 63-75 (p. 75).

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

early Renaissance periods, but ‘startlingly modern’ in approach.¹⁹⁶ Hieronymus van Aeken (c. 1450-1516) was a Flemish painter known (from his birthplace) as Bosch. Bosch’s work is ‘deeply religious: with a few exceptions, his pictures depict moments from the Bible and the lives of the saints, or scenes of heaven, hell, and the bits between’.¹⁹⁷ Like MacGreevy, Bosch’s work is ‘rooted in the everyday’. His drawings, with all their vitality and observed detail, have a special sharpness. His religious works too, are grounded in reality’.¹⁹⁸

In 1924 MacGreevy took his first trip to Spain. At the Prado Museum in Madrid he discovered the ‘masterpieces of grotesquerie’¹⁹⁹ of Hieronymus Bosch, including *The Haywain*, and the *Adoration of the Kings*. In *The Haywain*, a triptych with representations of Eden, Hell, and the dangers besetting mankind, Bosch portrays an allegory of society with a haywain at its centre. The energy of his devotion can be felt in the scathing social commentary of *The Haywain*, where crowds of people, including nuns, grasp at a haystack being led to hell by creatures that are half-fish and half-man. In the *Adoration of the Kings*, Bosch surrounds devotional iconography with grotesque building and landscape elements.²⁰⁰ Bosch’s scenes of hell and damnation were representative of his time, and would have had a particular significance and spiritual impact for the deeply religious MacGreevy. There is a sense of urgency to his paintings that demands attention and feels distinctly new. His figures, whether saints or mischievous sinners, are depicted with a naturalness which makes them stand apart from those of other painters of his time, particularly secular.

While Bosch’s paintings, much adored by the surrealists and appropriated as a kind of model for both painters and writers, supplied the imagery for the poem, it was the horror of witnessing the hanging of Kevin Barry, a student at University College, Dublin, that provided the inspiration.²⁰¹ ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’ centres on an execution that took place during the Irish War of Independence. There are four TS drafts of the poem entitled ‘Bosch’ and, presumably alluding ironically to the ‘dance

¹⁹⁶ The Economist, ‘Hieronymus Bosch, Painter of Our Greatest Fears’, *The Economist*, (February 27th 2016-03-04), 77.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ *The Economist*.

¹⁹⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 104.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 105

²⁰¹ Ibid., p. 104.

of death' common in medieval art, 'Dance of Life'.²⁰² In a letter to M.E. Barber, the general secretary of the Society of Authors, MacGreevy explains:

You will see that the Homage to Bosch title was chiefly a warning to the reader to expect images that were not exactly Parnassian. When I was a student a number of us, 17 in all I think, who were ex-British officers asked the Provost of Trinity College to send an appeal on our behalf for the reprieve of a student on the National University who was captured in an ambush and condemned to be hanged.²⁰³

Barry's execution was for his part in a raid for arms on a British military lorry in which six soldiers were killed, although there was no evidence that he had fired the fatal shots. Barry's sacrifice aroused widespread feeling, and MacGreevy and twelve other ex-British soldiers had petitioned John Bernard, the Provost of Trinity College, to relay to the proper authorities their

...appeal for the reprieve of the boy, Kevin Barry, who is under sentence to be hanged on next Monday, the first November 1920, at Mountjoy Prison. As soldiers, it is borne in upon us very forcibly, that in the case of one so young, obviously acting under the orders of older men, the Royal Prerogative of Mercy might be exercised without any compromise to the prestige of the Crown.²⁰⁴

MacGreevy continues,

It was believed he had been tortured by the Black and Tans²⁰⁵ and our appeal was that he should be reprieved only long enough for it to be verified that he had British justice and not torture. Only two or three of the signatories were nationalists. But the Provost refused to have anything to do with the appeal and Kevin Barry was hanged.²⁰⁶

On the day of his hanging, 1 November 1920, many young men joined the IRA.²⁰⁷ In effect, despite their service on the battlefields of France, MacGreevy and his fellow signatories were considered 'powerless' and 'shabby' after the war when it came to Irish political affairs. As a student of history, MacGreevy was conscious of the irony of his own situation. Although Irish, he was a British citizen; although Catholic, he

²⁰² The earliest reference to the poem is in October 1926. The poem was originally published in *Transition* 21 (March 1932), p. 178-9, entitled 'Treason of Saint Laurence O'Toole', and the epigraph for 'Alexander Andreyevitch Balascheff'.

²⁰³ Copy of letter from Thomas MacGreevy to M.E. Barber, 16 April 1947; TCD 8097/59.

²⁰⁴ TCD MS 8104/15.

²⁰⁵ The Black and Tans, officially the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve, was the brainchild of Winston Churchill. They were recruited to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary during the Irish War of Independence.

²⁰⁶ Copy of letter from Thomas MacGreevy to M.E. Barber, 16th April 1947; TCD 8097/59.

²⁰⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 170.

had attended Trinity College, which has been viewed as the university of the Protestant Ascendancy for much of its history; although the British military establishment regarded him as a leader on the battlefield (he was a second lieutenant during the war, and was promoted to lieutenant after it) he was powerless in the country of his birth. In the poem, MacGreevy writes,

A woman with no face walked into the light;
A boy, in a brown-tree Norfolk suit,
Holding on
Without hands
To her seeming skirt.
She stopped,
And he stopped,
And I, in terror, stopped, staring.

Then I saw a group of shadowy figures behind her.

It was a wild wet morning
But the little world was spinning on.
Liplessly, somehow, she addressed it:
The book must be opened
And the park too.

‘The book must be opened’, is perhaps a reference to the opening of the book with seven seals: ‘Who is worthy to open the book? ...And no man was able... to open the book, nor to look on it... [but] one of the ancients said to me: “Weep not; behold... the root of David hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Revelation 5:2-5). The opening of the book was one of the scripture readings at Mass for 31 October, the eve of the feast of All Saints (All Hallows) and of Kevin Barry’s execution. According to MacGreevy the reference to the park ‘has to do symbolically with the four green fields of Irish tradition and more particularly with the Dublin squares that are still closed except to residents’.²⁰⁸

I might have tittered
But my teeth chattered
And I saw that the words, as they fell,
Lay, wriggling, on the ground.

There was a stir of wet wind
And the shadowy figures began to stir
When one I had thought dead
Filmed slowly out of his great effigy on a tomb near by

²⁰⁸ Copy of letter from Thomas MacGreevy to M.E. Barber, 28th March 1947; TCD MS 8097/53.

And they all shuddered
He bent as if to speak to the woman

But the nursery governor flew up out of the well
of Saint Patrick,
Confiscated by his mistress,

In this passage, the 'nursery' is an unflattering reference to Trinity College, Dublin. As MacGreevy explains, both him and the other students 'were the inhabitants of the nursery in the poem. John Bernard the nursery governor'.²⁰⁹ John Bernard was the Provost (ie Head) of Trinity from 1919-27 when MacGreevy was there. He was a Protestant churchman, church historian and a strong Unionist. His Unionism, loyalty to the British connection and to the king or queen of England, gives special force to MacGreevy's assertion of Bernard's 'mistress' as Queen Elizabeth I, founder of Trinity.

Trinity College, Dublin, was founded on lands confiscated from the Priory of All Hallows, and the well of St. Patrick was used before the Reformation as part of the Abbey of All Hallows. The well, visible during MacGreevy's days as a student, has since been replaced by an academic building, the Arts Block.²¹⁰ The well 'is the kernel of the poem but the spirit of Ireland, powerful and powerless, shabby and inspiring and a dozen other things is knocking about the whole time'.²¹¹ The poem is in a sense about the difficulty of finding coherent language to make sense of the incoherent, endlessly frustrated yet endlessly vital spirit of Ireland. The jumbled fragmentary allusions recalling Dublin in history contribute a vivid yet inconsequential nightmare.

And, his head bent,
Staring out over his spectacles,
And scratching the grave furiously,
Hissed-
The words went *pingg!* Like bullets,
Upwards past his spectacles-
*Say nothing, I say, say nothing, say nothing!*²¹²

²⁰⁹ Copy of letter from Thomas MacGreevy to M.E. Barber, 16th April 1947; TCD MS 8097/59.

²¹⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 170.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² The phrase 'Say nothing', can be compared to Seamus Heaney's line in *North*, 'Whatever you say, say nothing'.

And he who had seemed to be coming to life
 Gaspd,
 Began hysterically, to laugh and cry,
 And, with a gesture of impotent and half-petulant despair,
 Filmed back into his effigy again.

The poem's 'effigy' symbolises a well-known tomb with an effigy 'of Strongbow (Richard fitz Gilbert de Clare) in Christ Church Cathedral. By holding Dublin during the siege in 1171 (see St. Laurence O'Toole, above), Strongbow was instrumental in the Norman conquest of Ireland'.²¹³

High above the Bank of Ireland
 Unearthly music sounded,
 Passing westwards.

'High above the bank of Ireland', refers to the old Irish Parliament House on College Green that was designed in 1729 by Edward Lovett Pearce. The Irish Parliament was dissolved after the Act of Union in 1800. The building was converted into a bank but, 'it was the dream of all Nineteenth Century Nationalists to see an independent Irish Parliament established there again'. Music allowed one to explore and express personal ideology, and became part of the agenda of cultural nationalism: 'Unearthly music sounded, / Passing westwards'. In Ireland, the spirit of the nation owed much to a poem written by Irish writer and politician Thomas Davis. In his poem, Davis regards the west of Ireland, 'as when the west is awake, that spirit is awake and when the west is asleep, that spirit is asleep'.²¹⁴ A good example of the kind of quasi-surrealist nightmare often depicted by Bosch can be found in MacGreevy's 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch':

Then, from the drains,
 Small sewage rats slid out.
 They numbered hundreds of hundreds, tens, thousands.
 Each bowed obsequiously to the shadowy figures
 Then turned and joined in a stomach dance with his brothers
 and sisters.
 Being a multitude, they danced irregularly.

Phrases like 'hundreds of hundreds, tens, thousands', and others like 'a multitude', and 'bowed obsequiously', appear to evoke a parody of the worship of Christ in heaven, as in 'And I beheld... the living creatures, and the ancients; and the number of them was thousands of thousands' (Revelation 5:11). This was the passage read at

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Mass on the Eve of All Saints, 31 October, Halloween night.²¹⁵ It is a nightmarish version of Robert Browning's 'Pied Piper of Hamelin', and calls to mind the loathsome rat in the third section of Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

There was rat laughter,
Deeper here and there,
And occasionally she-rat cries grew hysterical.
The shadowy figures looked on, agonised.
The woman with no face gave a cry and collapsed.
The rats danced on her
And on the wriggling words
Smirking.
The nursery governor flew back into the well
With the little figure without hands in the brown-tree clothes.

The poem was originally entitled 'Treason of Saint Laurence O'Toole,' and the epigraph 'for Alexander Andreyevitch Balascheff'.²¹⁶ Schreibman's annotated notes to the poem explain, 'Saint Laurence O'Toole was the archbishop of Dublin from 1162 to 1180. His brother-in-law, King Diarmuid of Leinster, brought the invading Normans to Ireland'.²¹⁷ In 1166, while serving as archbishop, O'Toole established the Priory of All Hallows, a monastic foundation and the present site of Trinity College, Dublin. Historically, the Priory was one of the most important, and over time became one of the wealthiest, religious establishments in the vicinity of Dublin. During the siege of Dublin in 1171, O'Toole unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate peace with the Norman invaders. However, the priory survived the invasion and a period of prosperity followed.²¹⁸ During the Reformation in Ireland, the British Crown dissolved the Priory. In December 1591, an appeal was granted by Queen Elizabeth I for a license to the land for the establishment of a college.²¹⁹ The epigraph of the original poem is dedicated to Andreyevitch Balascheff, a Russian friend of MacGreevy's who lived in Paris during the 1930s.²²⁰ Paris had become the main centre for Russian emigrants and refugees after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 104. *Transition* 21 March 1932, pp. 178-9.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

²¹⁸ Séan Duffy (ed.) *Medieval Dublin XIII, Proceedings of the Friends of Medieval Dublin Symposium 2011* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013) p. 251.

²¹⁹ Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, *The Dublin Review*, Vol. 4 (London: Booker & Dolman, 1838), p. 285.

²²⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 105.

Modernisms

When MacGreevy returned to writing poetry, he was one of the few poets in the 1920s who could write effective free verse deriving from Joyce and distinct from Eliot. Many had unsuccessfully tried to follow in the footsteps of Eliot's poetic style. In MacGreevy's words, 'what was there in post-war English literature? Though Mr. T.S. Eliot was a genius, his ghosts were not the ghosts of the war generation. And ghosts matter'.²²¹ The category of writer that remains to be considered is the poet, sometimes regarded as the most characteristic single category of literary participant in the Great War. Military historians have traditionally been a little suspicious of poets and other literary folk in general. MacGreevy's claim that 'Eliot's ghosts were not ghosts of the war generation' coincides with distinguished military historian David Woodward's argument that 'the literary response to the war, *of course*, should *never* be used as documentary evidence'.²²² These two statements are about quite different things—Eliot's American and non-combatant view of the war as the death of a moribund European culture and the quite different if also inadequate and historically misleading close-up perspective of a combatant plunged into the middle of one part of the conflict. However, as a lieutenant in the front line, rather than a distant observer like Eliot or Joyce, neither of whom experienced direct action, MacGreevy had the advantage of being part of the literary group of participants in the war. MacGreevy could use his ghosts to bring to his poems his own direct experience of wastelands and ruined civilisation. In this regard, MacGreevy's published poems became a singularly authentic record of his experience in the Great War.

After the establishment of the Irish Free State, MacGreevy's move from Dublin to London and then Paris in 1927 enabled him to view Ireland from a detached perspective. This can be seen in his description of Irish nationalist painter Jack B. Yeats' paintings. After 1924, he noted that in Yeats' paintings 'the balance between observation and imagination, in fact, altered'.²²³ 'Homage to Vercingetorix' is one of many poems in which MacGreevy examines the differences in perception that divide the English and the Irish in both the colonial and post-colonial periods.²²⁴

²²¹ MacGreevy, *Richard Aldington*, p. 7.

²²² Emphasis added. David R. Woodward, 'The Home Front in the First World War', in Gerald Jordan, *British Military History: A Supplement to Robin Higham's Guide to the Sources* (New York: Garland, 1988) pp. 289-316 (p. 300).

²²³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxvii.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

Vercingetorix (82 BC- 46 BC) was the rebel-champion of the Gauls when they were invaded and eventually defeated by the Romans under Julius Caesar. Vercingetorix was often acclaimed as a patriotic icon because of the revolt he led. He immediately established an alliance with other Gallic tribes, took command, combined all forces, and led them in the Gaul's most significant revolt against Roman power.

Vercingetorix became a role model for later nationalist rebel fighters, much like the leaders of the Easter Rising; and like them he was put to death. Two later poems, 'Moments Musicaux' and 'Breton Oracles', also share the same Celtic element as a central theme.²²⁵ MacGreevy's use of Vercingetorix recalls a trend that was started by Wilde and continued with Joyce. As Kiberd notes, 'Wilde was perfectly right when he said that it was the Celt who led in art. Joyce never forgot that challenge'.²²⁶

Like MacGreevy's other poems, 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch' is meant to address, if at times obliquely, the injustices suffered by the Irish at the hands of the British. Confronting these injustices, 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch' raises the wider issues of greed and passion, of brother killing brother (symbolic of the Irish Civil War and its aftermath), and of the continuing story of the Celtic races being dominated by imperialist powers: in Vercingetorix's day, by Caesar's Rome, in MacGreevy's day, by imperial Britain.²²⁷

MacGreevy's reference to Vercingetorix links the Celtic past of Ireland together with the Celtic past of France. In doing so, 'he returns to several of his earlier themes: his sense of being Irish, his concept of the West of Ireland, and Richard Wagner's *Ring*'.²²⁸ As Schreibman explains in her annotations, 'In the poem, MacGreevy moves with ease from the Reformation, with its destruction and closure of Irish monasteries, to the twentieth century, and Irish artists living, by force of circumstance, abroad'.²²⁹

As in many of his earlier 'Homage' poems, MacGreevy builds upon personal associations. MacGreevy read Caesar's *Gallic Wars* in the 1920s, and in 1931 wrote, in *Richard Aldington: An Englishman*, 'I still remember that when I finished reading a translation of Julius Caesar's *Gallic Wars*, I decided for myself that I could not trust a single solitary thing that gentleman had said about the Gauls'. He would have been

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

²²⁶ Kiberd, p. 266.

²²⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 162.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 161.

offended by Caesar's quasi-colonialist and condescending pronouncements such as, 'the Gauls are an ingenious race, very good at imitating and making use of any ideas suggested to them by others', or the Gauls 'were unused to hard work', or that Vercingetorix tried 'to seduce them [the Gaulish tribes] with bribes and promises'.²³⁰ MacGreevy associates the British with Vercingetorix, and the Gauls with Ireland. In his poem, MacGreevy writes:

'For me,' said my host-
An O, so Norman, Norman-Irishman in England-
For me, Julius Caesar is,
Divine personages apart of course,
The greatest man who ever lived.

Anyone in Ireland with a name beginning with Fitz could claim to be of Norman ancestry. So were the Butlers from whom William Butler Yeats claimed descent. The imperialist historian J.A. Froude, unpopular in nationalist Ireland, had actually associated Julius Caesar with Christ. Vercingetorix was, in Caesar's opinion, one of his most formidable enemies. He was a natural leader, a brilliant strategist, and was the only Gaul able to unite the tribes in organised resistance to the Roman invasion. In 52 BC, Caesar besieged Vercingetorix at the fortress of Alesia, near Dijon. Rather than put his troops and the town's civilians at risk of almost certain death, Vercingetorix surrendered.²³¹ He spent six years as a prisoner in Rome and was paraded as one of Caesar's most prized captives in his first triumph.²³² According to Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, Vercingetorix was later put to death in a dungeon at the foot of the Capitol while Caesar offered his thanks and prayers in the temple above.²³³

As a guest,
As an Irish-Irishman
Cherishing secretly
The dream of his father's dreaming
That set loveliness in stone by the waters in the west

The line 'That set loveliness in stone by the waters in the west', 'probably refers to Corcomroe Abbey, the most striking of the Cistercian Abbeys in the West of

²³⁰ Julius Caesar, *The Battle for Gaul*, trans. Anne and Peter Wiseman (Chatto & Windus, 1980), pp. 144-8.

²³¹ G.W. Kitchin, *A History of France Down to the Year 1453* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923), pp. 33-4.

²³² Gerald Walter, *Caesar*, trans. Emma Crauford, (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1953), Vol. II, p. 174

²³³ W. Warde Fowler, *Julius Caesar and the Foundation of the Roman Imperial System* (New York: Putnam, 1892), p. 218.

Ireland'.²³⁴ Corcomroe Abbey, also known as *De Petra Fertili* (Latin for 'of the Fertile Rock') was founded in the twelfth century. It is located in the Burren area of north County Clare, 'an area of bare rock interspersed with patches of very fertile soil'.²³⁵ Although the abbey community was dissolved during the Reformation when King Henry VIII appropriated the abbey lands, the ruined buildings remain standing; MacGreevy's phrase 'Cistercian whiteness' may either refer to the limestone of the Burren rock used in the building or to the white habits worn by the monks.²³⁶

Ere ever the roving gangsters looked on Ireland-
 From the verdant turf
 That once was Cistercian whiteness
 The stones still rise
 Singing with art
 'Vivificantem'

The reference to 'Vivificantem', as in 'Cron Trath na nDeithe', is an allusion to the Holy Spirit from the Nicene Creed: (*credo*) in *Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et Vivificantem*: '(I believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life'.²³⁷

(Dear Brian Coffey in America²³⁸
 I still keep the photograph
 You took for me long ago)-

As such a guest and such an Irishman
 How should I but feel constraint?
 So the play of mind failed to inspire
 An unanswerable repudiation
 Of Ascendancy humanities.

In nationalist Irish usage, 'Ascendancy' refers to the Anglo-Irish upper classes.²³⁹

It is perhaps debatable
 Whether Caesar was a renegade
 To the radiant gods
 Of sympathetic understanding

²³⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 163.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Brian Coffey was an Irish poet and friend of MacGreevy's from 1932-33 onwards. He was living in the US when MacGreevy composed the poem, and taught at Saint Louis University in Missouri when the poem was published.

²³⁹ Ibid.

‘The radiant gods’ references the battle of the gods and the giants in classical mythology.²⁴⁰ As Schreibman explains, ‘the fall of Satan and the rebel angels is thought to parallel the defeat of the giants at the hands of the gods of Mount Olympus. MacGreevy may also have had in mind the battle of the gods and the giants in Wagner’s *Ring* (see ‘Cron Trath na nDeithe’).’²⁴¹

And in the little battle that has no ending
Went over to the giants
Who, resentfully, cherish, ever,
Their own dark incomprehension.

What is self-evident
Is that Caesar’s book is special pleading.

‘Caesar’s book’ refers to Caesar’s *Gallic War, Book VII*, which presents Caesar’s version of his dealings with Vercingetorix.²⁴² In the last verse, MacGreevy ties the poem to his Nationalist leanings through a reference to the Black and Tans:

But the answer
Which,
Especially if timed fortunately
Out of silence,
Has universal validity
And, for an Irishman,
Particular significance,
In the generalisation
That a Black-and-Tan
Even one who has reserves
Of Literary talent
And polite manners,
Is a Black-and-Tan.

The actions of the IRA alienated public opinion in Ireland, and introduced savage reprisals from the Black and Tans. Their ‘tactics amounted, essentially, to shooting down policemen, on and off duty, arguing that the Royal Irish Constabulary, however Catholic and Irish in personnel, were objectively the representatives of alien oppression’.²⁴³ As Foster explains, ‘The new police reinforcements, nicknamed “Black and Tans” and “Auxies” behaved more like independent mercenaries; their brutal regime followed the IRA’s policy of killing policemen, and was taken by many

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Foster, p. 494.

to vindicate it. Intimidation never slackened'.²⁴⁴

It is important to note that at this time, after serving in the war and returning to Ireland, the rise of Sinn Féin appears to have led MacGreevy towards greater affiliation with the country's resurgent nationalism.²⁴⁵ He supported the anti-Treaty side of Sinn Féin during the party's split over the oath of allegiance to the British monarchy, though he was at no point a member of the fighting forces in the Anglo-Irish conflict or the Irish Civil War that followed it.²⁴⁶ Political events at the time drove MacGreevy towards a closer affiliation with Irish nationalism, as outlined in challenging poems such as 'Homage to Vercingetorix'. However, rather than becoming politically active on a public scale, he became immersed in scholarly studies of his Gaelic heritage and identity. His advanced political and cultural nationalism would appear in articles such as 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia' and 'The Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish Culture' published in *The Irish Statesman*.²⁴⁷

Irish and Anglo-Irish

In 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia', MacGreevy addresses the topic of compulsory Irish as part of the Gaelic revival. Whilst he believed that 'the first phase' of the language revival had 'definitely, successfully ended', he argued that 'the organising intelligence of the movement has to break new ground... if it is to continue to retain its hold on the imagination of the country'. For him, the movement 'has to become more purely cultural'. This 'great, cultural thing,' MacGreevy wrote, 'could be done without official support'. The answer to this is 'the production of a Gaelic encyclopaedia', which 'would give information that is now obtainable only with considerable labour, in a concise and convenient form'. It 'would also be a new point of departure in the evolution of the language movement. It would add to the cultural possibilities of modern Irish'. Furthermore, in MacGreevy's mind, a Gaelic encyclopaedia would be a fantastic resource for those in favour of compulsory Irish. While holding the opinion that an epoch in the language revival movement was coming to a close, MacGreevy believed that a Gaelic Encyclopaedia would 'break

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 498.

²⁴⁵ Francis Hutton-Williams, 'The Other Dublin: London Revisited, 1919–25' in *Life and Work*, pp. 141–153, (p. 141).

²⁴⁶ TCD MS 8039/44.

²⁴⁷ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia', *The Irish Statesman* Vol. 2. No. 26, 6 September 1924, p. 824 and Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish Culture', *The Irish Statesman*, Vol. 3 No. 26, (7 March 1925), p. 816.

new ground' by becoming a 'cultural movement' and 'retain its hold on the imagination of the country'. It would be a significant contribution to academic departments or schools for research in 'Celtic studies, language, and archaeology'. For those persons 'of only more or less general education who can now utter little more than a curse or a blessing, or sing a song in Irish, would find such a work far more of an aid to the mastery of the language than the somewhat too elementary reading books now available'.²⁴⁸ MacGreevy argued,

if all the research work on Ireland that has been done not only at home but here and there throughout Europe in the last hundred years or so could be co-ordinated in a Gaelic Encyclopaedia I could get all the principal facts I wanted in an hour, and at the same time be getting greater command of the language.²⁴⁹

For MacGreevy, this access to 'the research work on Ireland' completed at home and throughout Europe and abroad, would provide him with the Gaelic needed to establish a 'greater command of the language'. For this reason, the creation of a Gaelic Encyclopaedia 'is an idea worth the consideration of Irish scholars'. Although he anticipated the project would take 'years of hard work', the director 'of such a work ... could not fail to have the sympathy and aid of those who care about scholarship everywhere'.²⁵⁰ The publication of this article not only revealed MacGreevy's steadfast support of Gaelic culture, but also showed the extent to which he was willing to go to make Gaelic a part of contemporary history. He thought a language revival in Ireland was impossible without the establishment of an Encyclopaedia, and a centralisation of Gaelic heritage and history. As a scholar, he would work towards making Gaelic scholarship accessible to all levels and capabilities.

The publication of the article, 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia', was one of many of MacGreevy's attempts at making Irish compulsory within the Free State. He advocated on behalf of the cultural-nationalist 'Gaels', in the United Kingdom, of which Ireland was still a part, yet understood that the English language had a significant part to play in the Free State's cultural heritage and history. Although most Irish-speakers were Catholic, not all Catholics or nationalists were Irish speakers. Not all nationalists were either Catholics or Irish-speakers. Parnell and Isaac Butt, for example, were Anglophone Protestants, while Douglas Hyde – dedicated Irish

²⁴⁸ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia', p. 824.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

scholar, collector of Irish-language literary materials, founder of the Gaelic League, and first president of Ireland – was also a Protestant and son of a Church of Ireland clergyman. Furthermore, MacGreevy's close associates, Jack and W.B. Yeats, were the descendants of Protestant clergymen (specifically, the Yeats's grandfather and great-grandfather).

The publication is an example of the 'characteristic dualism' that would colour MacGreevy's work. This dualism, where literature is 'either national and traditional or international and experimental' – by which twentieth century Irish Literature had been viewed – 'exploded in the very person and life of Thomas MacGreevy'.²⁵¹ As Keatinge explains, MacGreevy 'consistently championed modern art while also giving voice to opinions which, as we will see, are more often associated with the Irish-Ireland agenda of Daniel Corkery'.²⁵²

In a letter to George Russell, the editor of the *Irish Statesman*, MacGreevy defended Anglo-Irish W.B. Yeats:

It seems to me that since the Irish people speak English we must accept an English-speaking phase as an indubitable part of their history, and accept such literature as has been produced by those who have identified themselves with the people during that phase as part of our literary history. I have a personal distaste for Dean Swift's work but I am sure some of the Drapier letters have stirred the Irish mind to self-consciousness as surely as many works in our own language. We cannot reject all the last two hundred years of Irish history merely because the people and their leaders to a greater and greater extent as the years went on, spoke English. Mr. Yeats is probably as provoking a great writer as Ireland has produced, but that does not make him a stranger.²⁵³

For MacGreevy, despite his leanings towards 'Irish-Ireland' cultural nationalism, the Anglo element of Irish history was an intrinsic part of the nation's development. It formed a chrysalis over the budding nation and acted as a protective covering that sheltered the early stages of growth in the formation of the Irish Free State.

The poetry of W.B. Yeats symbolised this period. Yeats was present at the start of the Gaelic revival, along with Lady Augusta Gregory. However, unlike Lady Gregory, who could collect materials from Irish-speakers, Yeats knew no Irish and so was dependent on translations and what people told him. Yeats started this revival through the use of the English language, and used the English language to waken the

²⁵¹ Benjamin Keatinge 'A Matrix of Correspondences: The Critical Voice of Thomas MacGreevy' in *Life and Work*, pp. 65-78 (pp. 66-67).

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁵³ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish Culture', p. 816.

country to its Irish identity and heritage. For this reason, not only did MacGreevy understand that English was intrinsic in ‘stir[ring] the Irish mind to self-consciousness’, but was vital to the formation of the Free State. MacGreevy continued,

I may add that I am one of those who hope that the English-speaking phase will pass, and that I am in favour of compulsory Irish, for the simple reason that if it had been compulsory twenty years ago I should now be able to read O’Rahilly and Keating as easily as I read Yeats, whereas I am only able to read them as I read Dante and Cavalcanti—with a vis-à-vis translation.²⁵⁴

While MacGreevy made a strong case for and in fact urged the compulsory adoption of Irish, he remained politically neutral regarding the unavoidable element that comprised the Anglicisation of Irish literature and culture. In this instance, he rejected the bourgeois pleasantries of Anglo culture and strongly identified with the Catholic element of his national identity. MacGreevy steadfastly associated himself with ‘[t]he three great forces which, working for long in the Irish national being, have made it so different from the English national being [which] are, [1] The Religious Consciousness of the People; [2] Irish Nationalism; and [3] The Land’.²⁵⁵ It is therefore important not to lose sight of the Catholic and nationalist standpoint that so clearly influenced his response to literature and art.²⁵⁶

His work during this period may best be understood as an attempt to promote culture, particularly the appreciation of continental culture, in Ireland. That he undertook this work at a time of social disruption and violent hostilities underscores the difficulty of his task and the integrity with which he pursued it. His published work was just beginning, yet we see in this era the nucleus of experiences and perceptions that resulted in some of his most distinguished later work, completed in London and Paris.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Daniel Corkery, *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature: A Study* (London: Longman, 1931). p. 19.

²⁵⁶ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 67.

²⁵⁷ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 127.

Chapter III

National and International: Ireland, Catholicism, and Modernism in Dublin and London

One of the paradoxes of MacGreevy, as an Irish nationalist and Irish language enthusiast, working in the English-language and European tradition of international modernism, was his attempt to try to combine both, rather than separate either of these elements. MacGreevy spent approximately two and a half decades (on and off) in Dublin. These years, comprising a third of his life span, also saw his most productive period in terms of reviews and essays. Although his Dublin years have often been overshadowed by the creative and critical productivity of his time in London and Paris in the 1920s and 1930s, his residency in Ireland contributed significantly to his literary apprenticeship. Despite multiple relocations, there remains a thematic continuum in MacGreevy's thought that is particularly apparent in his prose and poetry.

The literary journalism of Thomas MacGreevy is diverse and frames his writing as a poet, an art critic, a literary critic, and theatre reviewer. The considerable number of shorter reviews show MacGreevy to be an 'agile commentator on the work of his contemporaries with insightful criticism on major authors'.²⁵⁸ The interrelatedness and mutuality of European literary and visual culture was to be an abiding element of MacGreevy's thinking during his Dublin years and in the years to come; drawing on the riches of the Catholic west, his experience of France, Spain and Italy, rather than the more idiosyncratic eastern and Nietzschean exoticism of Yeats. For much of his life he worked to promote Irish art and Irish culture as worthy, constituent parts of European culture. He insisted upon the need for Irish artists and critics to be as well versed in continental art as they were in indigenous (often nativist) Irish traditions.²⁵⁹

Catholicism, aspiring to be both universal and personal, linked the European, indeed global, mission of the church with religious life in particular places. As a poet, MacGreevy became best known for works such as 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnail', 'Recessional', 'Gloria de Carlos V', and 'Nocturne of the Self-Evident Presence', which were written during this time and heavily influenced by the heritage of Catholic

²⁵⁸ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 65.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 129.

Europe.²⁶⁰ In the essay titled, ‘Thomas MacGreevy and his North Kerry Roots’, Dr. John Coolahan, Professor Emeritus at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, writes of the significance of the Tarbert landscape and MacGreevy’s Roman Catholic upbringing in rural County Kerry: ‘The landscape on the estuary around Tarbert was a storied one, and MacGreevy was very conscious of the historical traditions and architectural remains of the past’.²⁶¹ The young MacGreevy established his closest and most cherished linkage with the Roman Catholic Church when singing in the choir as a young boy. In his memoirs, he recalls in remarkable detail the features of the Catholic parish church, which reflected the pre-Vatican II features and atmosphere of churches of that era. These features helped ‘the developing visual sense’ of a ‘small boy’.²⁶² Relationships between the Christian denominations in the parish were cordial and cooperative. He remarked that ‘relations with our Protestant neighbours were unaffectedly friendly... The Protestant and Catholic families in the village mixed freely with each other’.²⁶³ The freedom with which village dwellers operated, reflected in their ability to communicate harmoniously and respectfully to each other, left a lasting impact on MacGreevy. Not only was this religious tolerance reflected in his British Army service in a largely Protestant environment – though the Catholic army chaplains were often thought superior to most of the Anglican ones – but he also demonstrated this by mixing freely with the mainly Protestant (in descent if in practice often more or less agnostic or atheist) Anglo-Irish of Dublin, London, and Paris.

MacGreevy’s Search for the Young Eagle of Ireland

His first trip to Spain in 1924 left a lasting impression on him; its impact later manifesting itself in ‘Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill’, arguably his most recognised nationalist poem.²⁶⁴ Like ‘The Other Dublin’ or ‘For Vanessa Herself’, poems that

²⁶⁰ ‘Recessional’, a title that might glance ironically at a well-known and very imperialist poem by Rudyard Kipling with the same title, also represents the idea of recessional liturgically through the processing out (or music for the processing out) of clergy, altar-boy, choir etc. at the end of the mass or other religious service.

²⁶¹ John Coolahan, ‘Thomas MacGreevy and his North Kerry Roots’ in *Life and Work*, pp. 113-126, (p. 120).

²⁶² Thomas MacGreevy, ‘*Memoirs*’, p. 82. See also Coolahan, *Life and Work*, p. 120.

²⁶³ MacGreevy, ‘*Memoirs*’, p. 35.

²⁶⁴ ‘Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill’ was first printed in *The Irish Statesman* 9VI:8 (1 May 1926), p. 204-5, under the pseudonym L. St Senan (see ‘Saint Senan’s Well’) and has been reprinted in the following anthologies, most recently in *Poets of Munster* (1985): *A Little Anthology of*

were written not in Dublin but in London, nationalism was a prominent feature of his creative writing.²⁶⁵

In his essay titled 'The Sea-Divided Gael', a phrase borrowed from the Young Ireland poet Thomas D'Arcy, MacGreevy writes 'In Spain itself, at Valladolid, [he] had searched for traces of him who was the young eagle of all Ireland, Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill'.²⁶⁶ While doing this, he was also trying to find himself. He carried his 'preoccupations' with him, and Ireland was never far from his mind,²⁶⁷ the quest for 'the young eagle' was also to explore his own Gaelic roots. He felt the following note essential to the understanding of the poem, and insisted that it be printed as an addendum.²⁶⁸

'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill', 'Red' Hugh O'Donnell, Prince of Tirconail, went to Spain to consult with King Philip III after the defeat of the Irish and Spanish at Kinsale in 1601. He was lodged in the castle of Simancas during the negotiations but, poisoned by a certain James Blake, a Norman-Irish creature of the Queen of England (Elizabeth Tudor), he died there. As a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis, he was buried in the church of San Francisco at Valladolid. This church was destroyed during the nineteenth century and none of the tombs that were in it seems to have been preserved.

The earliest mention of Thomas MacGreevy's 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill' was in March 1925. There are two typescript copies of the poem in English exactly as printed in *Poems*. There are also four drafts in Spanish.²⁶⁹ The choice of language for this poem is especially significant to MacGreevy. In 1947, the editor of *1000 Years of Irish Poetry* printed three of MacGreevy's poems with a strong Irish-historical theme: 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill', 'Gioconda', and 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch'. These were printed with several typographical errors, as well as anglicising Aodh Ruadh to Red Hugh.²⁷⁰ MacGreevy was horrified at the lack of control he had over the publication of his poetry. As a result, MacGreevy decided to write a letter to the

Modern Irish Verse (1928), p. 7; *The European Caravan* (1931), p. 493; *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), p. 333, *The Capuchin Annual* (1942), p. 55; *1000 Years of Irish Poetry* (1947), p. 703; *An Anthology of Irish Verse* (1948), p. 370; *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1958), p. 219; *Irish Poetry* (1965), p. 251, *Contemporary Irish Poetry* (1980), p. 31; and *Poets of Munster* (1985), p. 33. It was also translated into Irish and published in *Feasta* (July 1959), p. 14. See Schreibman, *Poems*, pp. 133-134.

²⁶⁵ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 144.

²⁶⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Sea-Divided Gael', *Father Matthew Record*, (March 1945) 5-6.

²⁶⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 50.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Society of Authors, an organisation located in London that was founded in 1884 to protect the rights and further the interests of authors.

In a letter to M.E. Barber, the general secretary to the society at the time, MacGreevy explained his reasons for wanting the title of the poem printed exactly as he had written it:

In the case of ‘Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill’ I should refuse permission to alter the title even if it had been asked for politely, for with that title- it means Red Hugh O’Donnell- it is known to the Irish in every part of the world, almost as well known I dare say as Yeats’s ‘Inisfree’; and, equally important, the presence of the aspirating *h* in each word of the title is point of departure of the poem and the actual preoccupation of the first ten lines.²⁷¹

The ‘first ten lines’ and surrounding text of ‘Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill’ printed in Schreibman’s *Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy* are as follows:

Juan de Juni the priest said,
Each J becoming H;

Berruguete, he said,
And the G was aspirate;

Ximenez, he said then
And aspirated first and last.

But he never said
And –it seemed odd- he
Never had heard
The aspirated name
Of the centuries-dead
Bright-haired young man
Whose grave I sought.

The correct pronunciation of ‘Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill’ is significant as it connects the Spanish with the Gaelic, and highlights the Catholic element uniting the two. It also reflects the motivation for MacGreevy’s use of Spanish and Gaelic text. His incorporation of artistic elements at the beginning of the poem centralises the location of the poem in Valladolid. The French-born sculptor *Juan de Juni* (c. 1507-77) settled in Valladolid, and many of his works can be seen in Valladolid and Salamanca.²⁷² The *Berruguete* family was a family of Spanish painters from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²⁷³ Alonso Berruguete (1488-1561) worked mainly at Valladolid, where he

²⁷¹ Copy of Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to M.E. Barber, 28th March 1947; TCD 8097/53.

²⁷² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 135.

²⁷³ Ibid.

completed the altarpiece of St. Benito, and in Salamanca where he executed the altarpiece of the Irish College.²⁷⁴ MacGreevy's reference to '*Ximénez*' possibly refers to the Spanish painter José Ximénez Donoso (1628-90) whose paintings were mainly of religious themes. A large painting of St. François de Sales by Ximénez Donoso hangs in the Minimós de Salamanca.²⁷⁵ As MacGreevy hears each name called by the priest, "*Juan de Juni... Berruguete... Ximenez*" he waits for 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill' to follow. Instead, the priest 'never said', because he 'never had heard / The aspirated name / Of the centuries-dead / Bright-haired young man / Whose grave [MacGreevy] sought'. On first notice, it seems interesting and 'very odd' that MacGreevy would pair the Gaelic 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill' with the group of 'centuries-dead' Spanish artists. Yet these artists, who lived in Valladolid and whose Catholic-themed paintings can be found there, are just as historically significant to MacGreevy as they would have been to O Domhnaill. For MacGreevy, the burial of O Domhnaill in the church of San Francisco at Valladolid is of prime importance, which he equates to the religious significance of Spanish art in Valladolid. Further, it was the search for the Irish prince's burial place that inspired MacGreevy's best-known poem. At the poem's conclusion, MacGreevy notes the priest's omission:

And all Valladolid knew
And out to Simancas all knew
Where they buried Red Hugh.

With the death of O Domhnaill, Spanish plans to send further assistance to the Irish were abandoned. He was buried in the chapter of the Franciscan monastery in Valladolid. However, because the building was demolished in the nineteenth century, the exact location of the tomb is unknown. This could explain why the priest did not know O Domhnaill's name, or perhaps O Domhnaill had been forgotten in Valladolid. MacGreevy could not and would not forget the open rebellion O Domhnaill had led against the English.²⁷⁶ As if on a pilgrimage, MacGreevy had travelled to Valladolid specifically to find the monastery. The quest for the monastery followed the Irish Civil War and coincided with the establishment of the Irish Free State.

Bearing this in mind, another significant name is Steifan MacEnna (better known as Stephen MacKenna, 1872-1934), to whom the poem is dedicated.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ O Domhnaill led a rebellion against the English government in Ireland from 1593 and helped to lead the Nine Years' War from 1595 to 1603.

MacGreevy met MacKenna while studying at Trinity College, Dublin. Their correspondence lasted over thirteen years until the latter's death in 1934. The dedication to MacKenna was deeply symbolic. O Domhnaill was highly praised in Irish language literature of the early twentieth century for his nobility and commitment to the Catholic faith. Likewise, MacKenna was admired as an Irish journalist, Gaelic Revivalist, and translator and scholar of the neoplatonist Plotinus (Yeats was indebted to his work) and as a friend of many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising. In a letter to MacGreevy, MacKenna requested the unusual but more authentically Irish spelling of his name. When he received a copy of 'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill' he wrote, 'I feel enormously honoured and vastly delighted to have your solemn sombre darkly humorous Red Hugh dedicated to me'.²⁷⁷

Drawing upon this, Schreibman writes, "'Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill" is a poem of carefully modulated rhythm and subtle internal rhyme which...links the death of an Irish leader killed in Spain nearly four hundred years before with the hanging of Irish heroes just a few years earlier'.²⁷⁸ But Schreibman's plain term 'leader' rather than 'rebel' plays down the subversive quality of the O Domhnaill story, almost dangerously relevant to recent Irish history as he had led an unsuccessful rebellion against the English in Ireland.

The comparison and contrast between the death and funeral rites of Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill and the hanging of Irish martyrs can be gleaned in the following verses:

Yet when
Unhurried —
 Not as at home
 Where heroes, hanged, are buried
 With non-commissioned officers' bored maledictions
 Quickly in the gaol yard-

They brought
His blackening body
Here
To rest
Princes came
Walking
Behind it²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Letter from Stephen MacKenna to Thomas MacGreevy, 23 January 1929; TCD MS 8115/51.

²⁷⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxvii.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The link that MacGreevy has made between Aodh Ruadh O Domhnaill and the hanging of the ‘non-commissioned officers’ in the ‘gaol yard’ elevates the poem to one of commemoration. This is ‘a moment where the sentiment might echo that of the Irish exile, who is transported to his homeland by some sight or sound in the new place he finds himself’.²⁸⁰ For MacGreevy, this is a ceremonious moment and one that is sacred, sanctified, and holy. The controversy this kind of stance would create in a politically turbulent Ireland could explain why he felt the need to publish the poem in *The Statesman* under the pseudonym L. St. Senan, as by his own account the use of a ‘nom de plume [gave him] more freedom’.²⁸¹ It meant he could publish his Catholic but not always uncritical theological leanings, questions, and political thoughts on controversial subject matter without being held openly accountable. It also links the poem with his Gaelic heritage and identity. George Russell implored MacGreevy to publish under his own name as a defence for intellectual liberty at a time when most were clamouring for restrictions and censorship. However, MacGreevy’s use of a pseudonym indicates mixed feelings; the desire to push and question, while reluctant to publicly challenge the status quo.

There appears a general division in Irish artists between those who felt an obligation to build cultural structures in the community and those who felt that artists were, above all, obligated to their art. The former group is best represented by Yeats, Gregory, and Synge who played an active role in creating the Abbey Theatre, while the latter is best embodied by Joyce, who generally endorsed the idea that he owed his country only his art. MacGreevy appears a mixture of these impulses; throughout his life he started and (or) served cultural organisations in Ireland, for the advancement and promotion of art in Ireland. Yet he is also one of many Irish artists – one thinks most obviously of Moore, Shaw, Joyce, and Beckett – whose writings about Ireland seem to have been made easier, or perhaps even made possible, by leaving Ireland at least for a time.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Mark Leahy “‘...it is the act and not the object of perception that matters’”: MacGreevy’s Writing in Relation to Perception and Affect in Literary and Visual Arts’ in *Life and Work* pp. 33 – 47 (p. 39).

²⁸¹ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats 27 April 1926 Thomas MacGreevy National Library of Ireland. Autograph letter signed. NLI MS 30,859.

²⁸² Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 131.

Finding His Way

One of MacGreevy's more ambitious efforts in 1920 was devoted to assisting in the formation of the Irish Musical League. In this he worked closely with Walter Starkie, a man with pro-fascist leanings who later became a director of the Abbey Theatre and one of Samuel Beckett's tutors at Trinity College.²⁸³ The goal of the Irish Musical League was to form an Irish symphony orchestra and although the effort was not ultimately successful, it was seen as a gesture of defiant civilising at a time of general bloodshed. Throughout this tumultuous period, MacGreevy and his companions were striving to advance culture and artistry in the face of the barbarism and carnage around them.²⁸⁴

At this time MacGreevy began publishing his first articles. While at Trinity, he had been a member of the Dublin Drama League and Dublin Arts Club.²⁸⁵ His earliest publications reveal feeble attempts as a theatre critic for the Abbey Theatre and Dublin Drama League.²⁸⁶ His major output was in the form of short journalistic essays from which much of his purpose and intention as a cultural historian can be gleaned. These publications appeared on the pages of *New Ireland* and the *Irish Statesman* in the early 1920s.²⁸⁷ From the beginning, MacGreevy realised that it was vital for those engaging with Irish culture to be more aware of European rather than British traditions.²⁸⁸ Despite their brevity, these texts reveal MacGreevy to be widely read in British, American, and French art history and criticism, to have an almost photographic memory of artistic masterpieces, and a keen sense of observation—qualities which are characteristic of his strongly visual poetic imagery. His informal writing about art remained a central feature of his style throughout his career.

Writing to a readership concerned with national cultural issues, MacGreevy preferred to undertake shorter, more controversial writing on art history rather than detailed scholarly studies. His early discussions on art history challenged existing

²⁸³ J. Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: A Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996) p. 52.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xv.

²⁸⁶ Thomas MacGreevy. 'Reviews. The King's Threshold. By W.B. Yeats. Abbey Theatre, November 15th. 1921. The Saloon. By Henry James. Dublin Drama League, November 13th, 1921.' *Old Ireland*. 26 November 1921, pp. 570-571 and, 'Art and Morality: The Drama League's Excursion to America' in *New Ireland* 91 April 1922) p. 270.

²⁸⁷ Riann Coulter and Róisín Kennedy, "'It is only by learning to fully understand the past that we can most easily come to realise the significance of the present": Thomas MacGreevy, Art Critic and Art Historian' in *Life and Work*, pp. 41-54 (p. 53).

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

norms for exhibitions and the assessment of art, and offered alternative ideas that were more favourable towards a specifically Irish national approach. Throughout this time and amidst the destruction of Dublin in the early 1920s, MacGreevy continued his library work with the CUKT. The work did not keep him exclusively in Dublin, but Dublin formed his main base of operations – and it must have been personally, if not financially, rewarding for him.

His work with the trust seems to have been the primary focus of his activities, made of course more difficult by the worsening situation in Dublin and throughout the nation in 1922 and 1923. A later composition depicts the period just after the battles in Dublin and the start of the Civil War. This poem, the evocative ‘Autumn, 1922’, suggests exhaustion and despair. It was also during this time that he began a friendship with George Yeats, the wife of the poet W.B. Yeats, which lasted for forty years despite several, occasionally significant, interruptions.²⁸⁹

It is worth observing that MacGreevy’s public defence of Irish religious art began after the destruction in Dublin during and after the Easter Rising of 1916. Amid the demolition of buildings in Dublin’s city centre and the swift turning of Irish guns on Irishmen, MacGreevy devoted his thoughts to enduring aesthetic value and religious inspiration. Writing in the April 1922 edition of the Dublin journal *Gaelic Churchman*, he observes that one should perhaps understand the ability to appreciate art as being akin to the ability to value religious truth.

[The majority] cannot appreciate Bellini and Cezanne and Miss Geddes any more than they can live up to the New Testament. But, whereas it has become a convention to admit one’s shortcomings with regard to Christian standards of living, no man shows his humility about his shortcomings in matters of artistic appreciation.²⁹⁰

This is one of his more significant statements on aesthetics, as he seems always to have had an analogous reverence for both religious and artistic truth.²⁹¹ It is a point to which he returned, in December, in a column on Irish stained glass printed in D.P. Moran’s extreme cultural-nationalist journal *The Leader*:

... to persons of sensibility... [God] is the Great Creator, the Great Artist. Art is perhaps the most godlike of human activities. For out of the apparent chaos

²⁸⁹ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 135.

²⁹⁰ Thomas MacGreevy ‘Religious Art and Modern Ireland’ *Gaelic Churchman* 3 (2) (1922) pp. 128-129 (p. 128).

²⁹¹ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, pp. 135-6.

of life the artist evolves order, symmetry, grace, movement, as out of the void God evolved the worlds spinning rhythmically in space.²⁹²

The ‘apparent chaos of life’ and ‘worlds spinning rhythmically in space’ suggests the ‘earth voices whispering’, found in ‘Nocturne of the Self-Evident Presence’. This title intentionally refers to the Catholic sense of the ‘real presence’ of Christ in the Mass as well as an indication of a spiritual presence. Here again, MacGreevy responded to carnage and disorder by promoting the virtues of continental art and civilisation, the value of religion and the broad spread of knowledge.²⁹³ At this point in his life, MacGreevy was concerned with the absence of any coherent understanding of Irish art history both within the education and the museum sector, and in the broader public sphere. MacGreevy brought to his art historicism an intimate and conversational tone that opened the subject to the wider public, and made the topic accessible and of general concern. His sense of fluidity between history and the contemporary moment is apparent even in his accounts of Italian Renaissance art, which he made relevant to modern Irish art and Catholic ideology.

During this period, MacGreevy’s aesthetic continued to develop. In the early stages of his career, he was publishing work to get noticed. His contribution to the avant-garde Dublin-based journal *The Klaxon* was an essay that had been (up to then) one of his most extensive works of art criticism. As Schreibman explains, *The Klaxon* was a ‘remarkable but extremely short-lived Irish journal priced at one shilling. The cover, with its futurist design and bold block letters, signaled a new brash voice on the Irish literary scene’.²⁹⁴ Under the masthead, the editors’ statement proclaimed that *The Klaxon* was ‘an Irish international Quarterly, published in Dublin, concerned with the activities of all nations in matters of Art, Music, and Literature’.²⁹⁵ The first editorial, entitled ‘Confessional’, signed L.K.E. (Dublin scholar Laurence K. Emery) set the tone for the publication:

We are the offspring of a gin and vermouth in a local public-house. We swore that we were young and could assert our youth with all its follies. We railed against the psychopendantic parlours of our elders and their old maidenly consorts, hoping the while with an excess of Picabia and banter, a whiff of Dadaist Europe to kick Ireland into artistic wakefulness. We produced our

²⁹² Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Irish Stained Glass’, *The Leader*, XLV.20 (1922) pp. 496-497 (p. 497).

²⁹³ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 136.

²⁹⁴ Susan Schreibman, ‘Introduction to the Klaxon’. *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*. 1999. Accessed 27 February 2017.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

seven articles of faith: announcing primarily our belief in ourselves and a catholic aestheticism...²⁹⁶

The Klaxon was the perfect avenue for MacGreevy to combine ‘aspects of an Irish-Ireland agenda’, ‘together with a broad-minded, cosmopolitan embrace of the most daring aspects of high modernism’.²⁹⁷ It is ‘within this context of brashness, youth and firm belief in the avant garde’²⁹⁸ that his ‘Picasso, Maimie [sic] Jellett, and Art Criticism’ was published in the Winter 1923-24 edition.²⁹⁹ Written before he was well known as a critic, his tone is notably more strident than in his later criticism. The journal provided him with a populist platform for his ideas and an opportunity to guide the general reader towards an appreciation of art history.³⁰⁰ It addresses Picasso’s development away from Cubism and helps to contextualise Jellett, all the while noting the amateurishness of Dublin’s art critics. He observes Ireland’s pre-eminence in literature, specifically mentioning ‘Mr. Yeats, Mr. Joyce and George Fitzmaurice’.³⁰¹

In the publication, MacGreevy explicitly states his views on both contemporary and historical art. He expresses discontent at the lack of strong representation of Irish artists in Irish galleries: ‘we are all – except our newspaper critics – interested in pictures by Irish artists and French artists. We are not interested in dead Dutch boors and dead English gentlemen. They only tell us about boorishness and gentility. They tell us nothing about art’.³⁰² In the article, he suggests that study abroad is essential so that young Irish artists ‘learn to tear away the layers of English humbug that lie between us and clear artistic vision’.³⁰³ Admitting that, in an ideal world, Irish artists would be able to find this ‘artistic vision’ by looking back at historic Irish art, MacGreevy laments that the opportunities to do so are limited because there are only a handful of ‘mostly bad’ Irish paintings and a few portraits at the National Gallery.³⁰⁴ He viewed British art as the product of a Protestant, industrial history, which he saw as alien to his particular vision of a Catholic and rural Ireland.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 66.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Picasso, Mamie [sic] Jellett and Dublin Criticism’, *The Klaxon* 1.1, (Winter: 1923-4) pp. 23-7. *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

³⁰⁰ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 53.

³⁰¹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Picasso, Mamie [sic] Jellett and Dublin Criticism’, p. 26.

³⁰² Ibid., p. 27.

³⁰³ Ibid., p 26.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

He criticised the National Gallery of Ireland for its overemphasis on the British School, believing that ‘Irish art should engage with the best of continental art’ and ‘should be supported by Irishmen and Irishwomen when it attains a standard comparable to European art’. His mention of ‘dead Dutch boors and dead English gentlemen’, refers to the old-fashioned Victorian English taste for bourgeois Dutch realist painting, with a ‘boorish’ sneer about the Boer War. The underlining point of the article is both significant and difficult to miss. He believed that Ireland should aspire to the eminence in visual art that it had already attained in literary art.³⁰⁵

MacGreevy preferred to study continental European art, and made an extensive effort to acquaint himself with its history. From 1924, he worked off and on as a tour guide for Lunn’s Travel Agency.³⁰⁶ This gave him the opportunities he craved to acquaint himself with continental art and its history. The importance of contextualising Irish contemporary art within art history by providing the historical context of the poem is a central feature of MacGreevy’s art criticism. This is particularly true of his treatment of modern Irish artists whom he felt had the potential to contribute to a canon of Irish art with roots firmly planted in Gaelic culture and history.

Establishing himself as an art critic of contemporary Irish art, he was influenced by the writings of Irish artists and cultural historians and by his reading of European art history. The impact of his writings on both contemporary Irish art and on the history of art focuses on his contribution to the history of European and Irish art of the pre-twentieth century. His primary criterion came from his belief that Irish art should project both an Irish nationalist and a Catholic awareness. His reviews of the works of modernist Irish artists provided the historical context for contemporary art and thereby helped to both educate the public and construct a canon of modern Irish art with roots firmly planted in the past.

MacGreevy’s discussions on art history sought to dismantle existing norms for exhibiting and assessing art and to offer alternative principles based on the needs of the newly independent nation.³⁰⁷ As Jenkins notes, ‘MacGreevy was a modernist *and* a nationalist, and it is the uneasy marriage, or divorce, between experimental

³⁰⁵ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 136.

³⁰⁶ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats 10 June 1926. Thomas MacGreevy National Library of Ireland. Autograph letter signed. NLI MS 30,859

³⁰⁷ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 53.

modernist technique and national animus which wires his work with the necessary tension to make him an interesting figure in Irish poetry'.³⁰⁸ Of central significance to MacGreevy's sense of his own image, and therefore a key import to art history, is his description of himself as 'an Irish Catholic'.³⁰⁹

The Irish Free State, which resulted from the Irish War of Independence and accompanying Irish Civil War, had not turned out as MacGreevy expected. In August 1924, five years before the Censorship of Publications Act was passed, his position at the CUKT was complicated by controversy that broke out on the publication of 'The Madonna of Slieve Dun' by Lennox Robinson.³¹⁰ The short story, written by his friend thirteen years earlier, had outraged the clergy when it was printed alongside other subversive pieces in Cecil Salkeld's and Francis Stuart's short-lived journal *To-Morrow*. The story features a farmer's daughter named Mary Creedon, who imagines herself as the Madonna after she is sexually assaulted. Unable to come to terms with the event, she recasts her pregnancy in the form of an Immaculate Conception but dies upon giving birth to a girl on Christmas Eve. Other offensive contributions in the publication included W.B. Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan', Liam O'Flaherty's 'A Red Petticoat', and Margaret Barrington's imperial-sex drama, 'Colour'. But it was Robinson's short story that upset the clergy most.³¹¹

The Irish Advisory Committee of the CUKT, for which MacGreevy was then employed as Assistant Secretary, became embroiled in the Madonna short story dispute when one of its members resigned stating that they could no longer work with Robinson, who was the Trust's secretary. Robinson was soon dismissed, and the activities of the Trust were suspended.³¹² When the administration of the Irish office of the Carnegie scheme was redirected through Scotland under the direct control of Dunfermline, MacGreevy was offered Robinson's former position at an increased salary of £400.³¹³ A mixture of dismay at the direction of the CUKT as well as loyalty to Robinson impelled him to refuse it.³¹⁴ Without accepting the offer or confronting the priests, he decided to leave for London.

³⁰⁸ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 66.

³⁰⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Art criticism and science', *Capuchin Annual* (1960) pp. 161-66 (p. 164) *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

³¹⁰ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, pp. 141, 152.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

³¹³ A. Olden, 'A Storm in a chalice', *Library Review*, 25.7 (Autumn 1976) 265-9.

³¹⁴ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, p. 137.

The creative work he went on to accomplish in London originated from the intermediary period in Dublin, either as early drafts or as inspirations for later work. He memorably recorded experiences from these years in a number of the poems he published later, notably ‘The Six Who Were Hanged’, ‘Cron Trath na nDeithe’, ‘Autumn, 1922’, and ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’. He also passed a time of national cataclysm by trying to promote and promulgate libraries. Finally, he consistently argued, in the public columns of journals and newspapers, for a high critical understanding of continental art, drama, music, and literature, and insisted on the seriousness of Irish success in these fields. These were not unproductive years, nor years of apprenticeship; what he accomplished was significant and is only overshadowed by the greater productivity and artistic success of the succeeding years of expatriation and of his later residence in Dublin as Director of the National Gallery of Ireland.³¹⁵

MacGreevy in London

It has often been said that MacGreevy was a man of connections, someone who enjoyed a wide circle of friends in artistic and literary circles.³¹⁶ His friendship with the Yeats family paved the way for his acceptance into London society. With a helpful letter of introduction from George Yeats to Sir Herbert John Clifford Grierson, the Scottish literary scholar, editor, and literary critic, MacGreevy was introduced to London society as ‘Carnegie Librarian by profession and by taste and industry a profound student of European painting’.³¹⁷ On the strength of a letter of introduction from W.B. Yeats to T.S. Eliot,³¹⁸ Eliot invited MacGreevy into *The Criterion* offices and began commissioning reviews from him. These freelance engagements, for Eliot’s high profile self-published literary journal, coupled with other publications for which he began writing, allowed him to make his living at the heart of the city’s galleries, theatres, museums, concert halls and opera houses.³¹⁹ It was the world of print culture to which Eliot provided introductions that supplied the impetus for his time in the city away from the social and religious pressures of the

³¹⁵ Goodspeed, *Life and Work*, pp. 137-8.

³¹⁶ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 65.

³¹⁷ Undated letter from George Yeats to MacGreevy with enclosure (enveloped postmarked 3 February 1925) Autograph letter signed. TCD MS 8104/20.

³¹⁸ Coolahan, ‘Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work’, p. 66.

³¹⁹ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 142.

Irish Free State. The interaction between Eliot and MacGreevy in London was positive if infrequent and paved the way for MacGreevy to make his living as a journalist.³²⁰ MacGreevy and Eliot became fast friends despite their intellectual rivalry. Eliot was generous to MacGreevy, regularly taking articles and book reviews from him from 1925 to 1927, and again in 1934. In June 1925, after being introduced to literary editor Leonard Woolf through Eliot, MacGreevy began writing art reviews for *The Nation* and *Athenaeum*.

It is worth reflecting briefly on what he was returning *to* in London and *why* his second interaction with the city was so different from his first.³²¹ The post-war break-up of the Edwardian social world is vital to understanding MacGreevy's second interaction with the city. The recent pressures of Irish republicanism, Russian communism, and the Indian independence movement had all left their mark on London's political landscape. It is worth noting that MacGreevy's strong religious sense would have kept him impervious to the Marxism fashionable in intellectual circles in the years between the wars and brought him closer to the politically conservative right-wing modernism particularly associated with T.S. Eliot. New inspirations were gathering in the London art world, where, as a critic, MacGreevy found himself drawn to artists who were effecting a transition away from the Impressionist influences of the Parisian avant-garde.³²² In May 1925, MacGreevy took up residence at 15 Cheyne Gardens in Chelsea. He quickly settled into Chelsea after the reorganisation that had been forced upon the Irish office of the CUKT. His continuing proximity to Lennox Robinson can be deduced from the fact that George Yeats sent letters to each that were meant for the other.³²³ It was MacGreevy's contact with the Yeats circle, combined with his religious sense that prevented him from drifting. Although the Yeats brothers were Protestant-descendants, they were effectively agnostic if not atheistic. In this manner, he could distinguish himself from other Irish expatriates, like Sean O'Casey, whom he regularly encountered on the King's Road.³²⁴ O'Casey and Shaw were much more left-wing in England than the Yeats brothers or MacGreevy.

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

³²¹ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 141.

³²² Ibid., p. 142.

³²³ TCD MS 8104/36.

³²⁴ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, pp. 143-4.

The Chelsea residence was at the time occupied by the medium Hester Dowden and her daughter Dolly Travers Smith, of whom MacGreevy grew deeply fond. Vanessa Hester Dowden (1868–1949) was the daughter of Edward Dowden, Shakespearean scholar and professor of English at Trinity College, Dublin.³²⁵ She was a medium, using the Ouija-board and the surrealist technique of automatic writing at her sittings. In 1921, she moved from Dublin to London, and one year later went to live at 15 Cheyne Gardens. Her daughter Dorothy, known as Dolly, married Lennox Robinson in 1931.³²⁶ While living alongside Hester and her daughter, MacGreevy occupied an intermediate position somewhere between the status of a boarder and a family member.³²⁷ The affluent setting of 15 Cheyne Gardens is clearly evident in the poem ‘The Other Dublin,’ previously entitled ‘Living With Hester’,³²⁸ and ‘To Vanessa Herself’.³²⁹ The front room of the house was used exclusively for psychic investigation and séances while the inner drawing room contained a full-size Steinway on which Hester played, surrounded by her pets.³³⁰ She loved Siamese cats and Pekinese dogs and had a succession of these animals.³³¹ It was through Hester Dowden that MacGreevy met many people, including the composers Constant Lambert and Peter Warlock. In June and July 1923, Dowden received ‘communication’ from Oscar Wilde.³³² Throughout his residency, MacGreevy depended upon George Yeats opinion of his poems, as he was reluctant to share his poems with the residents of Cheyne Gardens.³³³

It is important to note that his Chelsea location acted as an especially green space in the light of the social and religious pressures (if not actual legal restrictions) that he had experienced in Ireland’s print culture. Writing from that address kept MacGreevy at the heart of current events, such as the opening of the New Wing of the Tate Gallery by King George V. The Chelsea base afforded him the opportunity to

³²⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 123.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 141.

³²⁸ TCD MS 7989/1: 50.

³²⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘To Vanessa Herself’ *The Irish Statesman* Vol. 12. No. 16 (22 June 1929) p. 309 It is important to note that the poem was published under the name ‘Thomas MacGreevy,’ and not ‘L. St. Senan’ as had been the case with previous poems.

³³⁰ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 142.

³³¹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 124.

³³² For further information about Hester Dowden, see Edmund Bentley’s *Far Horizon, A Biography of Hester Dowden: Medium and Psychic Investigator* (London: Rider and Company, 1951).

³³³ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 144.

temper his convictions despite the wedge that had been driven between Ireland and Britain, and helped to pave the way for a third sojourn in London from 1933 until the Blitz of 1940. Space had opened for him in the vast metropolis, where he could explore his poetic voice.³³⁴ If his return to London during the mid-1920s was marked by disaffection with the Edwardian legacy, his residence in Chelsea was arguably that much more up to speed with current trajectories in the capital's literary and artistic expression.³³⁵

In September 1925, MacGreevy wrote to Collins Baker, then Director of the National Gallery, London, asking if there might be an opening for a lecturer. He enclosed a copy of 'The Daemon of French Painting', an essay of fine art criticism published in *The Dublin Magazine* in August 1924. Although there were no openings at the time, Baker was impressed with MacGreevy's writing and passed his name on to Reginald Grundy, editor of *The Connoisseur*, who needed an assistant editor.³³⁶ Founded in 1903, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* was the leading monthly art periodical, covering the history and criticism of the visual arts with special attention to current developments in all aspects of the fine and decorative arts. In November 1925, MacGreevy took up the post of Assistant Editor at *The Connoisseur*. His work included editing and writing short book reviews and art notices. From letters written by MacGreevy in 1925 and 1926, his work for the journal was clearly demanding. It was not unusual for him to spend Sunday afternoons proofing and writing up notices. However, in keeping with the custom of the time, MacGreevy did not sign any of the notices that were published and so his true contribution to *The Connoisseur* cannot be ascertained. In any case none of the magazine's records seem to have been preserved.

While it is impossible to determine the extent of MacGreevy's contribution, there is no doubt that it was more extensive than can be determined from documentary evidence.³³⁷ For example, in 1935 when he applied for the Directorship of the National Gallery of Ireland, he wrote: 'When on the staff of *The Connoisseur* I always contributed a substantial [portion] — sometimes as much as half — of the

³³⁴ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 142.

³³⁶ Susan Schreibman, 'Introduction to *The Connoisseur*.' *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*, 1999. Accessed February 27th, 2017.

³³⁷ Ibid.

criticism of art exhibitions and reviews on the fine arts'.³³⁸ At the same time as contributing to *The Connoisseur* magazine, MacGreevy contributed to *The Nation and Athenaeum*, a popular general-interest magazine published in London, as well as the *Irish Statesman*.³³⁹

According to Eksteins, the England that MacGreevy was working in 'was one of honour and virtue and duty in which an aristocratic and middle-class view of the world had merged, in which empire and sport, honesty and social stability, were all part of an indivisible whole'.³⁴⁰ This was a society for which Modernist thought was a 'revolutionary threat' to the 'security, prosperity, and integrity' of English Edwardian society.³⁴¹ His work for *The Connoisseur* was not as stimulating as he would have wished. He referred to his work on *The Connoisseur* as 'conoozing',³⁴² and, in a personal exchange with George Yeats, he revealed:

The present Connoisseurs were not I imagine at a University at all. The assistant editor was at Westminster School — which means nothing to me except that I'm sure it isn't Winchester. Eton and Harrow are quite Jewish and vulgarian are they not? Still I should feel intellectually very déclassé were it not for '*The Nation*' and '*The Criterion*'!!³⁴³

Life at 'the conoozer' reveals much about his political orientation directly after the Edwardian period, which was intensely divisive in its class aspects.³⁴⁴ One can 'taste the spirit of retrospective fury',³⁴⁵ in his description of an

old England [that] was still to all intents and purposes Edwardian, when passionless, fastidious would-be aristocratic, Nonconformist Liberalism, the nearest thing to New Englandism that exists in Europe, was triumphant; when the emasculate brilliance of John Singer Sargent passed for great painting and the emasculate brilliance of Mr. Bernard Shaw for great drama.³⁴⁶

In another exchange with George Yeats, MacGreevy also admitted:

³³⁸ TCD MS 8148/4.

³³⁹ In November and December 1925, MacGreevy wrote eight articles for *The Nation* and *Athenaeum*. He regularly contributed to *The Times Literary Supplement* through 1926, where the convention of anonymous reviewing also applied. There is no way of knowing exactly what he reviewed.

³⁴⁰ Eksteins, p. 188

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats, 7 January 1925. Events described in the letter indicate 7 January 1926. Thomas MacGreevy National Library of Ireland. Autograph letter signed. NLI MS 30,859.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 148.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 142.

³⁴⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: A Study* (London: Chatto & Windus 1931) p. 11. All future references will be abbreviated '*Eliot*'.

The Connoisseur sending me out to an exhibition yesterday said ‘Of course if its advanced don’t praise it because the paper doesn’t stand for that’. I don’t know how long it will be possible for me to stay or for them to find me out and get rid of me. Even Hester [Dowden, his landlord at his residence in Chelsea] who thought it a heaven sent job now sees the ridiculous joke it is my being on such a paper. But I can’t say at the same time that the people on the paper aren’t kind. I give it to them there, and all the prostitute in me would like to give in as much as possible to their absurd exaltation of Wheatley’s ‘Cries of London’ over a design by Picasso, Matisse or Braque’.³⁴⁷

MacGreevy did not like working for *The Connoisseur* magazine because it did not support contemporary or modern art. The English painter Francis Wheatley’s series of paintings entitled ‘The Cries of London’ was first exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1792. They were his most popular works and were made into engraved prints and sold across Europe. MacGreevy’s preference for a ‘design by Picasso, Matisse or Braque’ demonstrates his love of the modern and alludes to a division he must have felt between himself and other senior staff on the magazine. He seems to consider his colleagues and the readership of *The Connoisseur* very old-fashioned, due to their preference for quasi-documentary conventionally representational art rather than modernist experimentation. Further, MacGreevy’s use of the word ‘design’ deliberately avoids any suggestion of conventional representation.

In a letter MacGreevy wrote to George Yeats, 3 December 1925, he conveys the deep disappointment he felt after the end of a dinner party when he was left with a strong conviction that his art criticism would not bring him success. In the letter, MacGreevy reveals:

I felt a bit disappointed. I'll stick on at this art business till I've paid my debts, then I must quit...I don't write good poems...neither do I write good art criticism. I write personally, and from the point of view of success Bodkin's stuff is more what's wanted. He is frequently in the Burlington now. I may have sensibility in these things but I know I'll never be an 'expert'. How I wish I was rich — very rich, wouldn't it be nice? I think I'd go home to Kerry probably in spite of everything. One might go for a change to Avila and Paris and Vienna, but one pines for a breath of air sometimes.³⁴⁸

MacGreevy appeared to suffer with a deal of self-doubt at this time, perhaps the result of his rivalry with the Irish art critic Thomas Bodkin, who served on the Board of the National Gallery of Ireland.

³⁴⁷ NLI MS 30.859:30.12.25.

³⁴⁸ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats, 3 December 1925, National Library of Ireland. MS 30/859.

The Emergence of MacGreevy's Modernism

While in London, MacGreevy veered towards a pro-continental, modernist aesthetics hostile to the 'passionless', 'emasculate', and 'fastidious' dimensions of its Edwardian predecessor. The wider discrepancies he saw between the art that London facilitated and the art that England produced appeared only to have confirmed his prejudices about a culture still partial to the physical jerks of old-maidishness.³⁴⁹ This old-maidishness was prompted by an adherence to the comfort of Edwardian society and culture. As Eksteins explains, for the British, the First World War had been a 'war about values, about civilisation... and especially about the relationship of the future to the past'.³⁵⁰ While MacGreevy's colleagues might have held on to Edwardian values, MacGreevy, who had served in and *survived* the First World War, sought artistic innovation and creative expression in his work.

His exposure to English ballet on the London stage had a significant effect on him in this respect. His 'Review of Margaret Morris Dancing' is intriguing for the tensions it provokes between the patrician aspects of English class culture and the need for artistic independence:

As a matter of fact, even Miss Morris's teaching does not appear to have an artistic aim. '*How*,' she asks – she italicises with the comical frequency of a Queen Victoria – 'can physical exercises be made more interesting?' And answers, 'by bringing in the artistic or creative element'. This, decidedly, is keeping art in its place.³⁵¹

MacGreevy was liberal enough about the modernist valuation of autonomy to picture himself yielding to Miss Morris's schooling: 'all the prostitute in me would like to give in as much as possible to [*The Connoisseur's*] absurd exaltation of [Francis] Wheatley's *Cries of London* [: *Pots and Pans to Mend*] over a design by Picasso, Matisse, or Braque'.³⁵² George Yeats sympathised with him regarding the tension he felt with his fellow staff at *The Connoisseur*. She replied:

they grew up in families that were brilliantly clever in a public and spectacular way whereas they are clever in a personal negative and journalistic way and they amuse one because they have selected a form of gossip that panders to one's feeling of superiority to a previous generation. Wheatley's *Cries of London* in their day were quite as enthralling as any illustrative artist of today

³⁴⁹ Thomas MacGreevy 'Review of Margaret Morris dancing', *The Criterion* (June 1926) 570-3.

³⁵⁰ Eksteins, p. 189.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² NLI MS 30.859: Letter dated 30.12.25.

and not a whit less good of their kind. This is not to say that I don't fully sympathise with you for preferring Picasso or Brancusi.³⁵³

Yeats could understand why MacGreevy's colleagues perhaps acted with an air of superiority and had airs about them that irked the poet. However, what MacGreevy may have failed to notice at the time is that it was his associations with post-war Edwardian society that actually spurred his creative energies and drove from within him deeper and fuller potential. As Eksteins explains, 'an important impulse behind experimentation in the arts at the turn of the century was a quest for liberation, a break, in aesthetic and moral terms, from central authority, from patriarchy, from bourgeois conformity'.³⁵⁴ Eksteins viewed the 'psychological and spiritual momentum' behind this break as coming from the 'geographical, social, generational, and sexual' peripheries: 'the emphasis on youth, sensuality, homosexuality, the unconscious, the primitive, and the socially deprived originated in large part not in Paris but on the borders of traditional hegemony'.³⁵⁵ Although MacGreevy would veer away from overtly controversial themes regarding sexuality and social norms in his poetry and art criticism, there is a conscious break from the 'central authority' presented by the 'bourgeois conformity' of Edwardian society. Further, the main themes with which his literary and aesthetic criticism engages while he is establishing himself as a writer, most significantly, the depth in which he explores his Catholic and romantic Celtic upbringing, would not have endeared him to Edwardian society.

The enduring legacy of his Irish-Catholic roots helped MacGreevy to firmly establish an international outlook. The internationalism of his Catholicism enabled him to easily take in the aesthetic riches and traditions of Catholic France, Spain, and Italy, and did something to resolve the apparent paradox of simultaneously espousing cultural and political nationalism and an international and increasingly modernist aesthetic. The creative inspiration he received from the 1925 and 1926 ballet seasons in London was amplified when he found himself suddenly in close proximity to Sergei Diaghilev's most recent production. Sergei Diaghilev (1872 – 1929) was a Russian art critic, patron, and founder of the Parisian *Ballets Russes*. The *Ballets Russes* was a mobile ballet company based in Paris that performed between 1909 and

³⁵³ Letter from George Yeats to Thomas MacGreevy Letter dated 'Dec 31.' Envelope postmarked 31 December 1925. George Yeats Trinity College, Dublin. Typewritten manuscript with autograph annotations signed. TCD MS 8104/34.

³⁵⁴ Eksteins, p. 81.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

1929. Originally conceived by Diaghilev who drew inspiration from Wagner in his quest for the achievement of ‘ultimate art’, Diaghilev claimed that ‘ballet contained in itself all the other art forms’.³⁵⁶

The *Ballets Russes* promoted ground-breaking artistic collaborations among young choreographers, composers, designers, and dancers, all at the forefront of their careers. The ‘general political and economic condition of France in the *belle époque* [had] of course provided the backdrop for the theatricality’,³⁵⁷ which created a huge sensation amongst the public. Diaghilev, ‘keenly aware of the importance of modern methods of publicity and advertisement’, created productions that reinvigorated the art of ballet and brought many visual artists to the public eye. Further, Diaghilev’s cultural preoccupations, ‘related to political and strategic concerns’, helped establish the company as one of the most influential ballet companies of the twentieth century, and significantly affected the development of musical production to the present day.³⁵⁸

MacGreevy’s review of the 1926 ballet season for the *New Criterion* indicated he saw at least twelve Diaghilev productions,³⁵⁹ including British composer and conductor Constant Lambert’s *Romeo and Juliet* (not the better-known ballet with Soviet composer, pianist and conductor Sergei Prokofiev’s score). Lambert’s ballet featured controversial stage-sets by Surrealists Max Ernst and Joan Miró. Though the *Ballets Russes* had been running for sixteen years by the time MacGreevy saw French painter and printmaker Marie Laurencin’s setting of *The House Party* on 25 May 1925, it was in the London Coliseum that he found himself witnessing the greatness of Diaghilev’s personality reinventing itself all over again in the heady atmosphere of the post-war 1920s.³⁶⁰ MacGreevy was drawn to radical innovations in set design – like that of Picasso’s *Parade* – that advanced the background scenery beyond the shrubbery of traditional choreography.³⁶¹ As Eksteins explains, Diaghilev ‘conceived art as a means of deliverance and regeneration... from the social constraints of

³⁵⁶ Eksteins, pp. 50 – 51.

³⁵⁷ Eksteins, p. 82.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

³⁵⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘The Ballet’ *The New Criterion* (October 1926) pp. 741-5.

³⁶⁰ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, pp. 146-7. 7 Sadler’s Wells was closed during this period and did not reopen until the foundation of Irish dancer, teacher and choreographer Ninette de Valois’ Royal Ballet Company in 1931, where some of the former stars of the Diaghilev Company re-assembled.

³⁶¹ MacGreevy, ‘The Ballet’, pp. 741-5.

morality and convention, and from the priorities of western civilization – of which [Diaghilev's] Russia was becoming increasingly apart'.³⁶² His perception of this regeneration 'would involve the recovery of a spontaneous emotional life, not simply by the intellectual elite... but ultimately society as a whole'.³⁶³

There is a parallel here, with MacGreevy's poem 'Dysert' first published in *The Criterion* in 1926 under the pseudonym L. St. Senan (later retitled 'Homage to Jack B. Yeats'). Following Diaghilev's conception of production design, the poem stages its reaction against the cold, prophylactic separation of landscape and figure, as can be read in his words of homage to Jack Yeats: 'And then the tower veered / Grayly to me'.³⁶⁴ However, what is noteworthy here is the way MacGreevy's aesthetic opposition to English art is set up as the foundation for an Irish cultural republic that, similarly to Diaghilev's understanding of post-war European society and convention, had yet to be realised as free from British imperialism and aesthetic influence.³⁶⁵

'The Man about Town'

MacGreevy was particularly influenced by 'The London Group', an exhibiting society of artists whose founding members included Walter Sickert, Jacob Epstein, Wyndham Lewis, Edward Wadsworth, and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.³⁶⁶ He mentioned 'The London Group' in a number of his reviews.³⁶⁷ As we have seen from the controversy that surrounded the 1924 publication of the Lennox Robinson short story, MacGreevy was not unfamiliar with scandal, and wavered uneasily between his Catholic dedication and his commitment to modernist art.³⁶⁸ He had enjoyed a substantial correspondence with Scottish author and journalist Catherine Carswell since 1920; a relationship that was as fond, generous, and unique in its way as that which he maintained with George Yeats, and deepened further during his time in London. Carswell is known as one of the few women who took part in the Scottish Renaissance. Her work is considered as an integral part of Scottish women's writing

³⁶² Eksteins, pp. 58-59.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 28.

³⁶⁵ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 147.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

³⁶⁷ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The London Group' and 'Old Coloured Prints', *The Connoisseur* (March 1926) 189, 192.

³⁶⁸ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 148.

in the early twentieth century. She and her husband, John – who MacGreevy first met while in training for the First World War – were in regular correspondence with Rebecca West and other members of the Bloomsbury group.³⁶⁹ The Bloomsbury group comprised a number of English writers, intellectuals, philosophers, and artists active during the first half of the twentieth century and highly influential in literature, aesthetics, and modern attitudes such as feminism, pacifism, and sexuality.

Despite his commitment to modernism, MacGreevy still maintained a few reservations about the London Group and his connections in London. He particularly remained ‘unusually apprehensive’ about meeting with D.H. Lawrence.³⁷⁰ This was despite numerous pleas by letter from Carswell: ‘I think you are very silly about Lawrence. Anyway about meeting him here. After all we are on the homeliest terms with him & [his wife] Frieda [Weekley], & if you were to join us one day when he was here [in Elin Row, Hampstead], there could be no smell of lions [controversy] or other cause for embarrassment’.³⁷¹ Although anxieties remain in his attitude to parts of British culture directly after the Edwardian period, MacGreevy’s return to the capital in 1925 generally superseded any hesitations he might have had about staying there. The London Group of painters, the Bloomsbury group, the Diaghilev ballets, and the post-war neoclassicism all added direction to the pro-continental modernist aesthetic for which he was striving.³⁷²

It has been suggested that MacGreevy’s cosmopolitan connections absorbed his energies in ways that impeded the type of sustained creative effort needed for artistic achievement and recognition such as that achieved by his friends. It has also been argued that ‘the man about town’ in him somehow undermined his status as a poet.³⁷³ However, MacGreevy’s cosmopolitan connections provided him with an impetus conducive to the creative effort needed for artistic achievement. His freelance engagements and the connections he established as a result gave him ‘an additional foothold in London’ necessary for creative work.³⁷⁴ On occasion, he would send Eliot a selection of his latest work for commentary and critiquing. Eliot acknowledged the receipt of one collection of poetry saying, ‘I’ll write about them later — I hope you’ll

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

³⁷¹ TCD MS 8109/17.

³⁷² Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 152.

³⁷³ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 65.

³⁷⁴ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 148.

soon have enough for a book',³⁷⁵ a response that MacGreevy found 'non-committal yet not discouraging'. In his opinion, Eliot was one of 'the half dozen people in existence whose good opinion he wanted'. Eliot later proved to be a genuine friend and provided a platform for the publication of some of his first poems.³⁷⁶ Eliot helped pave the way for MacGreevy to enjoy creative success while in London and to produce a 'good deal more writing – particularly poetry – from 1925 onwards'.³⁷⁷

With Cheyne Gardens empty on his return from Antwerp in late August 1926, he settled down to write 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch', a surrealist poem that was eventually published in the twenty-first number of *transition*.³⁷⁸ 'Did Tosti Raise His Bowler Hat?' is also marked 'London 1926' and coincides with drafts of 'Recessional',³⁷⁹ and 'Gloria de Carlos V',³⁸⁰ from the same period. We note that none of the titles referred to here are distinctly about London.³⁸¹

Looking beyond London

MacGreevy addressed the issue of 'authority and journalism' degrading the experiences of the soldier-writer in his essay on Eliot as he points to the changes taking place in 'literary circles' for the post-war writer who is Irish

some years ago, after Ireland had given British jingoism a tolerably resounding *coup de poing sur le visage*, Ireland went out of fashion in London intellectual circles. (Which was fortunate for Irish writers, some of whom were already getting seriously corrupted by the flattery of half-educated reviewers and gushing hostesses in London.)

MacGreevy also refers to 'a thorough-going anti-Celtic fashion',³⁸² set in motion by, among others, 'a true-born Orangeman like [Irish author and critic] Mr. [St. John] Ervine'.³⁸³ This was a jocular comment: Ervine, though by birth (in Belfast) an Ulster Protestant and, like his friend Shaw, with no special interest in Celtic revivalism,

³⁷⁵ See Eliot's letter of 2 October 1925 (TCD MS 8113/20).

³⁷⁶ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats Letter dated 7 January 1925. Events described in the letter indicate 7 January 1926. Thomas MacGreevy National Library of Ireland. Autograph letter signed. NLI MS 30,859.

³⁷⁷ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 144.

³⁷⁸ NLI MS 30.859. Letter dated 28.8.26.

³⁷⁹ TCD MS 7989/1:84.

³⁸⁰ TCD MS 7989/1:73.

³⁸¹ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 146.

³⁸² MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 19.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

started out as a socialist very critical of Orange sectarianism particularly in his early play *The Orangeman* (1914). Later, MacGreevy continues:

The journalistic ‘thinkers’ do well, however, to be anti-Celtic. It is fashionable and therefore, one way or another, it pays. And they do not matter ultimately. But for poets it is another question. To those who are not provincial minded, the architecture and other arts of the Celtic countries are, within their limits, of as lasting interest as any others, and all the Calvinistic sneers that Belfast and Bayswater and Boston ever have produced or ever will produce will not alter the fact that the Celtic countries have provided poetry with some of its greatest spiritual themes and with practically all its most unselfish lovers.³⁸⁴

By the summer of 1926 MacGreevy was growing tired of his work on *The Connoisseur* and pining to leave London. In a letter postmarked 3 July, 1926, he writes,

Yes London has helped in some ways and I am not sorry to have made a halt here. But I don't think it ought to be for good, and I don't honestly believe I've written any better ~~from~~ for being here. Eliot (as an editor) is more my line than Russell and that is all. So far as rhymes go Red Hugh is the only one written here that is as good as three or four of those I did before I left Ireland. I'm not writing anything recently...I've had too long and too exhausting a day every day, and I had to try and keep up the *Nation*, *Litt. Sup.* [*The Times Literary Supplement*] &c in the evenings and over the week ends...Besides I'm very tired in my brain and get headaches... They don't want me much longer at the *Connoisseur*, and I am trying to make up my mind as to whether I should go Lunning ~~or stay~~ and stay abroad, or stay here till about the end of August when I think ~~they~~ the *Connoisseur* won't have anything left for me to do...I do want a change. My head aches four days in the seven at least.³⁸⁵

MacGreevy's sojourn in London had been worth his while. However, he was far too pessimistic about his experience to see the success of his endeavour. Perhaps he did not write as many poems as he had wished, or his editorial positions on *The Nation*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and the *Connoisseur* were not challenging enough. Yet, arguably, it was London that set him in the right direction for his art criticism and the second half of his career as an art critic and lecturer, and later still, Director of The National Gallery in Dublin. In this passage, the ‘tiredness’ and ‘headaches’ he complains of resulted from the wounds he received in the Great War. While there are no known examples of MacGreevy experiencing what is now termed post-traumatic stress disorder (then known as ‘shell shock’) after his time on the battlefield, he did, at least, suffer from his head wounds, with his ‘head ach[ing] four days in the seven at

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

least'. He continued to experience symptoms from his head wounds for the rest of his life. However, there is no evidence to suggest his head wounds impeded his literary progress as a writer and poet.

By August 1926, MacGreevy was touring again with Lunn's travel agency. He spent August in Bruges working as a tour guide, lecturing for groups on tour.³⁸⁶ He wrote to George Yeats of his experience, calling it the 'most indecently prettified place and pittoresque [sic] to the last degree.' He also mentions a visit to Antwerp, which he 'liked very much'.³⁸⁷ He recalls a 'lovely Titian' he viewed in Antwerp, in addition to a 'really good' Cathedral, a Rubens, which he considered 'a magnificent effort', and a 'delightful Assumption over the High Altar'.³⁸⁸ Rubens painted three large paintings for the Antwerp Cathedral of our Lady, 'Descent from the Cross' (1612), 'Elevation of the Cross' (1610), and the 'Resurrections Triptych' (1612). MacGreevy's travel agency employment in Belgium gave him a culturally enriched experience, with access to paintings and historical monuments he would have missed when he was younger, fighting on the Western Front.

Traveling in Italy and Belgium provided MacGreevy with a greater knowledge of art history and the culturally enriching experiences necessary for the development of his career. Serving on the board of the National Gallery, Dublin, was a sensitive point for MacGreevy. He later commented, 'I gave myself three years away from Dublin, but I imagine I wouldn't get on the board of the National Gallery even if I knew Italy backwards'.³⁸⁹ MacGreevy may not have felt like he measured up to his aspirations with Bodkin, his main rival as art critic, pundit, and representative of the old-fashioned status quo in art criticism serving on the Board of the National Gallery. However, the access to paintings in Europe and his self-education in European art history prepared him well for the position of Director. In January 1927, MacGreevy made the first attempt (of three) for the position of Director of the National Gallery, Ireland.³⁹⁰

Feeling temporarily burnt out from serving as Assistant Editor on *The Connoisseur* and feeling out of place among his colleagues in a 'post-war literary

³⁸⁶ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to George Yeats, 16 August 1926, NLI MS 30,859.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxii.

society in England' that was 'so intolerable',³⁹¹ MacGreevy looked elsewhere. This raises the question whether the literary world and the art world were connected in MacGreevy's mind, or, if the cultural conservatism he encountered in London and Dublin were preventing him from putting the literary and art worlds together as the writer in him would have wished. His sense of frustration regarding his place in society and his literary and artistic career would have been amplified by the 'international economic recession of the late twenties'.³⁹² When the Great Depression hit the United States in 1929, Britain was still recovering from the economic devastation caused by the First World War.

With financial instability an increasing concern, MacGreevy sought employment elsewhere. The idea of working in France in a close-knit group of intellectual equals and a supportive network that included Eliot, Yeats, Pound, and Joyce, appealed greatly. As Eksteins explains, 'Paris, because of its mythical associations with revolutionary ideals, became the refuge of many of these exiles, including Joyce, and thus the main setting of the modern revolt'.³⁹³ The creative sterility and financial anxiety he felt in London was appeased by the generosity of Eliot, who supported MacGreevy in his application for the position of lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure.³⁹⁴ Much of MacGreevy's creative work during his years in London had made him better prepared and ready to embark on the later stages of his career. He took up his post at the École Normale Supérieure in February 1927.³⁹⁵

The themes of Ireland, Catholicism, and Modernism, distinctively brought together by MacGreevy's personality and imagination, were nourished by his proximity to a close-knit group of Irish contemporaries and exiles. Although much of the work he had done up to this point had been in order to earn a living, in Paris, he found himself writing out of an enthusiasm for life that contributed towards his developing sense as a cultural historian. The growth of his poet's mind resulted directly from his interest in artistically rich, historically Catholic countries, where Irish exiles could be found.

³⁹¹ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 20.

³⁹² Kiberd, p. 359.

³⁹³ Eksteins, p. 82.

³⁹⁴ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 148.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Chapter IV

The Possibilities of Paris

As one of several modernist poets and writers who had experienced and survived the First World War, MacGreevy aimed to create a modern poetic style that reflected post-war reality. His time in London in the mid-1920s had led him to become disillusioned by a post-war culture that sought to maintain the comforts and normality of Victorian and Georgian social traditions. While his fervent Roman Catholicism led him to travel throughout France, Spain, and Belgium in the mid-to-late 1920s, the themes and concerns of European modernism emerging in Paris led him to settle down as one of the members of the Joyce circle.

Inter-war Paris was crucial to MacGreevy's development. His wartime experience led him in the post-war years to seek the comfort of his fellow Irish expatriates in Paris. But what exactly did he encounter there and how did it affect him? Once christened the capital of the nineteenth century, Paris had a powerful attraction for writers, poets, painters, and intellectuals fleeing political persecution or cultural stagnation for the cosmopolitan freedom from local constraint necessary to their work. It is through this work, and what remains of it, that Paris became a city of the mind, conveyed to our imagination through the imaginations of others. It is through the filter of the soldier, civilian, rich, poor, intellectual, academic, artist who lived there at least for a time—the filter of their memories, desires, dreams, descriptions, gossip—that we experience the city. What we respond to is an imagined place: the dull reality of the boulevard Montparnasse³⁹⁶ today will never quite displace the romantic associations of its name.³⁹⁷

Paris in the Belle Époque

In the years preceding the First World War, the cafés of the boulevard Saint-Michel—d'Harcourt, la Source, le Panthéon, and pre-eminently la Vachette, where French Symbolist poet Paul-Marie Verlaine used to pass his days—had welcomed a younger clientele, as the artistic community of Montmartre began to switch its

³⁹⁶ District in the 14th *arrondissement* of Paris, south of the Boulevard Montparnasse, adjacent to the Montparnasse cemetery. M.C. Howatson. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) pp. 118, 410.

³⁹⁷ Ian Littlewood, *Paris: A Literary Companion*. (London: John Murray, 1987), pp. 1-2.

allegiance to the Left Bank.³⁹⁸ In the late nineteenth century, the Académie des Beaux-Arts dominated. Traditional French painting standards of content and style emphasised historical subjects, religious themes, and portraits. During the 1870s and 1880s, Impressionism took the Parisian art world by storm. Impressionist painting was characterised by relatively small, wispy yet visible brush strokes that emphasised the depiction of light, and often accentuated the effects of light throughout the passage of time. The subject matter could be ordinary, such as a still life or a portrait: it was the depiction of light and characterisation of movement that were crucial elements for the Impressionists.

The Impressionists challenged the rules of academic painting and were considered unconventional during their time. In an article titled ‘The Daemon of French Painting’, published in *The Dublin Magazine* (1924), MacGreevy opined that, ‘all French art tends to show, and sometimes to suffer from, the national passion for building well. The well-made play, the well-constructed novel, the neatly-finished verse are all French, so above all is the well-designed picture’.³⁹⁹ MacGreevy loosely based his essay around Henry Adams’s well-known *Mont St. Michel and Chartres*. At the beginning of the essay, MacGreevy uses the quotation from French art historian Jacques Élie Faure, ‘Le héros français, c’est la cathédrale’ to summarise his essay’s intended message.⁴⁰⁰ Perhaps inspired by Adams’s book, MacGreevy articulates how architecture, the cathedral in particular, is characteristic of the French mentality when it comes to painting. He conveys how the cathedrals of France speak the loudest for the spirit of France when he quotes Faure, ‘Mais elle soulève cela par ses voûtes et par ses tours dans un tel emportement lyrique, qu’elle fait monter la foule française, jusqu’aux pressentiments suprême que le plus’.⁴⁰¹ Translated into English, the phrase reads: ‘But it raises this by its architectural vaults, and towers in such a lyrical impetus that it makes the French crowd rise to the supreme presentiments which the greatest of our artists have never attained’. We seldom know, and what knowledge we do have is very little, about the architects behind the cathedrals. At this point, the architecture and personality of the architect, particularly in French cathedrals, rises above individual creative intelligence. MacGreevy argues that the greatest

³⁹⁸ Littlewood, p. 115.

³⁹⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘The Daemon of French Painting’. *The Dublin Magazine*. Dublin. (August 1924). Pp. 30-34 (p. 32).

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

achievements of fine artists cannot measure up to the glory achieved collectively by the French architects and builders who built cathedrals such as Chartres and Mont St. Michel.

MacGreevy understood the passion for building well that was exercised by the French. Further, he could move forward from historical barriers of time and place and make classical architecture contemporary. MacGreevy was moved by the works of the Impressionists in a similar way to classical architecture, particularly, cathedrals such as Notre Dame. As he explains,

Is not a good Cézanne as splendidly massed as Notre Dame itself? Is not a Poussin, for all its painter's worship of Raphaelesque grace, as stout a piece of architecture as any cathedral in Normandy? Is not Corot (against his instinct sometimes, for Corot was not naturally architectural), is not Renoir even, forced by the tradition to retain something of French calculated architectural design?⁴⁰²

For MacGreevy, the Spirit, or 'Daemon' that had spurred the minds of French Impressionist painters such as Cézanne, Poussin, Corot, and Renoir, rivaled the minds that had been behind the grandest calculations of French architectural design. The zeitgeist of nineteenth century France had been 'more free, more experimental, more courageous in every sphere of human activity than almost any period in any country in the history of modern civilization'.⁴⁰³ As French Impressionism evolved, Paris transformed itself in the early decades of the twentieth century into a cultural centre to rival Florence at the height of the Italian Renaissance. These artists individually and collectively 'emancipat[ed] French painting from the tyranny of the Italian Renaissance' and the status quo set by the Académie des Beaux-Arts.⁴⁰⁴

Paris after the War

With the end of the war, a new element was introduced that had a crucial effect on the literary tone of the area for the next twenty years. As Baldick explains, "migration, resettlement, cosmopolitanism, and cultural hybridity are major facts of literary life in this period on a scale never seen before".⁴⁰⁵ Both the Great War and the Russian Revolution introduced to Paris a whole generation of young immigrants, and

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Chris Baldick, *The Oxford English Literary History Vol. 10 1910-1940, The Modern Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 12.

a new wave of political exiles. Characterising this age was the concept of The European Idea, which, owing its origins to the feeling of insecurity and danger that arose out of the Great War, proved that the ‘most important event of the War was the Russian Revolution’.⁴⁰⁶ As summarised in ‘A Commentary’, from the August 1927 edition of the *Criterion*, the Russian Revolution had,

made men conscious of the position of Western Europe as (in Valéry’s words) a small and isolated cape on the western side of the Asiatic continent. And this awareness seems to be giving rise to a new European consciousness. It is a hopeful sign that a small number of intelligent persons are aware of the necessity to harmonize the interests, and therefore to harmonize first the ideas, of the civilized countries of Western Europe.⁴⁰⁷

It was this developing, perhaps idealistic, ‘Mind of Europe’ that many writers of the post-war generation sought to evoke and emulate. The sense of European solidarity found in western continental Europe was strong and pervasive enough to dominate the consciousness of the post-war age. What Kiberd describes as ‘devotion to an epiphanic moment in the midst of a fallen universe’, brought Joyce, whose ‘rejection of all narrowing national traditions’ inspired MacGreevy’ and ‘impressed Beckett’.⁴⁰⁸ These men would ‘[come] to know and esteem one another on the boulevards of Paris after 1928’.⁴⁰⁹

But to understand why Paris became the focal point of this consciousness it is important to examine the modernist period. Since the 1890s, many Irish intellectuals and Irish writers – Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist – had preferred to live abroad, some for career reasons, some for psychological. For war veterans, a variety of factors drew them back when the war ended. These included, but were not limited to: infatuation with the place itself, dislocation from their roots at home, a favourable exchange rate and, for Americans from 1920, the horrors of Prohibition.⁴¹⁰ ‘In the world’s most nearly civilised country’, MacGreevy

had been made to feel nearer to the people—to the squirearchy as well as the cottagers—for being Irish. The years of adversity had added to, not derogated from the majesty of the beautiful city. The famous buildings looked more imposingly beautiful than ever, the layout of the great avenues, above all, of

⁴⁰⁶ ‘A Commentary’, *Criterion* (Aug. 1927), pp. 97-9 in Jason Harding, *The Criterion Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 209.

⁴⁰⁷ Harding, p. 209.

⁴⁰⁸ Kiberd, p. 462.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

course, the Champs-Élysées with its ascent crowned by the Arc de Triomphe, the supreme architectural achievement of its kind in the world, seemed even nobler than one remembered.⁴¹¹

But even with these factors in mind, the question, ‘why Paris?’ remains unanswered. Berlin, with its post-war runaway inflation, was an even cheaper place to live, and exotically more decadent. It too attracted writers, but not as many. Vienna had acquired and retained an intellectual allure and cultural elegance. Florence, too, had its appeal. But what was it about Paris that made it the great cultural and artistic centre of the twentieth century?⁴¹²

For one thing, many soldiers who had experienced Paris during the war found it difficult to adjust easily back home. Those who returned from the battlefield were viewed as lost men who were still haunted by the ghosts of the war and sought refuge in Paris. It was here that MacGreevy met ‘many old friends’; and, although he lamented the fact that ‘Some of [his] most cherished French friends had been killed in the latest stupid war’ he was cheerful that ‘some had survived too’.⁴¹³ Yet Paris did not just offer a safe haven for those who were seeking to create a life for themselves out of the wreckage of the Great War. Not only was Paris carved into their post-war memory and psyche, but once the mist of war had settled, it also became synonymous with excitement and cheap living. Although the French economy was not as badly affected as those of Germany or Austria (where galloping triple-digit inflation was eliminating the middle class) it was nevertheless weak. The franc was worth about six cents in 1921, and by 1926 it had dropped to four cents, a rate of exchange that meant flush times for anyone with dollars to spend.⁴¹⁴

The First World War marked not just the end of a chapter but the end of a volume. It paved the way for a new story that was ‘quite nakedly new, with a newness that [had] been encountered only three times in the history of the West’.⁴¹⁵ For the new story and the men who were living it were not part of a sequence, or even a natural development. One can only be progressive or reactionary in terms of an epoch

⁴¹¹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris’, *Father Mathew Record* (September 1948), pp. 4-8 (p. 4).

⁴¹² Arlen J. Hansen. *Expatriate Paris* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Little, Brown and Company, 1990), p. xxi.

⁴¹³ MacGreevy, ‘Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris’, p. 4.

⁴¹⁴ Hansen, p. xxi.

⁴¹⁵ Genesis Jones, *Approach to the Purpose: A Study of the Poetry of T.S. Eliot* (London: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1964), pp. 304-305.

that has already declared itself. For these men, whose placement in Paris sprang inevitably from the past, their beginning or renewal occurred in a moment of synthesis that changed the vision and contours of the existence of post-war Europe. For those who had escaped the Russian Revolution or survived the Great War, the war years seemed wasted years. It was Paris where they believed they could use this new beginning as a chance to take heart for the future. The commonality that brought these men together lay in the process of death, burial, and resurrection, and for many, it was Paris that meant renewal.⁴¹⁶

After the war, Paris became the lodestar for émigré writers and artists from the United States as well as Europe.⁴¹⁷ Continuous religious and cultural interchange—as among other things the interchange between east and west, involving (Russian) Orthodox, (Roman) Catholic and every kind of sceptic—crucially facilitated the work and self-identification of aspiring artists. This generation of men, having become disillusioned by the Great War, abandoned the values and code of conduct of their Victorian and Georgian predecessors.

The aesthetic and social development of the Georgians may have left them open to the charge of insularity, but it was this element, together with the importance they attached to the depictions of everyday life, which enabled poets like Sassoon and Owen to express the bitter disillusionments of the war with verse that was both direct and poignant. Their poetry was formally and stylistically often quite traditional and accessible, yet challenging and innovative in content. It could be argued, in fact, that without the pioneering work of the Georgians before 1914, the subsequent achievement of the ‘war poets’ would not have been possible.

Disillusionment with and reaction against the war and the patriotic verse used to keep up wartime morale meant that the post-war generation had been changed entirely. According to French physician and psycho-analyst André Berge, the ‘psychological significance of those four War years, which were especially violent ones for France, and after them, the influence of those economic uncertainties which marked the return of peace’⁴¹⁸ were important factors in the ‘intellectual evolution of

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 313.

⁴¹⁷ Terence Brown. *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-79* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd., 1981), p. 168.

⁴¹⁸ André Berge, ‘An Introduction to France’ in Samuel Putnam (ed.) *The European Caravan: An Anthology of the New Spirit in European Literature* (Brooklyn: Braunworth & Co. Inc., 1931), All future references will be abbreviated ‘*European Caravan*’. pp. 45-63. (p. 49).

the country'.⁴¹⁹ Further, 'four years of abnormal living, constant anxieties, physical and moral suffering, material restrictions, danger and nervous tension could not fail to leave serious scars upon the mental life of a people'.⁴²⁰ During the post-war period, 'connecting up again with old traditions... seemed like accepting a set of chains,' the idea of which was 'repugnant to the majority of those who were engaged in celebrating their new-found freedom'. Not only was there a desire to wipe out all that had led up to and ended in the cataclysm [of war], but the younger generation felt a 'constructive need' to begin again.⁴²¹ Berge continues, 'The writer of today is not prone to begin over again what has been done before him, and against that which his revolt was staged... The majority of the old "absolutes" from which he has freed himself are no longer calculated to satisfy him.'⁴²²

The Beginnings of Modernism

In France, the heritage of Symbolism and the symbolist belief in the alchemy of language helped create a form that allowed others to glory in emotional intensity.⁴²³ Traces of symbolism can be detected in the early poems of Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), an impassioned defender of cubism and a forefather of Surrealism. Symbolism's influence on modernism can be seen in works of many modernist poets including T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. Those who previously had difficulty responding to war and the emotional intensity that derived from battle found Symbolism an avenue to express the horrors of the age.

Although a poetic record of the war experience exists in French, there is no equivalent of the group of poets (Owen, Sassoon, etc.) who define a moment in the history of English verse. Apollinaire is the only substantial poet in French whose work tried to engage with the business of being at war. In their language, they follow Apollinaire's constant habit of opening the poetic to the everyday and the modern in a way that is consistent with his pre-war aesthetic.⁴²⁴ In post-war Europe, theories of realism were being redefined and the question of how literature could represent and

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 60.

⁴²³ Frank Field, *British and French Writers of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 113.

⁴²⁴ Peter France, *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 38.

influence social and cultural formations was a pressing concern in international literary debates.

The social and political situation of post-war Europe made debates about the responsibilities of the writer particularly urgent. American author and scholar Samuel Putnam describes how the subject became:

a matter of stress, and the stress [was] upon that spirit which has evolved since 1918. Even those who [had] been soldiers will seldom be found dealing with War themes. It is, rather, as has been hinted, a shattered after-War world that interests them, a world that is to be built up again or demolished utterly, – in any event, portrayed and reacted to.⁴²⁵

Theories of realism—specifically nineteenth century theories of realism associated with French novelists and playwrights Honoré de Balzac, Émile Zola, and Gustave Flaubert—were being redefined and the question asked how literature could represent and influence social and cultural formations. From the carnage of the Great War sprang Surrealism, the revolutionary movement that developed in Paris. Calling for a revision of values in reaction to the futility of the war, it ran against the currents of positivism, realism, reason, logic, and the nineteenth century belief in progress.⁴²⁶

The generation that reached maturity during the Great War and survived bore the indelible impress of war. This generation ‘had something, if possible, even worse than war to face: namely, after War chaos, a spiritual chaos, marked by the seeming breakdown of reality itself’.⁴²⁷ From this came a foreshadowing of the post-war age, the imminence of a new order. Having emerged from the ‘other side of the grave’, MacGreevy, like Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon, was both unwilling and unable to forget the experience of the trenches and gave his ghosts a new lease of life through his poems. As post-war reality came to fruition, men began to feel the need to justify their own existence. As MacGreevy explains, ‘Their words will go the rounds, will be quoted and remembered. Their praise is treasured, their reserves are noted’. What they had to say, ‘helps to make the community more fully conscious of its own reaction to what it has experienced’.⁴²⁸

The avant-garde reputation and atmosphere of Paris attracted expatriates from around the world. In the late 1920s, over 35,000 British, 40,000 Americans, 60,000

⁴²⁵ Samuel Putnam, *European Caravan*, p. vi.

⁴²⁶ France, p. 784.

⁴²⁷ Putnam, *European Caravan*, p. v.

⁴²⁸ MacGreevy, ‘Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris’, p. 4.

Russians, and 100,000 Italians were believed to be residing in Paris. MacGreevy was privately friendly with many American expatriates, and conscious of their role in avant-garde Paris.⁴²⁹ The generation of modernists who had flocked to Paris regarded the city as a special, virtually holy place. It carried the reputation not only of tolerating artistic independence and eccentricity but also of actually encouraging it. According to Littlewood, 'Not everyone will feel an impulse to tramp the streets. For many it is enough just to be in Paris... to open the long windows onto the balcony, to watch the faces in the café mirror, to tread the white-tiled corridors of the métro stations. The place is kind to idlers'.⁴³⁰ Matters of a sensual and sexual nature were welcomed, in fact encouraged, transforming Paris into a city of pleasure. Further, 'diaries, letters, novels, poems all transmit an atmosphere of sensual excitement along the boulevards which is almost tangible'.⁴³¹ As individuals flocked to Paris for its intellectual and cultural milieu, the artistic atomic pile in Paris achieved critical mass.⁴³² MacGreevy thought, 'it is impossible for a thinking man to visit Paris without having his wits sharpened further by contact with the intelligences that always tend to congregate there'.⁴³³ In simplest terms, the creative fervour of Paris gave it its empirical status, and its atmosphere the zeitgeist of the post-war age.

On a visit to Florence, the novelist Richard Aldington wrote to MacGreevy, 'I reflected with some annoyance that dogma built cathedrals, while free thought produces the suburbs of Paris. Between these two ruins there is a whole new world to build'.⁴³⁴ For MacGreevy, this new world was built within the cathedrals and canvasses of French art, comparing 'the sculptured gargoyles of the cathedrals and the horrors of war as designed and engraved by [Jacques] Callot and [Francisco] Goya'.⁴³⁵ The elements of Irish culture that MacGreevy opposed were, in his understanding, the result of English bourgeois Puritanism. Censorship, intolerance,

⁴²⁹ Hansen, p. 25.

⁴³⁰ Littlewood, p. 3.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴³² Hansen, xxiii.

⁴³³ MacGreevy, 'Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris', p. 4.

⁴³⁴ 12 February 1931, TCD MS 8107/66.

⁴³⁵ MacGreevy, 'Art Criticism, and a visit to Paris', p. 6.

Puritan morality, and other inhibitions of artistic freedom were, for MacGreevy, antithetical to Irishness and Catholicism.⁴³⁶

MacGreevy thought of Europe and Paris in particular, as a potential corrective to this influence, both in the tradition of Continental culture and in international modernism's critique of tradition. As Berge explains,

... it is in France, for example, that two of the most striking and important effects of the War as reflected in literature have occurred: namely, the breakdown of reality and the break-up of the human personality, and young France has not been without its influence upon the rest of the continent.⁴³⁷

Pre-war liberal democracy was seen to be in crisis, unable to deal with the new kind of political pressures of post-war Europe. Poets and writers of this generation, 'all faced a common dilemma in the evident decline in the readership for poetry in the immediate post-war period and its aftermath'.⁴³⁸ A seriously depleted work-force (especially in skilled paper-makers, printers, and bookbinders), damaged infrastructure and disrupted communications, combined with a shortage of investment capital and raw materials made the creation and maintenance of a readership a recurrent concern for writers of the time.

From the literary perspective, the war had represented a caesura.⁴³⁹ Prior to this, 'writers produced less, busied as they were with other tasks; the publishers, moreover, lacked paper and workmen, as well as manuscripts'. When the war struck, 'many houses were shut down, many publications suspended or considerably reduced in size, "for the duration of hostilities"'.⁴⁴⁰ However, during this time,

a whole country had not... ceased thinking and feeling. Quite the contrary; fresh experiences were not lacking. Public opinion on all hands was assured that "many things are going to change," once peace had been re-established. That peace, so ardently longed for, appeared as the beginning of a new era, laden with hope and with infinite possibilities.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁶ Rhiannon Sarah Moss, 'Irish Modernism in an International Frame: Thomas MacGreevy, Sean O Faolain and Samuel Beckett in the 1930s' (London: Queen Mary, University of London, 2009), p. 62. unpublished thesis.

⁴³⁷ Berge, *European Caravan*, p. 45.

⁴³⁸ Andrew Thacker and Peter Brooker, *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines Vol. 1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 339.

⁴³⁹ Berge, *European Caravan*, p. 46.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Ezra Pound had argued that European literature from 1830 to 1917 had very largely been French literature.⁴⁴² This literary development that occurred after the war had been spurred by a collective sense that the old pre-war poetic style, conventions, and pre-war poets belonged to a different world that had now changed utterly. New poetics in the manner of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* were becoming established.

For expatriates like James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Samuel Beckett, and Thomas MacGreevy who, among others, were drawn to the 'sedulously *avant-garde* literary circle of the English language',⁴⁴³ post-war Paris provided the accoutrements necessary to art: excellent printers and presses, galleries and bookshops, art schools, social companions and intellectuals, patrons and buyers, concert halls and salons, and an unusually accessible and sympathetic press.⁴⁴⁴ The presence of four English-language newspapers in Paris indicated a sizeable English-speaking community.⁴⁴⁵ Virtually every magazine and newspaper sensitive to its image had a branch in Paris and hired freelance journalists to cover the news. Periodicals as diverse as *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *Vogue*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Vanity Fair* maintained editorial offices in Paris. According to Arlen Hansen, four-English language newspapers were published in Paris: the *Herald*, the *Tribune*, the *Times*, and the *Daily Mail*. When MacGreevy arrived in Paris in January 1927 to take up a temporary post as *lecteur d'anglais* at the Ecole Normale Supérieure,⁴⁴⁶ he immediately stepped into a blaze of avant-garde cultural life.

MacGreevy's Expatriate Circle

Between about 1910 and 1940, the bars, cafés, and nightclubs on the left bank of the River Seine were fashionable meeting places for many writers and painters, both French and foreign, who lived and worked there. In the Montparnasse⁴⁴⁷ cafés, expatriate life was bustling and MacGreevy soon gravitated to the essential meeting points with the international avant-garde set. These included, 'the roll of cafés passed [in Montparnasse]' that were 'a sufficient indication of the literary focus of this

⁴⁴² Ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁴³ Anthony Cronin, *Samuel Beckett, The Last Modernist* (London: Flamingo, 1997), p. 83.

⁴⁴⁴ Hansen, p. xxiii.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁴⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xvi.

⁴⁴⁷ France, p. 545.

boulevard'. At the end of the First World War, 'the café de la Rotonde virtually monopolised the literary and artistic life of the neighbourhood, but in the early twenties it was superseded— at least among the expatriates— by the Dôme'.⁴⁴⁸ Furthermore, 'Most of the literary cafés of Montparnasse were—and in most cases still are—strung out along the same stretch of the boulevard'. Although coveted by the expatriate community, this sector was not entirely an expatriate preserve, as these cafés 'were also a focus for the intellectual life of French writers. And the French of course stayed on when the Americans went home'.⁴⁴⁹

The expatriate scene in Paris, with which MacGreevy was closely linked, aligned him closely with the themes and concerns of European modernism, in particular, with new developments in the visual arts.⁴⁵⁰ While he emphasised his engagement with the breadth of French society, his time in Paris between 1927 and 1933 was spent largely among expatriate intellectual groups.⁴⁵¹ As the zeitgeist of post-war Europe enveloped Paris, the changing life of the city began to be measured in terms of the 'atmosphere and clientèle of the cafés'.⁴⁵² This clientele included a colourful array of French surrealists, English imagists, Italian futurists, German expressionists, Russian émigrés, American expatriates, and fellow Irish poets and writers.⁴⁵³ For those who had migrated to Paris, France had, they believed, a widely disseminated knowledge of art and literature and a level of intellectual discussion that was absent at home.⁴⁵⁴ Detailed examination of the critical and cultural writing of these figures, including investigation of the intellectual networks in which each worked, reveals the extent to which each negotiated national culture within an international frame.⁴⁵⁵ This continuous religious and cultural interchange—which included modernist and traditionalist Catholicism, Russian Orthodoxy, and varieties of atheism—and the emphasis MacGreevy placed on the process of exchange, was paramount to his work and his identification. The artistic milieu found in Paris gave way to an exploration of the high modernist tradition, whereby he could align his concept of a newly-independent Ireland with many of Europe's most influential

⁴⁴⁸ Littlewood, p. 126.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁵⁰ O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 166.

⁴⁵¹ Moss, p. 52.

⁴⁵² Littlewood, p. 128.

⁴⁵³ O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 155.

⁴⁵⁴ Cleary, p. 267.

⁴⁵⁵ Moss, p. 17.

cultural and artistic movements. It was precisely this self-identification that led to his development of high modernism and his quest to recover the basis of an independent Irish intellectual tradition.⁴⁵⁶ The varieties of modernism that developed in 1930s Ireland represented a range of perspectives on the relationship between art and national culture. These interacted and overlapped with the attitudes and ambitions of MacGreevy's Irish contemporaries as well as the avant-garde in Paris.

All those, Irish or not, who were conscious of the genius of James Joyce and his literary circle and reputation, sought his acquaintance in Paris.⁴⁵⁷ In their veneration of Joyce's work and their recognition of the European nature of his achievement, they recognised that Irish cultural provincialism could only be redeemed if a sense of Irish cultural identity was combined with an acceptance of the richness of European culture. Irish life was opening once again to ideas and influences from abroad and was concerned to define itself not predominantly in terms of local past but in relation as well to the economic, social, and political developments of contemporary European history.⁴⁵⁸ Complicating the traditions of Continental culture and the international critique of modernity was Catholicism (both traditional and at times modern); the centre of MacGreevy's aesthetic and his interpretation to the modern world.⁴⁵⁹

Prompted by his appointment at the École to relocate from London, MacGreevy moved to Paris in February 1927 and took up a temporary post as *lecteur d'anglais*.⁴⁶⁰ He quickly renewed contact with the Joyce household and soon became a regular and welcome visitor to the Joyce apartment on Square Robiac.⁴⁶¹ The years from 1927 to early 1932 mark his period of greatest involvement with Joyce and his

⁴⁵⁶ Sean Kennedy, "'Too Absolute and Ireland Haunted': MacGreevy, Beckett and the Catholic Irish Nation" in Susan Schreibman, *Life and Work*, pp. 189-202 (p. 194).

⁴⁵⁷ MacGreevy first met Joyce in Paris in 1924, on his first visit back to France after the war. *Ulysses*, with *Finnegans Wake*, has perhaps been the strongest single influence on experimental French writing from the Surrealists to the Oulipo group, and the impact of Irish literatures reinforced by the works of Beckett, straddling two cultures (Killeen, 173). Most major British and Irish writers have had translators and admirers (France, p. 118).

⁴⁵⁸ Brown, p. 210.

⁴⁵⁹ Moss, p. 74.

⁴⁶⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xvi.

⁴⁶¹ Joyce and his family moved to 2 Square de Robiac in June 1925 and stayed until 1930, longer than anywhere else he lived in Paris. During this period Joyce wrote much of his 'Work in Progress' (title from 1924, retitled *Finnegans Wake* in 1939). Hansen, pp. 60, 190.

family.⁴⁶² In February 1928, he submitted *Poems* to publishers. In March, his essay on George Augustus Moore (1852 – 1933) was published in *Scrutinies*. Moore was an Irish novelist, short-story writer, poet, art critic, memoirist, and dramatist and had helped to pioneer the role of the Irish writer in Paris.⁴⁶³ Moore's writings influenced James Joyce and, although his work is sometimes seen as outside the mainstream of both Irish and British literature, he is often regarded as the first great modern Irish novelist. His Parisian experiences described in *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888), influenced Joyce's similarly titled *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (begun in 1904 but not published until 1916). Through his friendships with the leading French painters and his immersion in the cultural life of Paris at a crucial stage in its early modernist phase, Moore had a deep familiarity with and understanding of the impressionist painters and their predecessors. His first-hand appreciation of contemporary art and artists informed his writings on the visual arts. The pioneering work of Moore helped pave the way for other Irish expatriates in Paris like Joyce and MacGreevy who were to later follow.

'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress*'

As a post-Catholic writer forming the centre of MacGreevy's circle in Paris, Joyce was inevitably influential in MacGreevy's formulation of modernism. MacGreevy was one of the twelve contributors to *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (Paris, 1929) – Beckett was another – intended to promote interest in the still-unfinished *Finnegans Wake*.⁴⁶⁴ In 1928, MacGreevy's essay titled 'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress*', was first published in *transition*. The essay identified an imprint of the complex relationship to Catholicism that MacGreevy shared with Joyce. It was later reprinted in 1929 in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in*

⁴⁶² Terence Killeen, "'Our Shem": MacGreevy and Joyce' in *Life and Work* pp. 173-188 (p. 174).

⁴⁶³ For more information, see Robert Welch, 'George Moore' *Dictionary of Irish Biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002*, v. 6. James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 634-639.

⁴⁶⁴ Serialised in the avant-garde *transition* magazine, *Work in Progress* attracted as much praise as criticism among the expatriate community in Paris. To defend the 'Joycean' method against such criticism, *Ulysses* publisher Sylvia Beach conceived a new project entitled *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1929) for which she commissioned twelve essays from writers who personally knew Joyce. See O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 158.

Progress published as an accompaniment to Joyce's *Work in Progress*. MacGreevy's close friendship with Joyce, for whom he wrote the essay 'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress*' was, according to Sandra O'Connell, 'undoubtedly a decisive factor in his seniority among the Irish group of friends in his almost seven-year-long stay in Paris'.⁴⁶⁵ Throughout his stay in Paris, MacGreevy made himself 'indispensable' to Joyce, for 'endless transcription, proof reading, and note-taking duties'.⁴⁶⁶ As Killeen explains in his essay, "'Our Shem" MacGreevy and Joyce', Joyce depended on MacGreevy for 'the range of MacGreevy's mind and his wide interest and knowledge of art and music, an interest and knowledge that indeed exceeded Joyce's own'.⁴⁶⁷

MacGreevy's turn to Europe was based on his understanding that the tradition and history of Irish civilisation was based on a deep hostility to England and on an ideal of the transnational bonds of Catholicism.⁴⁶⁸ He wanted to 'expound the view of Anglo-Irish and Catholic-Protestant relations'.⁴⁶⁹ The social and political implications of his Catholicism were evident in his treatment of Joyce,⁴⁷⁰ and *Work in Progress* in particular, which he considered the continuation of the 'deep-rooted Catholicism of *Ulysses*'.⁴⁷¹ Religion became a central argument of MacGreevy's essay on *Work in Progress*, with his attempt to distinguish between the 'profound "regular" Catholicism of Ireland' and that of 'temporary' Catholics, such as T.S. Eliot, who considered himself 'Anglo-Catholic'. In his statement, 'the pastiche Catholicism of many fashionable critics in England',⁴⁷² MacGreevy challenged the religious devotion of his contemporary.⁴⁷³ In contrast to his critical view of Eliot's piety, he praised Joyce for belonging to a tradition of 'cultivated Irish Catholics who leave Ireland [and] always gravitate towards Paris'.⁴⁷⁴ His view of Joyce's work is 'part of a wider sense of

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Killeen, *Life and Work*, p. 174

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 176

⁴⁶⁸ Moss, p. 46.

⁴⁶⁹ Killeen, *Life and Work*, p. 185.

⁴⁷⁰ Moss, p. 76.

⁴⁷¹ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress*', in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1929), pp. 117-127 (p.121).

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Eliot's religious faith would come under further scrutiny by MacGreevy in his 1931 monograph *Thomas Stearns Eliot: A Study*.

⁴⁷⁴ MacGreevy, *Richard Aldington*, p. 37.

European literature, closely linked to matters of belief and society', and is part of 'the contentious contrast between English and Irish Catholicism'.⁴⁷⁵

Joycean scholar and Associate Professor of English, Dr John Nash suggests that MacGreevy's essay is an intervention into contemporary Irish debates about censorship.⁴⁷⁶ In it, MacGreevy 'acknowledges that there is "an inquisition" in Ireland, and produces some historical background to explain it. But crucially, he continues to have faith in the "larger traditions" of Irish Catholicism, a larger European tradition that he believes will finally prevail'.⁴⁷⁷ The true Catholic Irish, the *fíor Gaeil*, who, MacGreevy asserted, 'are not shocked'⁴⁷⁸ by finding the ugly and the grotesque in the midst of the sacred and the beautiful, seemed to have been very shocked, nonetheless, by what Joyce had produced. MacGreevy acknowledged 'an inquisition' in Ireland, but it was his belief in the larger, European body of Catholicism that prevailed over the limited censoring of Irish Catholicism. For MacGreevy, religious art could incorporate 'the sordid, the obscene, and even the blasphemous', provided that the teleology was a religious one.⁴⁷⁹ Further, his commitment to the Catholic heritage shared with Joyce, suggests *Work in Progress* as 'the first expression for many centuries of the buried soul of Catholic Ireland which had long been suppressed by the Anglo-Saxon Protestantism of the invader'.⁴⁸⁰ This was the light in which he viewed Joyce's work.

MacGreevy's approach to *Work in Progress* drew closer to that of fellow modernists such as Eliot and Pound through his perception of the crucial figure Dante. According to Killeen, MacGreevy was 'particularly insistent on the notion that *Ulysses* is a modern *Inferno* and *Work in Progress* is a modern *Purgatorio*'.⁴⁸¹ However, to see *Ulysses* as a modern-day *Inferno* requires an extremely narrow and partial reading of the work. To Killeen, MacGreevy

⁴⁷⁵ Killeen, *Life and Work*, p. 181.

⁴⁷⁶ John Nash 'Thomas MacGreevy and "The Catholic Element" in Joyce' in T. Conley (ed.) *Joyce's Disciples Disciplined* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), pp. 71-80 (p. 77). Whatever debate there was proved quite ineffectual in preventing the imposition of Irish censorship. See also Beckett's far more direct would-be intervention in the Irish debate: 'Censorship in the Saorstát', written in 1934 and intended for *The Bookman*, but unpublished until 1983 in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (London: John Calder), pp. 84-8.

⁴⁷⁷ Killeen, *Life and Work*, p. 182.

⁴⁷⁸ MacGreevy, 'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress*', p. 121.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Killeen, *Life and Work*, p. 182.

seems to base himself principally on the Nighttown or 'Circe' episode and more specifically still on Stephen's experiences in that episode. Because of the nature of *Ulysses*'s construction, an overemphasis on any episode is likely to produce a distortion of the whole.⁴⁸²

MacGreevy's comparison of *Work in Progress* to the *Purgatorio* was shared by other contributors to *Our Exagmination*, such as Beckett.⁴⁸³ Both MacGreevy and Beckett attached high value to Dante's work although MacGreevy's viewpoint, 'complicated by a febrile anti-Britishness and anti-Protestantism', was not necessarily shared by Beckett.⁴⁸⁴ MacGreevy's emphasis on the European Catholic and Dantesque elements of Joyce's work provides his readers with a high modernist viewpoint that would also serve as the basis to his poem 'Cron Trath na nDeithe'.

MacGreevy the Mentor

Considered one of the first of the post-war Irish network to have arrived in Paris and conscious of how this was perceived,⁴⁸⁵ MacGreevy provided young Irish visitors with the essential introductions to the intellectual milieu and avant-garde in Paris.⁴⁸⁶ For these young men, who felt the need to 'escape the stultifying air of the Free State',⁴⁸⁷ Paris 'as it had for generations of Irish artists and writers, offered a freedom Ireland could not provide'.⁴⁸⁸ It was in Paris, for instance, that in the first half of the twentieth century journals and presses such as the Olympia Press or the Obelisk Press published works by English-language authors (including Henry Miller and James Joyce) that were forbidden in Britain or America.⁴⁸⁹ In spite of this collective consciousness, writers approached the relationship between Ireland and Europe from different perspectives and considered the possibilities of international influence on national literary culture in diverse ways. MacGreevy justified his experience of French culture in nationalist terms, as a development of 'Irishness'. His

⁴⁸² Ibid., p. 183.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 184.

⁴⁸⁵ O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 161.

⁴⁸⁶ Moss, p. 157.

⁴⁸⁷ The Irish Free State is used loosely to refer to post-independence Ireland though it was the official title of the state only from 1921 to 1937. See F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Fontana Press, 1985); or Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).

⁴⁸⁸ Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-79* (Glasgow: William Collin Sons & Co Ltd, 1981).

⁴⁸⁹ France, p. 287.

later reminiscences of his time in France idealised the country as a centre of Catholic tradition, and emphasised his engagement with French culture and society.⁴⁹⁰

Well-known in certain expatriate circles in Paris, both as a poet of some apparent promise and as an art critic,⁴⁹¹ MacGreevy was first introduced to Samuel Beckett in October 1928 when Beckett arrived as MacGreevy's replacement at the École Normale. The rooms normally reserved for the *lecteur* in English, however, were still occupied by his predecessor, MacGreevy, thirteen years his senior.⁴⁹² Hearing of the difficulty, Joyce interceded for the young Irish teacher and MacGreevy graciously moved into smaller quarters upstairs. At the time of their first encounter, MacGreevy had been publishing poems regularly in periodicals.⁴⁹³ The experienced writer was an invaluable mentor to the young Beckett, who considered him a poet of a 'radiance without counterpart in the work of contemporary poets writing in English'.⁴⁹⁴

While the notion of a formal Irish expatriate group or movement has been questioned by critics and labelled as 'one of the many false starts of Irish modernism in poetry', there existed in Paris a supportive close-knit Irish network.⁴⁹⁵ These young Irishmen, friends and admirers of Joyce, included MacGreevy, Beckett, George Reavey, Denis Devlin, and Brian Coffey. They gathered around George Reavey's literary agency, the European Literary Bureau, and his avant-garde Europa Press imprint. Because not all were Catholic or Nationalist, the network was connected through a mutual concern to 'bear witness more to crises of individual consciousness, metaphysically conceived, than to collective distress'.⁴⁹⁶ The Irish poets used to gather at the École Normale, in the heart of academic Paris, where MacGreevy and

⁴⁹⁰ TCD MS 8053/1.

⁴⁹¹ Cronin, pp. 85-86.

⁴⁹² Cronin, p. 84. Shortly thereafter, as Beckett's own writing career was about to take off Joyce's daughter, Lucia, fell madly and unilaterally in love with Beckett, who by then was serving as Joyce's unpaid secretary and gofer. (Hansen, pp. 111-112).

⁴⁹³ MacGreevy's essay 'The Catholic Element in *Work in Progress* was first published in *transition* (Fall 1928), and later reprinted by Shakespeare & Co. in *Our Exagmination round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (May 1929). See Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xvi.

⁴⁹⁴ Samuel Beckett, 'Humanistic Quietism' and 'Recent Irish Poetry' in Ruby Cohn (ed.), *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. (London: John Calder, 1983) p. 68.

⁴⁹⁵ Cronin, p. 194.

⁴⁹⁶ Brown, Terence. 'The Counter-Revival 1930-65: Poetry' in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day, 1991) vol. 3, 129-34 (p. 132).

Beckett taught.⁴⁹⁷ Despite his involvement in the circle, MacGreevy confided in a private letter to George Yeats that he sometimes thought he was ‘the loneliest person in all the world’.⁴⁹⁸

The group was brought together by a ‘need of some sort of intellectual morality’ which ‘had become more and more imperative, amid the initial disorientation, and later amid all the various efforts at individual and social reorganisation’ of the post-war era. From the beginning of the post-war period, young writers, ‘faced by a general overthrow of existing values and the collapse of all absolutes, had preserved in spite of it all, as the supreme object of his aspirations, at least one intellectual virtue: sincerity’.⁴⁹⁹ The intellectual elite were drawn to the bourgeois and high-class status of the *grandes écoles*. The prestige of the École Normale within the competitive educational system meant that it attracted ‘an intellectual elite which later made its mark in politics, literature, and philosophy as well as in academic life’.⁵⁰⁰ Academic postings at these specialised schools meant Beckett and MacGreevy were able to distinguish themselves among their contemporaries in the heart of academic Paris. As France explains, ‘The ambitious preferred the grandes écoles, specialized schools which recruited through competitive examinations’.⁵⁰¹ This *culture générale* became a badge of bourgeois status, but ‘angled towards the professions and the bureaucracy rather than industry and commerce’.⁵⁰² Since the École Normale was residential, it had an intense internal life that strongly marked its graduates; the *esprit normalien* was seen as the quintessence of critical independence and literary discrimination that were thought characteristic of French intellectual habits.⁵⁰³ For MacGreevy, the Irish had become ‘culturally Anglicised’, and this needed to be redressed by way of an immersion in European traditions.⁵⁰⁴ Ireland could be most herself not through a self-absorbed antiquarianism but through self-acceptance of her position as a European nation with links to the intellectual and artistic concerns of the continent.

⁴⁹⁷ Moss, p. 156.

⁴⁹⁸ NLI 38,951.

⁴⁹⁹ Berge, *European Caravan*, p. 57.

⁵⁰⁰ France, p. 270.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁵⁰⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Saint Francis de Sales’ *Father Mathew Record* (June 1943), p. 2. See also Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 194.

Negotiating Irish Catholicism within an International Frame

Although the École has produced some distinguished conservative thinkers, it has generally been identified with the Left—liberal in the nineteenth century, often socialist in the twentieth. Republicans saw Catholic institutions for the élite (which included Catholic faculties from 1875) as dangerously divisive and anti-modern, and it was true that Catholic colleges had a social cachet that appealed to the nobility and the more conservative bourgeoisie.⁵⁰⁵ A position at the École was invaluable to the formation of MacGreevy's modernism. Despite his traditional and personal values, he remained 'open minded to all kinds of literary experimentation'.⁵⁰⁶ His cultural nationalism, combined with an innovative and liberal version of Catholicism, brought him closer to the cultural mass, in favour of a cultivated elite.⁵⁰⁷ His cultural attitude required a cultured elite.⁵⁰⁸ He associated this elite with civilised, intellectual Catholicism in contact with the Continent.⁵⁰⁹ This reasoning, which combined intellectual aspiration and nationalism, presented France as attractive for its Catholicism and centrality in the 'metropolitan tradition' of Europe, not for its republicanism. Experience 'inside the skin' of French culture was justified to avoid English 'provincialism'.⁵¹⁰ MacGreevy realised it was vital for those engaging with Irish culture to be more aware of European rather than British traditions.

The writers most important for MacGreevy's understanding of modernism were those who combined anxiety about democracy and mass culture with a conception of the ability of culture to provide a compensatory order in response to social and political disorder.⁵¹¹ Smith explains,

MacGreevy's Europe was above all a cultural entity in which all can participate and in which he believed the Irish throughout centuries had participated. It is what could be learnt from this that was important to him. What MacGreevy would not have accepted was any notion of Irishness that formed a barrier to the greater European cultural heritage which he, as an Irishman, considered his birthright. And poetic modernism was an essential part of that.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁵ France, p. 272.

⁵⁰⁶ Michael Smith, 'A Talent for Understanding' in *Life and Work*, pp. 267-270, (p. 268).

⁵⁰⁷ Andres Huyssen. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. vii.

⁵⁰⁸ Moss, p. 49.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁵¹⁰ Moss, p. 52.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵¹² Smith, *Life and Work*, pp. 269-270.

The writers with whom MacGreevy can be best compared were in the 1930s associated with cultural and political positions closer to MacGreevy's than to the radical progressiveness and experimentalism of the avant-garde. National discussions of the social responsibility of the writer, the role of the intellectual in the public sphere, and the potential values and implications of literary form, resonated with contemporary debates taking place in Britain and Europe.⁵¹³ Analysis of this engagement enables insight into broader currents in Irish intellectual culture and their relationship with European concerns in the 1930s.

The Irish poets in Paris were particularly successful at organising commissions for poems, translations, and reviews for each other, with Beckett and MacGreevy regularly publishing— at the instigation of associate editor George Reavey— in the *New Review*. In 1929, MacGreevy's friendship with Joyce led to a position as assistant secretary at the English edition of *Formes*, a journal of the fine arts.⁵¹⁴ At this time he became a greater literary and artistic critic, contributing to periodicals such as *Transition* and *The New Review*. He also wrote *Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci*, which was published by English modernist and editor John Rodker.⁵¹⁵ In June MacGreevy attended the *Déjeuner Ulyssee* hosted by Adrienne Monnier to celebrate the French translation of *Ulysses*. Other publications in 1929 included 'Mr W.B. Yeats as a Dramatist', published in *Revue Anglo-Américaine*, and 'School...of Easter Saturday Night' which was published as 'For an Irish Book, 1929', and 'Gloria de Carlos V' in *transition* and later reprinted in *Poems* as 'Crón Trath na nDéithe'.

In January 1930, MacGreevy was appointed secretary of the English edition of *Formes*.⁵¹⁶ He aligned himself closely with the themes and concerns of European modernism, in particular with new developments in the visual arts.⁵¹⁷ While acting as secretary for the Arts Review section of *Formes*, he passed on editorial assignments to Beckett and Reavey during his absences from Paris. He played an important role as mentor to the group of emerging Irish poets as evidenced by Beckett's evocative review of his *Poems* for *Dublin Magazine* in 1934.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹³ Moss, p. 32.

⁵¹⁴ Cronin, p. 87.

⁵¹⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xvi.

⁵¹⁶ Cronin, p. 86.

⁵¹⁷ Moss, p. 166.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

In July 1930, after the death of his father earlier in the year, MacGreevy resigned from his position as *lecteur* at the École Normale,⁵¹⁹ though he continued to live in Paris. His monographs titled *T.S. Eliot: A Study* and *Richard Aldington: An Englishman* were published by Chatto & Windus in January and September 1931, respectively. In late January Beckett joined MacGreevy at the Trianon Palace Hotel,⁵²⁰ where he praised MacGreevy for his interest in French models (French modernism, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Cornier, Lafarge, and Jean Lurcat).⁵²¹ While his work at the time demonstrates the lessons of imagism and surrealism that he had learned in Paris,⁵²² and his form of experimentalism was indebted to Ezra Pound and James Joyce, MacGreevy's contribution towards Irish writing in the 1930s developed in relation to both national and international frames of reference. Dividing contemporary Irish poets "into antiquarians and others", Beckett perceptively acknowledged that MacGreevy was "best described as an independent, occupying a position intermediate' and praised him as an 'existentialist in verse'".⁵²³ The intermediate position MacGreevy occupied is most profound in the distance he placed 'between himself and many of the avant-garde movements of his time', focusing instead on his alliance with Joyce and the value he placed on his role as 'Irish Catholic exile'.⁵²⁴ For example, when writing to Reavey in the spring of 1931, MacGreevy distanced himself from English Modernism by 'arguing that he found *Work in Progress* "much simpler" than D.H. Lawrence or the generation around the Cambridge student review *Experiment*'.⁵²⁵

In 1931, the Irish expatriate trio of MacGreevy, Beckett, and Reavey had arguably its most public presence as key contributors to the American editor Samuel Putnam's ambitious two-volume anthology, *The European Caravan*, which set out to capture the post-war literature of France, Spain, Ireland, England, Germany, Italy, and Russia. The evocative title reflects the eclectic content, which ranged from poetry and short stories to excerpts and novels, manifestos, and literary criticism, spanning

⁵¹⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xvii

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Cronin, p. 71-2

⁵²² Ibid., p. 173

⁵²³ Samuel Beckett, 'Humanistic Quietism' and 'Recent Irish Poetry' in Ruby Cohn (ed.) *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (London: John Calder, 1983), p. 74.

⁵²⁴ O'Connell, *Life and Work*, p. 159.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

movements as diverse as imagism to the revolt of the Dadaists and the psychological experiments of the Surrealists.⁵²⁶ Yet despite the eclectic nature of the content, Putnam argued that his book was ‘an anthology with direction’, exploring a common zeitgeist, namely, the ‘after-war spirit in European literature’.⁵²⁷ Rather than offering another ‘perspective of the Great Struggle’, Putnam’s focus was on a ‘new generation’ of writers- *les jeunes*- which he defined as the generation of ‘the younger members’ of the modern period that ‘never saw the trenches’. Putnam believed that this generation had ‘something, if possible, even worse than war to face: namely, after-War chaos, a spiritual chaos, marked by the seeming breakdown of reality itself’.⁵²⁸ MacGreevy’s radiance emerges from the precarious position he occupied in avant-garde Paris as someone who had experienced the war and held onto his ghosts to breathe life into ‘those who live between the wars’, as in his haunting poem ‘De Civitate Hominum’.⁵²⁹

As Moss explains, the ‘intellectual, often theological concerns’, ‘unselfconsciously urban preoccupations’, ‘modernist experiment’, and ‘assured familiarity with European civilization’, are what ‘set their work apart’ from what most Irishmen and women had expected from contemporary writers. For these writers, ‘Ireland could be most herself not through a self-absorbed antiquarianism but through self-acceptance of her position as a European nation with links to the intellectual and artistic concerns of the continent’.⁵³⁰ Their highly experimental work therefore represents an important strand in modern Irish literary and cultural history.⁵³¹ *The European Caravan* was an aesthetic project that represented the ways in which Irish writing and art criticism engaged with international literary culture. The critical project which MacGreevy contributed to ‘acknowledges Ireland’s place in the grand tradition of intellectual production sponsored by France, Italy, Belgium, and Spain’.⁵³² Examination of the critical and cultural writing contained in this book, including investigation of the intellectual networks in which each contributor worked,

⁵²⁶ Moss, 162.

⁵²⁷ Putnam, *European Caravan*, p. v.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 2.

⁵³⁰ Moss, p. 166.

⁵³¹ Brown, *Life and Work*, pp. 168-169.

⁵³² Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Writers on Art’, *Father Mathew Record* (February 1944), p. 3. See also Kennedy, *Life and Work*, pp. 195-196.

reveals the extent to which MacGreevy negotiated national culture within an international frame.⁵³³

MacGreevy wrote with cosmopolitan influences in mind, and his modernism can be re-evaluated in his relation to national and international contexts.⁵³⁴ He wrote against the background of the idea of a nation, not a province, and in relation to other national cultures. His critical project can be fitted into the terms of such an analysis, in that he wanted to overturn or reverse the damage inflicted on the Irish psyche by colonialism by way of a restoration of links with Renaissance Europe. His deeply felt Catholicism and his sense of Irishness as part of a greater European literary and artistic heritage enabled him to forge native and continental resonances into a distinctly modern sensibility. As a Catholic, he had an awareness of the wider European heritage to which Ireland felt affiliated but from which it also felt, because of British rule, painfully separated.⁵³⁵ It is precisely this wider European tradition, one that is both available and remote, that he sought to recover as the basis of an independent Irish intellectual tradition.⁵³⁶

⁵³³ Moss, p. 17.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

⁵³⁵ Joe Cleary, and Claire Connolly, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 36.

⁵³⁶ Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 194.

Chapter V

‘Crón Tráth na nDeithe’ or ‘Twilight of the Gods’ and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*

When T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, MacGreevy had only recently begun writing serious poetry. When he started ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ in 1925, he had yet to meet Eliot. It was not until after he settled in London in 1926 that he met Eliot through a letter of introduction from WB Yeats.⁵³⁷ Nevertheless, Schreibman has argued that ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ is the poem most indebted to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*.⁵³⁸ This chapter will explore Schreibman’s annotations of ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ as published in *The Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy, An Annotated Edition*,⁵³⁹ and re-evaluate *The Waste Land*’s possible influence on ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’. This detailed study will challenge MacGreevy’s debt to *The Waste Land* in the context of his relationship to both James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, and MacGreevy’s later monograph *T.S. Eliot, A Study*, published in 1931. An explanation of the influences, references, and styles behind ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ will supplement Schreibman’s annotations, perhaps helping the reader to better understand the way MacGreevy’s imagination and poetry work.

Eliot, Joyce, and Pound: The Triumvirate Making of *The Waste Land*

The influences behind *The Waste Land*, Joyce and, to a lesser extent Pound, with Dante in the background, were at least as important for MacGreevy as the poem itself. In 1921, Eliot struggled with severe emotional and familial distress caused by an unhappy marriage that severely impeded his ability to write *The Waste Land*.⁵⁴⁰ As Dame Helen Gardner has observed, during the composition of *The Waste Land* ‘*Ulysses* had been appearing in the *Little Review* and had made an immense impression on Eliot’.⁵⁴¹ The example James Joyce set in *Ulysses* inspired Eliot in such a way that he attempted to ‘see whether the kind of material Joyce was engaged in

⁵³⁷ Coolahan, ‘Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work’, p. 66.

⁵³⁸ The poem was completed shortly after his arrival in London. It was not published until 1929, when MacGreevy was living in Paris. Schreibman has claimed, ‘it is the poem most obviously in debt to T.S. Eliot, particularly to *‘The Waste Land’*. See Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 107.

⁵³⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 14.

⁵⁴⁰ For more information, see Lyndall Gordon’s essay ‘The Composition of *The Waste Land*’ in *T.S. Eliot, An Imperfect Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), pp. 168-75.

⁵⁴¹ Helen Gardner, ‘*The Waste Land*: Paris 1922’ in North, pp. 72-89, (p. 79).

incorporating into the novel could be made available also for poetry'.⁵⁴² He 'wished his poem to go through English poetic styles as Joyce had gone through English prose styles'.⁵⁴³ In some ways in *The Waste Land* Eliot 'was attempting to do for poetry what Joyce had done for the novel'.⁵⁴⁴ In his essay, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth',⁵⁴⁵ Eliot declared Joyce's *Ulysses* 'the most important self-expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we are all indebted, and from which none of us can escape... It has given me all the surprise, delight, and terror that I can require'.⁵⁴⁶ The 'surprise, delight, and terror' that Eliot found in *Ulysses* is indicative of what scholar Lawrence Rainey describes as the modernist obsession with history. Rainey explains, 'the modernists were obsessed with history. They mourned it and damned it, contested it as tenaciously as Jacob wrestling with the image of God: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."'⁵⁴⁷ This wrestling with the historical form in prose led Modernist writers such as Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot to invent new methods and approaches to re-writing history. As Eliot explains, 'Mr Joyce and Mr. Lewis, being "in advance" of their time, felt a conscious or probably unconscious dissatisfaction with the form, that their novels are more formless than those of a dozen clever writers who are unaware of its obsolescence'.⁵⁴⁸ Joyce's 'dissatisfaction' with the form of the novel could be seen in the methods he applied when he restructured Homer's *Ulysses* and made it contemporary.

Classicism was important for modernists. However, it was the approach to classicism, to the principles and styles embodied in the literature, art, and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome that set the modernists apart from their forebears. For example, Joyce sought to make Homer's *The Odyssey* 'new'⁵⁴⁹ by completely overhauling the classical form. He did this by putting updated substance into the Homeric structure (rather than restructuring it), so that the sequence of ancient stories of a son trying to find a father, the father's wanderings, and at the end a kind of

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ Most notably, in the section of *The Waste Land* titled 'The Oxen in the Sun'.

⁵⁴⁴ Gardner, in North, p. 79.

⁵⁴⁵ T.S. Eliot, "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth' in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 128-130.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 128.

⁵⁴⁷ Lawrence Rainey, 'The Price of Modernism: Publishing *The Waste Land*' in *T.S. Eliot: The Modernist in History* ed. by Ronald Bush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 91-133, in North, pp. 89-111 (p. 90).

⁵⁴⁸ Eliot, "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth', in North, p. 130.

⁵⁴⁹ 'Make it New' was an avant-garde principle made popular by Ezra Pound. For more information see Ezra Pound, *'Make it New!'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935).

homecoming all help to organise Joyce's text. The negotiation of classic literature, for example, Homer's *The Odyssey*, in modernist prose involved a reconsideration of what it meant to be classical; as Eliot explains: 'One can be "classical," in a sense, by turning away from nine-tenths of the material which lies at hand, and selecting only mummified stuff from a museum—like some contemporary writers'.⁵⁵⁰ The act of bringing Homer's *Odyssey* into the present day, rewriting the myth, required Eliot to pose the following questions about Joyce: 'how much living material does he deal with, and how does he deal with it: deal with, not as a legislator or exhorter, but as an artist?'.⁵⁵¹

Joyce's approach to rewriting Homer's *Odyssey* made a considerable impact on Eliot and MacGreevy. It can be argued that Joyce may have been a direct influence on MacGreevy and Eliot alike, rather than the modernist influence coming only through Eliot. Eliot saw Joyce's creation of a novel approach as an invitation to follow suit; as Eliot explains through Joyce's use of the myth, and the manipulation of 'a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him'.⁵⁵²

While writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot had gone through what Gardner describes as bursts of exhaustion and 'flagging inspiration that preceded or possibly precipitated his breakdown'.⁵⁵³ As he struggled to come to terms with his emotional crises, Eliot 'attempted to fill out his poem and expand it by parodying the styles of other poets, not merely in lines, but in long passages'.⁵⁵⁴

Eliot viewed the mythical method that Joyce had created and used in lieu of the narrative method as 'simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.⁵⁵⁵ Further, MacGreevy had a broadly similar sense of contemporary Irish history that he did not need to learn from Eliot. Eliot found his own implementation of the mythical method in place of the narrative method through the order and placement of his parodies in *The Waste Land*, which occur according to

⁵⁵⁰ Eliot, "'Ulysses", Order, and Myth', in North, p. 129.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p. 130.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Gardner, in North, p. 89.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Eliot, "'Ulysses", Order, and Myth', in North, p. 130.

an historic scheme.⁵⁵⁶ In his lecture *On The Music of Poetry*, Eliot explained how ‘a poem, or a passage of a poem may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image’.⁵⁵⁷ This rhythm can be found in Eliot’s implementation of ‘violently contrasting styles which were to be juxtaposed’, into ‘a poem of episodes following each other without narrative consequence, of allusions and quotations that drift across the mind’.⁵⁵⁸ Eliot considered the mythical method as ‘a step toward making the modern world possible for art’.⁵⁵⁹

The Waste Land was radical in both style and substance. It was influenced by *Ulysses*, but made possible by the collaborative effort between T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. In his essay, ‘The Composition of *The Waste Land*’ Lyndall Gordon explains how ‘during the final stages of *The Waste Land*’s composition Eliot put himself under Pound’s direction’.⁵⁶⁰ The composition of *The Waste Land* has been described as ‘a long and difficult birth and pregnancy that Pound assisted at’,⁵⁶¹ which involved turning ‘a jumble of good and bad passages into a poem’.⁵⁶² The ‘centrality of Pound’s role in prompting and facilitating’ *The Waste Land* cannot be overestimated.⁵⁶³ Without Pound, *The Waste Land* would be ‘very different from what it is’, and ‘it is highly doubtful whether, without Pound, *The Waste Land* would have been completed and published at all’.⁵⁶⁴

Pound undoubtedly improved the poem, and was instrumental in helping Eliot find the right publisher. Initially, Pound encouraged Eliot to publish *The Waste Land* through Liveright. Pound believed ‘that literary modernism could best present itself as a shared language through a centralization suggesting the coherence of its ambitions’, a project that ‘animated his endeavour’ to unite the works of Joyce, Eliot, and himself ‘under the umbrella of a single publisher’.⁵⁶⁵ An ‘opportune moment’ arrived for Pound to achieve his ambition: ‘Joyce was looking for an American publisher of

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid. Jacobean dramatists are parodied at the opening of ‘A Game of Chess’, Pope and eighteenth-century narrative poems in quatrain in ‘The Fire Sermon’, and nineteenth-century blank verse, first person, narrative poetry in ‘Death by Water’.

⁵⁵⁷ Gardner, in North, p. 88.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁵⁹ Eliot, “‘Ulysses’, Order, and Myth’, in North, p. 130.

⁵⁶⁰ Gordon, in North, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶¹ Gardner, in North, p. 75.

⁵⁶² Ibid., p. 82.

⁵⁶³ Rainey, in North, p. 93.

⁵⁶⁴ Gardner, in North, p. 77.

⁵⁶⁵ Rainey in North, p. 100.

Ulysses, and Eliot would need a publisher for his unfinished poem'.⁵⁶⁶ As Lawrence Rainey explains in his essay, 'The Price of Modernism: Publishing *The Waste Land*':

On 3 January 1922, Liveright had an extraordinary dinner with Joyce, Eliot and Pound to discuss a milestone publishing program. The encounter was productive. With Joyce he agreed to publish *Ulysses* and to advance \$1,000 against royalties. To Pound he offered a contract guaranteeing \$500 annually for two years in addition to translator's fees for any work from French agreed upon by both parties. To Eliot he offered a \$150 advance against 15 percent royalties and promised publication in the fall list.⁵⁶⁷

The Waste Land was arguably the birth-child of Pound, with Joyce as the midwife. It was viewed as 'a verse equivalent of *Ulysses*' and was published as such.⁵⁶⁸ The merit of *The Waste Land* 'did not reside in a specific set of words or text', but in the poem's 'capacity to articulate [the] collective aspiration of an elite'.⁵⁶⁹ In spite of the noble intentions of Pound and what he sought to achieve for the triumvirate grouping of Joyce, Eliot and Pound for publication, Eliot was hungry for the largest financial offer available and made contact with multiple publishers. The publication of *The Waste Land* 'marked the crucial moment in the transition of modernism from a minority culture to one supported by an important institutional and financial apparatus'.⁵⁷⁰ In the end, *The Dial* made Eliot the largest financial offer for publication and Liveright missed out.⁵⁷¹

The history of the composition and publication of *The Waste Land* is crucial in understanding the relationship between 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' and *The Waste Land*. Eliot had been heavily influenced by Joyce, and largely dependent on Pound for writing and publication. It was mainly a collaborative effort between Eliot and Pound, with Joyce's *Ulysses* always at the back of their minds. Arguably, Eliot had been heavily indebted to Joyce for the creation of the mythical method as a narrative structure for modernist poetry, and attempted to create his own version of *Ulysses* in the composition of *The Waste Land*. Schriebman's argument that 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is 'most obviously in debt to T.S Eliot, particularly *The Waste Land*'⁵⁷² ignores the role that Joyce's *Ulysses* played in the formation of Eliot's poem. With the

⁵⁶⁶ Rainey, in North, p. 96.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., See also: Horace Liveright to Ezra Pound, 11 January 1922, New Haven Beinecke Library, Yale University, Bird Papers, folder 23.

⁵⁶⁸ Rainey, in North, p. 97.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² Schriebman, *Poems*, p. 107.

benefit of hindsight, it can be argued that MacGreevy is more indebted to Joyce than Eliot. This chapter will attempt to correct the assumption of MacGreevy's exclusive indebtedness to Eliot in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' by providing a fuller context of aesthetic, historical, and even literary influences behind 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe'.

The Wagnerian Influence in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe'

When the poem was first published in November 1929, it was titled 'School of... Easter Saturday Night (Free State)'.⁵⁷³ The poem contains 'observations and insights into the events surrounding the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence, and the ultimate establishment of the Free State government'.⁵⁷⁴ MacGreevy had witnessed some of these events first hand after demobilisation when he was a resident of Dublin. By retitling the poem, changing it from 'School of... Easter Saturday Night (Free State)' to 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe', MacGreevy focuses on the dark element of the political events of the time.

'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is the Irish equivalent of *Götterdämmerung* (Twilight of the Gods) from Richard Wagner's opera-cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.⁵⁷⁵ Wagner's influence on European culture is apparent in *The Waste Land*, but also long before that, in George Bernard Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898). Wilhelm Richard Wagner (1813–1883) was a German composer and conductor and is considered one of the greatest composers of all time. Wagner revolutionised opera through his concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work of art', by which he sought to synthesise the poetic, visual, musical and dramatic arts, with music subsidiary to drama. Wagner realised these ideas most fully in the first half of the four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. His compositions, particularly those of his later period, are notable for their complex textures, rich harmonies, and orchestration, and the elaborate use of leitmotifs- musical phrases associated with individual characters, places, idea or plot elements. His advances in musical language greatly influenced the development of classical music. His *Tristan und Isolde* is sometimes described as marking the start of modern music.

⁵⁷³ There are five typescript drafts of the poem entitled 'Notes for a Poem', 'Nocturne', and 'Easter Saturday Night'. It was first published in November 1929.

⁵⁷⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 108.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109. Cróntráth (one word) twilight in Irish, literally means dark time. MacGreevy might have chosen to separate this word in order to emphasise the *Cron* or the dark element.

Music was an important part of MacGreevy's life. From an early age, he sang in the church choir in Tarbert, County Kerry.⁵⁷⁶ In his childhood home, the 'piano and violin played an important part of family entertainment'.⁵⁷⁷ He learned to play piano and became a skilled pianist.⁵⁷⁸ In his *Memoirs* he recalls his childhood home, 'was full of music as it was of books... the whole house was a library. For there were books everywhere'.⁵⁷⁹ Similarly, it can be argued that music is central to Joyce's biography and to the understanding of his writings, and that music was at the heart of Joyce's life and art.⁵⁸⁰ Joyce's inspiration was at least as musical as it was literary, and

Joyce's ideas about the world and how the human fits into it were shaped to a great extent by his own musical imagination, which in turn was largely determined by the general cultural atmosphere in which he was born and raised.⁵⁸¹

Joyce would often allude to or use partial quotations from texts of Irish traditional songs, popular ballads, Roman Catholic chants and operatic arias. Amongst his operatic references were works by Wagner, which recent criticism has established as an attempt to adapt the structures of opera and oratorio to the medium of fiction, – notably through a decisive reliance on Wagner's *Ring* in *Finnegans Wake*, and *Ulysses*.⁵⁸² The common interest of MacGreevy and Joyce in Wagner was also shared by Eliot, who used Wagner's *Ring* as a demonstrative influence in writing *The Waste*

⁵⁷⁶ Coolahan, *Life and Work* p. 120.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁰ For more information see: Martin Ross, *Music and James Joyce* (Chicago: Argus Book Shop, 1936); Matthew J. C. Hodgart and Mabel P. Worthington, *Songs in the Works of James Joyce* (New York: Published for Temple University Publications by Columbia University Press, 1959); Zack R. Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry Through Ulysses* (New York: Gill and Macmillan, 1975); Ruth H. Bauerle, *Picking up Airs: Hearing the Music in Joyce's Text* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Matthew J. C. Hodgart and Ruth Bauerle, *Joyce's Grand Operoat: Opera in Finnegans Wake* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Sebastian D.G. Knowles, *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce* (New York: Garland Pub., 1999).

⁵⁸¹ [Anon] "I Have Left My Book": Setting Joyce's *Chamber Music* Lyrics to Music'. <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/~media/files/ljmu/microsites/james-joyce/documents/essay-1-i-have-left-my-book.pdf?la=en> [Date accessed: 30 August 2016]. Joyce's poems and prose in turn became an inspiration for composers and musicians.

⁵⁸² See Timothy P. Martin, *Joyce and Wagner. A Study of Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Harry White, "The 'Thought-Tormented Music' of James Joyce" in H. White, *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Land. All three writers were influenced by Wagner, and found means of incorporating Wagner's legacy into their literary and aesthetic visions.

In his monograph on Eliot, MacGreevy writes of the impact that *The Waste Land* had on literary London. In his opinion, 'before [*The Waste Land*] appeared London poetry was becoming rather a waste land'.⁵⁸³ After it was published, 'Mr. Eliot seemed to me to be perhaps the Parsifal who was going to set the frozen fountains playing again'.⁵⁸⁴ MacGreevy's comparison of Eliot to Parsifal symbolically unites Eliot with Wagner. Wagner's three act opera *Parsifal* was loosely based on *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach, a thirteenth-century epic poem of the Arthurian knight Parzival (Percival) and his quest for the Holy Grail (in the twelfth century). Wagner described *Parsifal* not as an opera, but as '*Ein Bühnenweihfestspiel*' ('A Festival Play for the Consecration of the Stage'). Eliot spared the reader, 'the pantheistic sentimentalities about buttercups and daisies that poets since Wordsworth [could not] be prevented from producing',⁵⁸⁵ and so restructured the idea of what was significant and important in modern poetry. By linking Eliot to Wagner's *Parsifal*, MacGreevy suggests Eliot as the ultimate Arthurian hero Parsifal, with his London-based, post-First World War pocket epic',⁵⁸⁶ setting 'the frozen fountains playing again'. The incorporation of the Arthurian stories in *The Waste Land* is highly indicative of the avant-garde writing for the time period that MacGreevy took after a 'mosaic' of stylistic influences. In some sense it follows the forms of European Modernism made available by Eliot and Joyce.

Both Eliot and Joyce challenged the mainstream. They argued for deeper realities that questioned the norm and left their audiences with a sense of unresolved conflict. Both produced work that shook prevalent dogmatic and metaphysical ideologies. However, in MacGreevy's opinion, 'the order implied at the end of *The Waste Land* and in Mr. Eliot's work since is more obviously metaphysical and dogmatic than the order we may infer from the tolerant ending of *Ulysses*'.⁵⁸⁷ MacGreevy did not adhere to a 'tolerant', post-dogmatic Joyceanism as found in *Ulysses*. MacGreevy's Catholic and nationalist commitments made him 'dogmatic' but not in the same vein as Eliot, who had not yet converted to Anglo-Catholicism

⁵⁸³ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 42.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁶ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 17.

⁵⁸⁷ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 35.

when *The Waste Land* was first published in 1922. His later poetry was more explicitly religious.

In his essay, 'The Other Dublin: London Revisited, 1925-27', Francis Hutton-Williams speaks of the effect T.S. Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism had on his relationship with MacGreevy. While religious conversion was 'in the air for a number of writers during this period, including W.H. Auden and C.S. Lewis', and was 'by no means exceptional to T.S. Eliot', Eliot's conversion 'so unsettled' MacGreevy⁵⁸⁸ because, according to Hutton-Williams, 'The Anglican church arguably represented the stumbling block of the Catholic transnational imagery that was so intimately connected to MacGreevy's political vision'.⁵⁸⁹ This was a political vision that MacGreevy shared with Joyce, who was also Irish Catholic from birth.⁵⁹⁰ MacGreevy sought to find a middle ground in his complex relationship with Catholicism, his deep love for Ireland and his Celtic heritage. In so doing, 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' sought to replace the unresolved conflict in Ireland with metaphysical and ideological searching from an inherently romantic and classicist background.

MacGreevy set out to write an Irish epic in ironic miniature. 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is replete with references to classical and Irish mythology, music, Irish history (both ancient and modern), Catholic prayers, the Great War, street ballads, and Dublin architecture (an apparent jumble of cultural and geographical references not just on Eliot but on Joyce before him). As MacGreevy explains,

The Grail legend took shape in a Breton monastery, Isolde and Deirdre and Naoise were Irish, Tristan and Abélard were Breton and Romeo and Juliet belonged to the country that was Cis-Alpine Gaul as did also he [Virgil] who wrote of Dido and Æneas (though he did commit the crime of popularising in literature the fake order that is called 'classicism').⁵⁹¹

Virgil, of course, was particularly important to Eliot and his wide-ranging idea of European culture, a culture that interestingly did not have much room for explicitly

⁵⁸⁸ Hutton-Williams, *Life and Work*, p. 149.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Joyce's relationship with Irish-Catholicism is somewhat controversial. Early in life he lapsed from the faith, see Richard Ellmann, (ed.) *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) and Stanislaus Joyce *My Brother's Keeper* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982). However, Leonard Strong, William T. Noon, Robert Boyle, and others have argued that later in life, Joyce reconciled with Catholicism and *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are essentially Catholic expressions. Likewise, T.S. Eliot believed between the lines of Joyce's work was the outlook of a devout faith, and the remnant of Catholic belief and attitude. For more information, see Jeffrey Segall, *Joyce in America: Cultural Politics and the Trials of Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) p. 140, (p. 142).

⁵⁹¹ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, pp. 20-21.

nationalist cultural projects such as the Irish Literary Revival, and no space at all for specifically Irish as opposed to Arthurian Celticism. MacGreevy's interest in Eliot, like Joyce's modernism, was in part a reaction against the Victorian and Edwardian literature of Irish romantic nationalism (mainly Davis, Mangan, Ferguson, and early Yeats). MacGreevy moved beyond Irish romantic nationalism through his portrayal of the social and political turmoil and sometimes internecine strife that was the aftermath of 1916.

The Prelude

Two musical themes interweave within the poem. The first is Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. *Götterdämmerung* is the last of the four operas that comprise *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (first performed as a whole in 1876). The second is the street ballad 'Cockles and Mussels', which is now represented in Dublin by the bronze statue 'Molly Malone', affectionately referred to locally as the 'tart with the cart'. Of these two examples, one represents high art, the other popular art; one Continental in origin, the other Irish. The juxtaposition of different cultural levels, pioneered by Joyce, highlights both Eliot's and MacGreevy's transnational cultural identity and influences. This involved a real tension for MacGreevy, though not for Eliot, as the Nationalist tradition that was part of his heritage was particularly strong culturally in the interwar years and during the formation of the new Irish state.

'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is MacGreevy's only effort at sustained verse. In the prelude to the first section, he framed his most ambitious poem with two epigraphs: '*How is the faithful city become a harlot?*'⁵⁹² And, '*Her ghosts wheel the barrow...*'⁵⁹³ In the first epigraph, from the Bible, MacGreevy uses 'faithful city' to contrast with Eliot's 'Unreal City' which is a possible allusion to Dante. As Lyndall Gordon puts it, Eliot's 'Unreal City' 'creates a "phantasmal" world of lust, filth, boredom, and malice on which he gazes in fascinated horror', emphasising a 'psychological hell in which someone is quite alone, "the other figures in it / Merely projections".'⁵⁹⁴ In his essay 'What Dante Means to Me', Eliot describes Dante's influence, 'Certainly I have borrowed lines from [Dante], in the attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind the memory, of some Dantesque scene, and

⁵⁹² Isaiah 1.21.

⁵⁹³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 14.

⁵⁹⁴ Gordon, in North, p. 72.

thus establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life'.⁵⁹⁵ MacGreevy's description of a very real 'faithful city' in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' with fervently religious customs, traditions, and Gaelic heritage stands out strikingly against the fantastic, illusory and wild 'inferno' of modern London as Eliot represents it.

The direct quotation, 'How is the faithful city, that was full of judgment, become a harlot? Justice dwelt in it, but now murderers', is not from the King James Bible (which makes it an exclamation, not question), but instead the Rheims-Douai (Catholic) translation which follows the Vulgate (Latin Bible) in making this a question. By choosing this as an epigraph, MacGreevy illumines not only the deeply religious underpinning of Ireland's capital city, but also paradoxically, the depravity of Dublin preceding the establishment of the nation state. In both cities, the city as it actually is and the faithful city as God and MacGreevy would wish it to be, MacGreevy explains:

We pay, even in this world, if we do not turn ourselves into unemotional, double-barrelled, two-fisted he-men. We are submerged or buried by society, by the city, as Burns was, as Byron was, as Wilde was.⁵⁹⁶

In this context, the 'we' MacGreevy refers to can be

any of us, the implication being that there is none of us who has not a corpse buried in his garden, a skeleton in his cupboard, a something on his back, a 'Man with Three Staves' (Neptune, the disquieting, with his trident), a shadowed, wintry, sinful man, a submerged life that, for all we may be 'frères,' we are hypocritical about.⁵⁹⁷

Furthermore, 'the disintegration of the world (which included 'the decay of Eastern Europe' is paralleled by what seems to be a reference to the war'.⁵⁹⁸ Specifically, the uncomfortable fact is that the city of Dublin witnessed many murders sometimes dignified as executions during the disturbances of 1916-22. In this context, MacGreevy conjures up the political and civil turmoil that Dublin faced since the Easter Rising and brings to light the turmoil created by religious strife.

The second epigraph, 'Her ghost wheels the barrow...' is from the Old Dublin ballad, 'Cockles and Mussels'. MacGreevy's incorporation of

⁵⁹⁵ T.S. Eliot, 'What Dante means to Me', in *To Criticize the Critic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965), pp. 125-135, (p. 128). See also 'Allusions to Dante' in North, p. 113.

⁵⁹⁶ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 47.

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

the ballad suggests the strong musical background which he shares with Joyce.⁵⁹⁹

In Dublin's fair city,
Where the girls are so pretty,
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone,
She wheeled her wheelbarrow

Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh!...

She died of a fever
And no one could save her,
And that was the end of sweet Molly Malone,
But her ghost wheels her barrow
Through streets broad and narrow,
Crying cockles and mussels, alive, alive, oh!⁶⁰⁰

Molly Malone is a popular song, set in Dublin, and has become the city's unofficial anthem. The song tells the fictional tale of a fishmonger who plied her trade on the streets of Dublin, but who died young, of a fever. In the late twentieth century a legend grew up that there was a historical Molly, who lived in the seventeenth century. The heroine is represented as a street-hawker by day, and prostitute by night. In contrast she has also been portrayed as one of the few chaste female street-hawkers of her day. In his essay, "'*Quadrupedante, etcetera*': Allusion, Lyricism and Imperium in Thomas MacGreevy's *Crón Tráth na nDéithe*' Alex Davis explains how these epigraphs

serve as a threshold to the poem's exploration of certain thematics – such as urban experience and its attendant malaise, the spiritual entropy of the present and its' haunting by stubborn revenants of the past – which echo those of... T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.⁶⁰¹

On a formal level, the combination of a biblical quotation and a snippet of an old Dublin ballad is a stylistic feature also reminiscent of *The Waste Land*: the latter's 'deliberately startling mixture of elements from different registers',⁶⁰² and a neat way of ironically undercutting civic and moral self-importance.⁶⁰³ It would be inaccurate

⁵⁹⁹ Joyce would make frequent use of the Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore, and ballads such as George Barker's *Dublin Bay* and J.L. Molloy's *Love's Old Sweet Song*.

⁶⁰⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, pp. 109-110.

⁶⁰¹ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 17.

⁶⁰² W.J.M. Bronzwaer, *Tense in the Novel: An Investigation of Some Potentialities of Linguistic Criticism* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1970), p. 30.

⁶⁰³ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, pp. 34-35.

to read ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ as little more than a restaging of Dublin in the immediate aftermath of the Irish Civil War.⁶⁰⁴ The obvious debt ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ and *The Waste Land* owe to Dante is clear. In the poem, European and Irish traditions, which are the old gods whose twilight this is, converge and cohabit (something a Free State government could not manage) as MacGreevy the poet comments on the Dublin he saw from his cab ride home on Easter Saturday 1923, coming from the ‘healthy air in Mayo / To Dublin’s stale voluptuousness’.⁶⁰⁵

Interested in music from his youth, and perhaps aware of the view shared by Schopenhauer and Walter Pater that all art should arrive at the condition of music, ‘MacGreevy gave structure to the chaos by numbering the sections as in a symphonic composition’.⁶⁰⁶ The poem, divided into sections with roman numerals, follows a specific route MacGreevy would have taken from the Broadstone Station, Dublin (now the CIW bus and road freight depot near Phibsborough Road) to the south side of Dublin where he was living after his graduation from Trinity College, as follows:⁶⁰⁷

1. Broadstone station (calls cab)
2. Foster Aqueduct (road-bridge, The King’s Inn on right)
3. Upper Dominick Street
4. Lower Dominick Street (Dominican Priory, slums in former upper class houses)
5. Parnell Street, Upper O’Connell Street (buildings ruined in the Civil War on left)
6. Lower O’Connell Street (buildings on both sides ruined in the 1916 Rising)
7. O’Connell Bridge (view of ruined Customs House on left down-river)
8. D’Olier Street (Crampton Memorial on left)
9. Great Brunswick (now Pearse) Street (Trinity College, Dublin on right)
10. Westland Row (has the station for Dunlaoghaire, the part for Holyhead and British mainland)
11. Merrion Street
12. Merrion Square West (the grandest of the great Dublin squares, Leinster Lawn and Collins/Griffith cenotaph on right).⁶⁰⁸

The urban geography of MacGreevy’s poem, like Eliot’s, is concisely but precisely delineated (as it is in Joyce’s *Ulysses*). Despite similarities of theme and form, MacGreevy’s longest poem resists even while it seems to invoke the quasi-epic

⁶⁰⁴ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 16.

⁶⁰⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxvi.

⁶⁰⁶ This is more clearly seen in the *transition* version where the first section is entitled ‘Prelude’. Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 108.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

ambitions of *The Waste Land*, and is governed by a stronger lyrical impulse than that which, fitfully yet powerfully, permeates Eliot's poem.⁶⁰⁹

The non-epical representation of Irish and wider European history in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is discernible from its very opening- the pointed allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*,⁶¹⁰ in the poem's second line:

Ter-ot. Stumble. Clock-clock, clock-clock!
Quadrupedante, etcetera,
 And heavy turning wheels of lurching cab
 On midnight streets of Dublin shiny in the rain!

In this stanza, MacGreevy changes the epic set-piece of galloping warriors into a description of an everyday cab-horse. An allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*, which fascinated Eliot, makes 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' superficially similar to *The Waste Land*. To take just one example, in 'A Game of Chess,' the second section of Eliot's poem, Eliot writes, 'In fattening the prolonged candle-flames, / Flung their smoke into the laquearia' (lines 91-93). Laqueria, or panels of a coffered ceiling, allude to a passage from Virgil's *Aeneid*: 'Burning torches hang from the gold-panelled ceiling,/ And vanquish the night with their flames'.⁶¹¹ In his allusion to Virgil, MacGreevy mirrors Eliot's writing whilst forming his own style and drawing his own conclusions.

MacGreevy's abridged quotation '*Quadrupedante, etcetera,*' opens a chink in his poem, through which the vista of another text comes into view.⁶¹² It is taken from the eighth book of Virgil's epic. The war in Italy has begun, but there is a break in the gathering storm clouds before battle is joined in full force in the following book. Aeneas, the ill-fated Pallas, and other horsemen set forth to Caere, where the Trojan leader will receive new armour, forged by Vulcan, from his mother, Venus:

Olli per dumos, qua proxima meta uiarum,
 armati tendunt; it clamor, et agmine facto
 quadrupedante, putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum⁶¹³

Translated from Latin, the passage reads: 'Through the scrubland, where the journey's end is nearest, the men-at-arms proceed; a cry goes up, and formed in a column, galloping hoof beats strike the powdery plain'.⁶¹⁴ An alternative translation brings out

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹¹ North, p. 8.

⁶¹² Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 22.

⁶¹³ Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.594-6.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

the galloping rhythm of the Latin more effectively: 'A shout goes up; they form a line; the hoofs'/ four-footed thunder shakes the crumbling plain'.⁶¹⁵

In 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe,' this celebrated example of Virgilian onomatopoeia is brusquely ('*etcetera*') and bathetically juxtaposed with the haltingly 'spondaic' rhythm and clippity-clop sound of 'Ter-ot. Stumble. Clock-clock, clock-clock!' The Virgil passage is an example of imitative rhythm in which the harsh consonants and dactyls convey the sound of galloping.⁶¹⁶ MacGreevy's rhythm initiates a rather uneven trot in ironic contrast with the heroic Virgilian gallop.

In tandem with the progress of the horse-drawn cab carrying MacGreevy's speaker through Dublin's 'rutty, muddy streets'⁶¹⁷ the allusion reiterates aurally and semantically, the clash of 'high' and 'low' registers between the speaker's undignified posture, 'inside' the cab, 'With torso waving/Hold[ing] the seat with gluteal muscles',⁶¹⁸ and the glorious riding forth of Aeneas and his entourage. MacGreevy's allusion to the build-up to the war against Turnus and the Latins in the *Aeneid* inescapably brings to mind the significance of this conflict in the establishment of 'imperium sine fine' (*Aen.* 1.279; 'empire without end', promised to Aeneas' descendants by Jupiter in the first-book of Virgil's poem). Composed against the background of the Social War fought between Rome and its Italian allies, and the immediate context of the *Pax Augusta* established subsequent to the ruinous civil wars, Virgil's account of the legendary struggles for Rome's foundation finds an anticlimactic foil in MacGreevy's depiction of a First World War combatant's cab-journey through the scarred streets of the Irish capital in the wake of the ceasefire to the Irish Civil War. Significantly, the date-line to 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is '*Easter Sunday, 1923*'.⁶¹⁹ Schreibman glosses the date-line thus: 'On 29-30 April 1923, the seventh calendar anniversary of Easter Sunday 1916, the Republican forces in the Civil War declared a cease-fire and ordered those still in the field to dump arms, thus effectively ending the war'.⁶²⁰

In his study of Eliot, MacGreevy aptly describes *The Waste Land* as an 'old, almost Jacobean, if not Elizabethan, English (and above all, London) shorthand

⁶¹⁵ Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil* (*Aeneid*, 8.594-6), trans. Allen Mandelbaum, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 210.

⁶¹⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 110.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁹ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 19.

⁶²⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 122.

masterpiece'.⁶²¹ In 'The Burial of the Dead,' the opening sequence of Eliot's 'masterpiece,' Eliot describes London: 'Unreal City, / Under the brown fog of a winter dawn, / A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many'.⁶²² In the opening sequence of MacGreevy's Irish-epic poem, MacGreevy parallels Eliot's verse though the city is much less unreal:

The dark-and-light-engulfing box
Wheels through the wetness
Bringing me
From empty healthy air in
Mayo
To Dublin's stale voluptuousness.

This passage provides the clue to the route followed in the rest of the poem. Travelling by train from Mayo in the west of Ireland, MacGreevy would have arrived at Broadstone Station (since closed).

Section I

After arriving at Broadstone Station, MacGreevy would have been driven via Dominick and O'Connell Streets to his destination. He then leads his reader to the first section, whereby the reader comes across Upper and Lower Dominick Street, and the slums of former upper class houses in the Dominican Priory:

Inquisitive street
And inquisitive moulting swans
Middle-aged
Drably white
Sleeping now

'Inquisitive Street' refers to Doomequick Street, or Dominick Street.⁶²³ By the late 1920s, Dominick Street, a long Georgian street of decayed mansions linking Broadstone Station with Parnell Street, had largely turned into slums. Dominick Street, originally the most important street of the Dominick estate purchased by Christopher Dominick in 1692, was later coincidentally chosen as the site of St. Saviour's Dominican Church and priory in 1858.⁶²⁴ MacGreevy builds on this association identifying the Dominican Order with the Inquisition, giving 'quick

⁶²¹ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 57.

⁶²² North, p. 7.

⁶²³ TCD MS 7989/34.

⁶²⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 110.

doom.’⁶²⁵ Crossing from Broadstone Station to Dominick Street MacGreevy would have passed close to an arm of the Royal Canal (which has since been filled in), where he would have seen ‘inquisitive moulting swans’. The description of the swans, very far from beautiful or romantic, fits in with the sardonic tone of the poem. The phrase ‘Middle-aged / Drably white’ could also refer to the swans, or even the medieval black-and-white habits of the Dominican Order; however, ‘Middle-aged / Drably white’ when combined with the last verse ‘sleeping now’ the verse conjures up the appearance of the Neo-Gothic stone church in a street of brick Georgian houses, which had deteriorated and turned into slums.⁶²⁶ MacGreevy then moves on, and poses the following question:

How long since your last absolution?
Answer: *Seven hundred years.*

In the Catholic sacrament of confession, ‘How long has it been since your last confession?’ is the initial question the priest asks the penitent. The verse ‘Answer: Seven hundred years,’ just as in ‘The Six Who Were Hanged’ where MacGreevy writes, ‘What, these seven hundred years, / Has Ireland had to do / With the morning star?’ is a reference to the English occupation of Ireland. The Norman ‘invasion’ of Ireland (they were invited by Dermot Mac Murrough, King of Leinster, to help an internal Irish power struggle) was in 1169, during the reign of King Henry II (and so long before the continental and English Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century). Further, Richard FitzGilbert, Earl of Pembroke, the Norman leader, known as Strongbow, was in 1170 married to Aoife, the daughter of the King of Leinster who sent the invitation, and that in a sense inaugurated the Norman-Irish connection. There is an epic-scale Victorian painting of the marriage, titled ‘The Marriage of Aoife and Strongbow’, by the Irish painter Daniel Maclise, originally commissioned for the British House of Commons and exhibited in 1854. Nineteenth-century nationalist rhetoric about seven-hundred years of British/foreign occupation usually takes 1169 as the starting-point, though there had been earlier invasions, notably by the Vikings.⁶²⁷ The Norman invasion of Ireland preceded the Protestant Reformation,

⁶²⁵ Ibid., p. 111.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ There are detailed histories of medieval Ireland such as Goddard Henry Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333* 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911-20) This edition was criticised by nationalists at the time for being too sympathetic to the benefits of

which had attempted to deny Ireland its Catholic and Gaelic heritage. MacGreevy could also possibly relate to the 700th anniversary of the death of St Dominic (d. 1221), founder of the Dominican order. In the litany that follows the rosary, the Virgin Mary is invoked as the morning star. In this context, MacGreevy evokes Ireland's Catholic history and uses 'morning star' to symbolise a new beginning.

The significance of '*Seven hundred years*' in the aftermath of the Easter Rising has been conveyed by author, historian, and Sinn Féin revolutionary Desmond Ryan in his book *The Rising: The Complete Story of Easter Week*. His political rhetoric produces a sense of the nationalist and catholic atmosphere in which MacGreevy worked:

For the first time in 700 years the flag of a free Ireland floats triumphantly in Dublin City. The British Army, whose exploits we are for ever having dinned into our ears, which boasts of having stormed Dardanelles and the German lines on the Marne, behind their artillery and machine-guns are afraid to advance to the attack or storm any positions held by our forces. The slaughter they suffered in the first few days has totally unnerved them and they dare not attempt again an infantry attack on our positions.⁶²⁸

MacGreevy's question, and the brutal history recalled in Ryan's passage, brings to mind Wagner's preoccupation with love and loss, death and resurrection. It also 'rather strikes home to an Irishman... the young sailor's song'⁶²⁹ from the first Act of *Tristan und Isolde* incorporated into the first section of *The Waste Land*:

*Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du*⁶³⁰

Translated from German, the verse reads as follows:

Fresh blows the wind,
To the homeland
My Irish child
Where do you wait?

The lines are part of a song overheard by Isolde, at the beginning of *Tristan und Isolde*. At this point, Isolde is being taken by Tristan to Ireland, where she is to marry

Norman rule. See also *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* ed. by S.J. Connolly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁶²⁸ Desmond Ryan, *The Rising: The Complete Story of Easter Week* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books Limited, 1957) p. 148.

⁶²⁹ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 43.

⁶³⁰ North, p. 6.

King Mark. The original story, put into German verse in the Middle Ages by Gottfried von Strassburg (Wagner's source), gradually became part of Arthurian literature and associated with the Grail legend Eliot refers to elsewhere in *The Waste Land*.⁶³¹ Through the inclusion of this epigraph, Eliot is quite deliberately drawing upon a full range of European literature and culture in his poem as he incorporates Celtic, German, and English associations. Eliot utilises the lament of the Rhine-maidens in Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, to set the tone for the course of events comprising *The Waste Land*.⁶³² Like Eliot, MacGreevy uses the format of Wagner's four operas to set in motion the events of the poetic stanzas.

Inherently romantic in origin, Wagner's work brought him to an intellectual questioning of romanticism, human instinct, and of life, through a personal order he created, and conveyed through operatic structure. Undoubtedly, both Irish romanticism and Irish nationalism impacted the creative genius of MacGreevy. However, because all Irish writing at least up to and including Yeats was romantic by inheritance, MacGreevy, as an Irish Modernist, had to negotiate that legacy. He sought to achieve similar modernist ambitions through his writings, but because of his nationalist leanings also wanted to incorporate the political turmoil of a particular nation in despair. He achieved this through his depictions of death and resurrection, which feature as prominent themes in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe'.

Following the penitent appeal for absolution, MacGreevy again refers to the sleeping swans:

In inquisitive days
The swans gave quick doom
Or you
Saw.

The image of inquisitive, moulting, middle-aged and sleeping swans after waiting for centuries for absolution brings to mind the Irish legend of the children of Lir. In the legend the children, who have been put under a spell for over 900 years, return to human form with the coming of Christianity.⁶³³ Following this verse, MacGreevy continues:

Here, one wrecked!
A rotting tooth

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Ibid., p. 14.

⁶³³ Ibid.

In the rotting head of
An Iberian gentleman failure!

Here, the ‘rotting head’ could belong to St. Dominic (the ‘Iberian gentleman failure’) who was from the Spanish nobility, and rejected worldly success when he founded his Order of Preachers. ‘Iberian gentleman failure’ could also refer to Eamon de Valera, whose father was Spanish. He had been a commander in the 1916 Rising, a political leader in the War of Independence and of the anti-Treaty opposition in the Irish Civil War. Many people in Ireland considered de Valera a failure during the Civil War until his re-emergence in politics in 1926.⁶³⁴ The image of the ‘Iberian gentleman failure’ smoothly transitions into the next verse:

Nineteen-sixteen perhaps,
Or fierce, frightened Black-and-Tans
Like matadors!

‘Nineteen-sixteen perhaps’ refers to houses in the Moore Street/Parnell Street area which were damaged towards the end of Easter week 1916 when the GPO garrison tunnelled through house-walls before their final surrender.⁶³⁵ The ‘Black and Tans’, officially the Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve, was a force of Temporary Constables recruited to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary during the Irish War of Independence. The Black and Tans became infamous for their attacks on civilians and civilian property, and ‘terrorized the population at the height of the War of Independence’.⁶³⁶ The Black and Tans tried to assassinate de Valera, but failed. ‘Matadors’ continues the Spanish theme but is also a visual image. Recalling the destruction caused by the Black and Tans in the city, MacGreevy leads to the next verse:

Rain, rain...

Wrecks wetly mouldering under rain,
Everywhere.

Much of Dublin’s city centre, particularly on the north side of the River Liffey, was devastated by the events of the rising and Civil War. It is possible that the snow falling everywhere over Ireland at the end of Joyce’s story ‘The Dead’ in *Dubliners* (pre 1916) lies somewhere behind this. Three-quarters of the buildings on O’Connell

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 112.

Street were destroyed.⁶³⁷ It is also important to note the war-inspired imagery of wrecked cities in Eliot's poetry, particularly in 'What the Thunder Said', the fifth section of *The Waste Land*:

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
 After the frosty silence in the gardens
 After the agony in stony places
 The shouting and the crying
 Prison and palace and reverberation
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
 He who was living is now dead
 We who were living are now dying
 With a little patience.⁶³⁸

Eliot's headnote to the section helped his readers to understand the lines as a description of the betrayal, arrest, interrogation and crucifixion of Christ. 'Thunder of spring over distant mountains' recalls the earthquake that followed Christ's crucifixion in Matthew 27.⁶³⁹ However, the verses 'He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying' also recalls MacGreevy's 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe', particularly the following stanza:

Remember Belgium!
 You cannot pick up the
 Pieces⁶⁴⁰

During World War I, 'Remember Belgium!' was a popular rallying cry to encourage recruitment among the Irish population. Belgium, another small Catholic country, supported the Allied cause. MacGreevy may be recalling his naivety prior to enlisting when he believed that the Great War would guarantee the sovereignty of small nations. He may also have been responding to the visual images of his cab ride of a city destroyed and in ruins. After the war, the destruction in Dublin closely resembled the ruins of the towns along the Western Front. Since the version in *transition* contained the additional line, 'In Belgium and the north...' MacGreevy may also have been thinking of the houses in Belfast that had been destroyed during the sectarian conflict there.⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ North, p. 16.

⁶³⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 15.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

The publication of ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ in *transition*, under the title ‘School of...Easter Sunday Night (Free State),’ coincides not only with that of many other important testimonies to the psychological trauma of the First World War (Richard Aldington’s *Death of a Hero*, Robert Graves’s *Goodbye to All That*, and Frederic Manning’s *The Middle Parts of Fortune* all appeared in the same year), but also shortly precedes the bi-millennial anniversary of Virgil’s birth in 130-1 – a date that, as the classical scholar S.J. Harrison observes, ‘provided a particular pretext for stressing his cultural centrality and contemporary relevance’.⁶⁴²

The reception of Virgil by twentieth-century writers in ‘the years of *l’entre deux guerres*,’ in the words of Eliot’s ‘East Coker’,⁶⁴³ has been brilliantly explored by Theodore Ziolkowski in *Virgil and the Moderns*.⁶⁴⁴ For Ziolkowski, numerous writers of this period, including Eliot from around 1930, ‘turned to Virgil... because they saw in his works... a set of values and an image of security that they missed in a world transformed by World War I’, his example offering them an exemplary ‘model of dignified survival in the face of social disorder and political turmoil’.⁶⁴⁵ Joyce’s *Ulysses*, neglected by Ziolkowski, almost covertly alludes to the Homeric Ulysses, who is barely mentioned in the *Aeneid*. Aeneas is a defeated Trojan, not a victorious Greek who somehow survives and succeeds in becoming the founder of a mighty nation.

Towards the end of part I of ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe,’ as the cab takes him down Dominick Street, the persona apostrophises the founders of the colony of Carthage:

But, oh, Phoenicians, who on blood-red seas
Come sailing to the Galerie des Glaces
And you, gombeenmen
On blue hills of office

This passage is striking in its simple contrast of red and blue. ‘Blue hills of office’ could perhaps sardonically recall English poet A.E. Housman’s line about the ‘blue remembered hills’ of childhood. ‘Phoenicians,’ alluding to the great trading people of the ancient world, also brings to mind Eliot’s depiction of Virgil’s Phlebas the

⁶⁴² S.J. Harrison, ‘Some views of the *Aeneid* in the twentieth century’, in *Oxford’s Readings in Vergil’s Aeneid* ed. by S.J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) pp. 1-20 (p.3).

⁶⁴³ T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber, 1969), p. 182.

⁶⁴⁴ Theodore Ziolkowski, *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi.

Phoenician, in 'Death by Water' the fourth section in *The Waste Land*. In the poem, the reader passes from the empty sea ('*Oed' und leer das Meer*') to a séance with a clairvoyant. The one-eyed merchant, seller of currants (from section II), merges into the Phoenician Sailor (section III):⁶⁴⁶

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Pickled his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
he passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.⁶⁴⁷

Phoenicians were great seafarers of the ancient world, and great traders.⁶⁴⁸ Both MacGreevy and Eliot use 'Phlebas the Phoenician' to draw, or make an allusion in their poems to the Allied troops, particularly the Americans, who sailed to France during World War I.

MacGreevy's reference to the 'Galerie des Glaces' in 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' ('But, oh, Phoenicians, who on blood-red seas / Come sailing to the Galerie des Glaces') refers to the 'Galerie des Glaces', or The Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles. This is where the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919 and was also painted by the Irish painter William Orpen in *The Signing of Peace* (1919). The transference to the seas of the customary derivation of the Phoenician's name from *phoinos*, the Greek for 'blood-red', creates, in the context of the peace treaty signed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, a grimly appropriate epithet, which is reinforced by the disillusioned revision of John 15:13 'No man hath greater lunacy than this'. The full text, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends' was often quoted on war memorials and at Remembrance Day services for the dead of the 1914-18 war.

MacGreevy, no less than Eliot, was sensitive to the interconnections of militarism, ideology, and economics.⁶⁴⁹ The jostling of Mediterranean superpowers for commercial supremacy in antiquity is invoked in *The Waste Land* by a speaker

⁶⁴⁶ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 48.

⁶⁴⁷ Eliot, *The Waste Land*, lines 312-321 in North, p. 16.

⁶⁴⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 112.

⁶⁴⁹ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 23.

standing in the financial heart of the City – in the immediate vicinity of Eliot's employer, Lloyd's Bank, where, during the war, Eliot worked in the Colonial and Foreign Department, and, from 1919 to 1923, in the Information Department where he had first-hand dealings with the German reparations incurred under the Treaty of Versailles.⁶⁵⁰ MacGreevy's verse moves from 'blood-red seas' to 'blue hills of office'; that is, from the great trading peoples of Phoenicia to the gombeenmen, whose usurious immorality quite possibly reflects the victorious Allies' exaction of war reparations from Germany in 1919 as much as on the politics of modern Ireland.⁶⁵¹ 'Blue hills' invoke picturesque rural Ireland, where in the countryside, the hills often appear blue. The image of blue hills can be seen both in the Irish countryside, but also in Irish landscape painting such as that by Paul Henry, who lived in Dublin from 1919 and whose work was almost certainly known to MacGreevy.

The idyllic Irish landscape in MacGreevy's verse is immediately corrupted by the gombeenmen ('And you, gombeenmen / On blue hills of office'). MacGreevy continues:

No man hath greater lunacy than this.

In the absurdity of ugliness
Some found quick doom
And some of us
Saw.

One wonders whether the reference is not so much for war debts and reparations causing unmanageable war debt as to the war profiteers and businessmen who did very well out of the war that other people were fighting. MacGreevy continued to rework the poem after it was published in *transition*, and in a copy of the magazine he added several lines (that did not find their way into *Poems*) such as the concluding lines of this section with their explicit reference to the Great War:

No man hath greater lunacy than this...
Yet lunacy is a miracle.
In the absurdity of ugliness (1914-1918)
Some of us
Saw...

⁶⁵⁰ Lawrence Rainey (ed.) *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 9-10.

⁶⁵¹ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 24.

The distorted allusion to the Gospel of John refers us to Christ's words to the Apostles at the Last Supper, to the final night of a ministry inaugurated in John by the Cleansing of the Temple of moneylenders (John 2:13-17), an event that in the Synoptic Gospels, is dated to the beginning of Holy Week. (The poem's cab-ride takes place six days after Easter Sunday).⁶⁵² The 'lunacy' MacGreevy's poem laments is thus international and national: the 'absurdity' of the Great War, of the post-war settlement, of the Irish struggle for independence and the subsequent Civil War – those 'troubled geographies'⁶⁵³ of MacGreevy's imagination. 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' makes apparent that what 'some of us / Saw' in the First World War is the 'parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity,' as Eliot famously glossed Joyce's 'mythical method' in *Ulysses*.⁶⁵⁴

Section II

In the second section, that which the speaker sees from the cab – to his eyes, the shabby post-colonial actuality of the Irish Free State – co-exists with what he saw during the Great War:

Look!
 Look!
 Oh, look!
 Look and see!
 But why look?
 Why see?
 You that saw!
 It's but Kathleen
 Or Molly –
 Kathleen is so seldom seen in Dublin
 And besides, she's no harlot –
 Yes, it's Molly,
 Sweet Molly,
 Giving herself to green soldiers.

In this section, it is important to note the jerky, informal, and colloquial rhythm like the pub section in *The Waste Land*. (*Kathleen / Or Molly*) Kathleen Ní Houlihan is representative of Ireland, as Molly Malone is of Dublin. A 'moll' is also slang for a prostitute or the female accomplice of a gangster, such as the Molly Malone of the

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Lee. M. Jenkins, *Wallace Stevens: Rage for Order* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), p. 98.

⁶⁵⁴ Eliot, "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth' in North, pp. 177-8.

Old Dublin Ballad, who is often thought of as a prostitute. Dublin's molls, plying their trade with the 'green soldiers' of the Free State, come to personify the city in the speaker's eyes. The nationalist icon Kathleen Ní Houlihan (she with 'the walk of a queen', in Yeats's eponymous play, rather than that of a street walker) is so 'seldom in Dublin': she belongs instead to the politically idealised rural western landscape. The desolate, stony, underpopulated countryside, –particularly since the Famine–, brings to mind the 'empty healthy air in / Mayo' that constituted the starting point of the speaker's journey to 'Dublin's stale voluptuousness',⁶⁵⁵ and the setting for Yeats's nationalist drama *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*.⁶⁵⁶ In the following verse,

The unfaithful city
Has gone away backward.

MacGreevy's use of the phrase 'the unfaithful city', conjures up the first epigraph, 'How is the faithful city... become a harlot?' In the epigraph, MacGreevy's 'faithful city' contrasts with Eliot's 'Unreal City'. In this verse, 'unfaithful city' becomes the 'Unreal City'. Both cities are specifically concerned with the idea of a wasted land, land that 'was fruitful and now is not', where life that 'had been rich, beautiful, assured, organized, and lofty' is now 'dragging itself out in poverty-stricken, and disrupted and ugly tedium, without health, and with no consolation in morality'. The 'faithful city', with its fervent Catholicism has, since the war, become fragmented, 'shored against [the] ruins' and 'the broken glimpses of what was'.⁶⁵⁷ Underlying these ideas could also be St Augustine's contrast between the crumbling earthly city, Rome in the last days of the empire, and the City of God.

Just as Eliot uses *The Waste Land* to represent spiritual drought, so does MacGreevy use Molly Malone as a symbol for the hedonistic barbarism that erupted after the Irish Civil War. While both poems take place half in the real world and half in a haunted wilderness represented by contemporary London and Dublin respectively, both poems chronicle the path the narrator takes while trying to make sense of the intolerable world around him.

The upheavals of war and politics have brought both narrators to the last point, where they have no hope, no vision outside of the chaos that comprises their

⁶⁵⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 14.

⁶⁵⁶ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 26.

⁶⁵⁷ Gilbert Seldes, 'T.S. Eliot' in *Nation*, December 6, 1922, pp. 614-16. See also North, pp. 138-140, (p. 139).

unfaithful and unreal cities.⁶⁵⁸ The disintegration of the world (which included ‘the decay of Eastern Europe’ referred to in the notes to *The Waste Land*) is a reference to and a way of establishing distance from battles through history starting with the ancient Greek Thermopylae (which literally means hot gates):

I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.

The end is not peace. It is mere statement of the fact that the troubling ideas persist. The poem is interesting not only for its sincerity and its beauty as literary expression, but also as showing how deeply despair had penetrated the poet’s spirit. It was ambition for power and for money that brought ruin on Europe.⁶⁵⁹

The war-damaged streets of ‘the unfaithful city’ confronting the narrator bring to mind not only the Jerusalem of Isaiah, ‘gone away backward’, but the blasted city of Robert Browning’s ‘Love Among the Ruins’ where the destruction of a city reveals ‘Earth’s returns / For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!’⁶⁶⁰ In ‘Love Among the Ruins’, Browning writes:

They think a murderer’s heart would taint
Each simple seed they sow.
It is not true! God’s kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red.
The white rose whiter blow.

Britannia indeed is not gone
But the red, red rose
Withers into its mossy coat.

The structure of Browning’s poem has dipped into the simple rhythm and rhyme (‘C.M’ or ‘common metre’) of a Victorian hymn. The significance of Browning’s poem to ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ is how both poets challenge and satirise poetic and even religious traditions of their respective heritages. It is also important to note MacGreevy’s ironic use of the flower-imagery of love poetry. In place of lines 15-17 in *Poems*, the *transition* version contained the following three lines: ‘Iran indeed is

⁶⁵⁸ Gorham Munson, ‘The Esotericism of T.S. Eliot’ in *1924*. 1 July, 1924, pp. 3-10. See also North, pp. 156-163 (p. 160).

⁶⁵⁹ MacGreevy, *Eliot*, p. 69.

⁶⁶⁰ Robert Browning, in *The Poems*, Vol. 1., ed. by John Pettigrew and Thomas J. Collins (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 529.

not gone / But that red moss rose / Withers into a green coat now'.⁶⁶¹ The 'red moss rose', symbolically representing a silver lining, perhaps a silver lining in the midst of the Irish Civil War, could be MacGreevy's way of saying that all is not lost. Other references include A.C. Swinburne's poem "Before the Mirror" where red and white roses feature together. Swinburne was still very popular during WWI and after it, and dedicated "Before the Mirror" to Whistler. MacGreevy's use of flower imagery could also come from 'the red, red rose' in Oscar Wilde's 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' (rather than directly from Burns's very well-known poem which states 'my love is like a red, red rose'):

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
 Out of his heart a white!
 For who can say by what strange way
 Christ brings His will to light,
 Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
 Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

In a green great-coat
 And wet lamplit shade
 Annihilation
 And realisation

The stanza 'In a green... shade... Annihilation' contains fragments from stanza six of English metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell's (1621–1678) 'The Garden':

Mean while the Mind, from pleasure less,
 Withdraws into its happiness:

Happiness is questionably unobtainable in MacGreevy's grim townscape, the poetic opposite of Marvellian pastoral:

The Mind, that Ocean where each kind
 Does straight its own resemblance find;
 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other Worlds, and other Seas,
 Annihilating all that's made
 To a green Thought in a green Shade.⁶⁶²

The narrator then moves on from Marvell, in MacGreevy's verse, when he continues by paying a brief homage to Victorian poet Robert Browning (1812–1889):

⁶⁶¹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 113.

⁶⁶² Andrew Marvell, in *Complete Poetry*, (ed. by) George deF. Lord (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 49.

That's what Browning found
 With whom?
 At the doin's
 In the ruins.

MacGreevy's juxtaposition of fragments from the Marvellian pastoral to his reference to Browning highlights an intellectual ability to move forward chronologically nearly 200 years in poetic structure and development. 'Doin's' is used in place of 'doings' in standard English – the apostrophe between the n and the s of 'doin's' indicates a letter left out (g), as it would be in pronunciation in many dialects of English. 'That's what Browning found... At the doin's', in near-comic rhyme, is a jerky, colloquial reference to the end of Robert Browning's 'Love Among the Ruins':

In one year they sent a million fights forth
 South and north
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots full force-
 Gold, of course,
 Oh, heart! Oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
 Earth's returns
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
 Love is best!⁶⁶³

Such is the retrocession of allusions, the reference to Browning's ruined city, in a poem charged with memories of recent civil war, and immediately succeeding a broken-backed quotation. Andrew Marvell, is faintly suggestive of a further poem of Browning's: *Sordello* – that 'Semi-dramatic, semi-epic' and almost unreadable story of a poet's 'soul' – the setting of which is the divisive civil conflicts of thirteenth-century Italy. Certainly, MacGreevy's allusion to Isaiah 1.21 – to the 'harlot' that the once 'faithful city' has become – recalls *Sordello*'s presence in an epic poem MacGreevy knew intimately, the *Purgatorio*, the work of a poet Thomas MacGreevy calls on three occasions 'a passionate patriot'.⁶⁶⁴

We're soldiers of the queen, my lads
 But all of us together

⁶⁶³ Robert Browning, in *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864* ed. by Ian Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 557.

⁶⁶⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Irish national anthem', letter to the editor, *Irish Statesman* 12 (19) (13 July 1929), pp. 371-2 (p. 371); 'Count your blessings', *Irish Bookman*, 1 (2) (August 1946) pp.43-52, (p. 48); 'Dante – and modern Ireland', *Father Matthew Record*, 41 (1) (January 1948) pp. 3-4, (p. 4).

But how long till your swagger-stick blossoms?

‘Swagger-stick’ in this context, suggests in the first place the military swagger-stick of the British Army of the time, but also references the last scene of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*. Both Wagner and Wagnerian myth are important to MacGreevy and Eliot. Tannhäuser, the opera’s hero, embraces his beloved’s corpse, dies, and thus is redeemed from his earlier sins: ‘As the sun rises, pilgrims from Rome carry in the pope’s staff which has, miraculously, burst into leaf; the clear voices of the pilgrims hail the miracle of salvation: ‘Let it be known in every land that God has forgiven him!’”⁶⁶⁵ Oscar Wilde also uses the *Tannhäuser* motif in ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’. However, in Wilde’s version it is the pilgrim’s staff that blossoms at the end rather than the Pope’s. The point of this is perhaps that the military life is necessarily sterile and unproductive of the new life symbolised by a blossoming stick.

Section III

In the third section, MacGreevy writes:

The king, his inns, behind!
But there’s little room for him now.
Poor king’s a-cold.

‘The king, his inns’ is archaic English for the King’s Inns, where Irish barristers are trained. The building was designed by English-born architect James Gandon (1743-1823) who designed many of Dublin’s noblest buildings including: the Four Courts, the Custom House, and the King’s Inns. It stands opposite Broadstone Station- the start of MacGreevy’s cab route across the city. The phrase, ‘Poor king’s a-cold,’ echoes *King Lear* III: iv. 1 51 ‘Poor Tom’s a-cold’, and suggests feelings of physical discomfort MacGreevy experiences in the cab.⁶⁶⁶ In *King Lear*, both the king and the fool are reduced to wandering on the cold heath- but the seriously reduced status of the king in Ireland is the real point here. Of the buildings Gandon designed, only the King’s Inns survived undamaged through the events of 1916-23.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁵ Catherine Athill, *Phaidon Book of the Opera* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1979) p. 1846.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

The phrase ‘When the Custom House took fire’⁶⁶⁸ was prompted by an event that took place in May 1921, when the IRA set fire to Dublin’s Custom House (the centre of nine departments of British Administration in Ireland).⁶⁶⁹ The female figure on the Custom House dome, ‘Hope’⁶⁷⁰ (‘Hope slipped off her green petticoat’),⁶⁷¹ was visible as MacGreevy crossed O’Connell Bridge and remained standing despite the effects of the 1921 fire.⁶⁷² In April 1922, the Four Courts, which were located up-river and not visible from the cab route, were occupied by Republicans opposed to the 1921 Treaty. On 28 June, Government forces bombarded the building, leaving it in ruins after two days of shelling, marking the start of the Civil War. ‘Moses’ one of the five statues on the central block of the Four Courts,⁶⁷³ could be behind MacGreevy’s phrase ‘The Four Courts went up in a spasm / Moses felt for Hope’.⁶⁷⁴

MacGreevy follows the scene of the Custom House fire with a scene perhaps inspired by Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*. In the poem, MacGreevy writes:

Folge mir Frau
Come up to Valhalla
To gile na gile
The brightness of brightness
Towering in the sky
Over Dublin

‘*Folge mir Frau*’, translated from German as ‘follow me wife’, is from the final scene of Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* in which Wotan invites his wife Fricka to accompany him to ‘Valhalla’, the home of the gods in Wagner’s *Ring*. In Norse mythology it is also the place where heroes slain in battle were borne by the Valkyries.⁶⁷⁵ The verse ‘*Gile na gile*’, translated from Irish as ‘Brightness of brightness’, is the first three words and title of Aodhagán Ó Rathaille’s (1670-1728) vision poem or ‘aisling’ (a poetic genre that developed during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Irish language poetry) in which the poet addresses the beautiful visionary woman (Ireland) betrothed to the deposed and exiled King James II. The poet follows her to

⁶⁶⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 19.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 115. According to *Malton’s Dublin*, the statue is called Hope.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁷² Ibid., p. 115.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

⁶⁷⁵ See also ‘Homage to Vercingetorix,’ another poem written by MacGreevy about the Irish Civil War and the formation of the Irish Free State.

her 'fairy dwelling of Luchair... erected by druid magic'.⁶⁷⁶ MacGreevy reconnects the reader to the scene of the fire, the 'brightness of brightness', at the burning of the Four Courts in 1922 with his phrase, 'Towering in the sky / Over Dublin'.⁶⁷⁷

MacGreevy immediately contrasts the scene of burning buildings and towering smoke when he follows his verse with a reminder of the surrounding sloblands: 'The dark sloblands below in their glory / Wet glory'. 'Sloblands' are mudflats exposed at low tide easily seen from Sandymount Strand, for instance, which features in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Parts of central Dublin, and in particular the Custom House area, were built on reclaimed sloblands.⁶⁷⁸ In MacGreevy's verse ('The dark sloblands below in their glory'), ugly, unpleasant and sometime rather smelly slobland is ironically associated with 'glory' though representing rather unsympathetically one of the more inglorious aspects of Dublin. He ends the inferno with the darkness of night:

Dark night has come down on us, mother
And we

Do not look for a star
Or Valhalla

Our Siegfried was doped by the Gibichungs.

In this passage, MacGreevy alludes to a post-heroic, dulled, and sluggish urban life 'dark night has come down on us, mother / And we / Do not look for a star'. Here, a sense of depression has fallen over the city, where the inhabitants do not look for a sign of hope. 'Siegfried was doped' references the magic potion of forgetfulness given to Siegfried, the hero of Wagner's *Ring*.⁶⁷⁹ Perhaps MacGreevy wishes to forget the epic scene of carnage he has just witnessed, caused by the IRA.

Section IV

In the fourth section, MacGreevy brings to verse his specialist aesthetic background and keen sense of appreciation for fine art. His role as an art historian and art critic were unrivalled by both Eliot and Joyce. Further, MacGreevy had a vision for the classical architecture and sculpture found in Dublin, which he called Dublin

⁶⁷⁶ Sean O Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, *An Duanaire, An Irish Anthology, 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 153.

⁶⁷⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 116.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Classical and Dublin Renaissance.⁶⁸⁰ He sought to establish at the basis of his vision a purely distinct Irish classical background, separate from the ‘Georgian’ influences located throughout much of Dublin City. In the section, MacGreevy writes:

How the gods crumble wetly!

Said enthusing Gaulish Gandon
To Anglo-Irish Smyth,

‘How the gods crumble wetly!’ changed from the *transition version* ‘How the giants crumble drearily’,⁶⁸¹ is said by ‘Gaulish Gandon’. Gandon’s ancestors were Huguenots, among the persecuted French Protestants who came to England and Ireland (there is a Huguenot cemetery in central Dublin) from France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. MacGreevy’s statement, ‘How the gods crumble wetly!’ in the *transition version* could refer to the impact that the Revocation had on the plastic arts during this time. In practice, the Revocation caused France to suffer a decline in its applied arts, as many skilled craftsmen sought asylum elsewhere. Upon leaving France, Huguenots took with them knowledge of important techniques and styles to the regions where they relocated.

The Irish sculptor Edward Smyth (1749-1812) was employed by ‘Gaulish Gandon’ as sculptor to the Custom House as well as for all of his Dublin projects, including the Four Courts, House of Lords, and King’s Inns. MacGreevy’s mocking comparison of Smyth to Michelangelo follows:

You’re Michelangelo, his peer.
Said Dublin then, *Hear, Hear!*
So Dublin’s rows
Of Michelangelos...

‘You’re Michelangelo, his peer’ is from *Life of James Gandon, Esq.* Gandon’s notes on the ornamenting of the Custom House, state:

The colossal statue of Commerce, with the bas-relief in the pediment, with the keystones representing the principal rivers of Ireland, some of which are equal to Michael Angelo, and all the rest, are executed by Mr E. Smyth, a native of Ireland, a gentleman who, without having had the advantage of travel, or opportunity of seeing many specimens of sculpture, has given proof of abilities equal to any in the three kingdoms.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Ireland and the Renaissance’ *Father Mathew Record*. (June 1945). P. 3.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² James Gandon, *Life of James Gandon, Esq.*, (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1846) pp. 78-9.

The characteristic specialist interest in architecture and sculpture found in the fourth section of 'Crón Tráth na nDéithe' is of particular importance for MacGreevy. The attention to detail given to the plastic arts is unrivalled by *The Waste Land*, and is an original contribution in thought from MacGreevy. Although Eliot mentions Michelangelo in 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock' ('In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo') the attention Eliot gives to Michelangelo and classical antiquity is neither detailed nor indicative of a specialist background such as MacGreevy's. MacGreevy follows with:

My muse, how thou art constricted!
Like Sir Philip Crampton's trickle.

At the junction of D'Olier Street and Great Brunswick Street (now Pearse Street), and hence on MacGreevy's cab route, stood the Crampton Memorial: a tall bronze spiky plant design, mounted on swans and a stone pedestal, with small drinking fountains. Sir Philip Crampton (1777-1858) an Irish doctor, was Surgeon-General to British forces in Ireland and surgeon-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria. The comic appearance of the Crampton memorial leads MacGreevy's comment:

Oh, city of unbeautiful fountains
That think'st thyself an Athens
The Hellas of a Hellas
And you but the Pale of the Pale.

In the 'city of unbeautiful fountains', the self-flagellation of the boastful 'Athens' references Dublin's self-image as the focus of Anglo-Irish culture and learning with Trinity College at its centre. MacGreevy's route passed the railings and side-entrance to Trinity College (just beyond the Crampton Memorial).⁶⁸³ Trinity was regarded by many cultural nationalists as a fenced-off English or British enclave in the middle of the Irish capital (hence 'The Pale,' the area around Dublin still held in the fifteenth century by English interests, and so named for its protective stockade).

In this section, MacGreevy's effect is to mock at Dublin's cultural pretensions to be a second Florence (Dublin's rows / Of Michelangelos) or Athens, very Greek (Hellas is Greek for Greece) and to suggest instead that Dublin is only a small restricted space within another fenced-off restricted area, neither big nor important nor very representative of the rest of Ireland lying 'beyond the pale'. Dublin is instead

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

referred to as ‘the Pale of the Pale’ - essentially nothing compared to Florence, Athens, or even Madrid or Paris. Again, for MacGreevy, Dublin is:

No Saint Michel
No Nettuno –

Mont Saint Michel, a pyramidal granite island rock near the town of Avranches in Normandy, rises dramatically out of the bay at high tide. It is a fortress town with ramparts clinging to its sides; crowning the hill is a majestic eleventh-century church with a slender spire. MacGreevy may be alluding to the fact that the spiritual vision of Saint Michel has no place in war-torn Dublin.⁶⁸⁴ Further, he makes a more secular critical point in his reference to ‘Nettuno’, which is what Italian sculptors and writers would have called Neptune. MacGreevy then poses the following question:

And when did you
See?

Neptune might drive off Famine and Despair,
Could he drive off despair,

Gandon’s biographer Edward McParland describes the pediment of the Custom House (south front) which was executed by Smyth, after a design by Agostino Carlini, as portraying ‘Britannia and Hibernia embracing, accompanied by Neptune who, with an attendant, drives away figures identified by Malton as Famine and Despair: personified winds speed the passage of two ships in the background moving in opposite directions, the vehicles of imports and exports’.⁶⁸⁵

But against your Pale green he was ill-aspected,
And Neptune ill-aspected...!

In an alternate version, MacGreevy wrote, and then crossed out the following lines:

Once on mean Belgian sands
By the mean shore of Belgium
Neptune was there too
& wept for Hippolyte
But that is a tale of Belgae
Oh of the Belgic Neptune.⁶⁸⁶

I weep for Hippolyte.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Edward McParland, *James Gandon: Vitruvius hibernicus* (London: Zwemmer, 1985), p. 68.

⁶⁸⁶ The manuscript containing these lines is property of Thomas Dillon Redshaw.

MacGreevy's description of the sands and shore of Belgium 'Once on mean Belgian sands / By the mean shore of Belgium' can be compared to Eliot's *The Waste Land* when he stands despairingly on Margate Sands and can connect nothing with nothing. Here, the reference is to Belgium in the First World War. Invaded by the Germans with much savagery (or so Allied propaganda claimed), the reader is reminded of one of the places where and indeed why the Western Front campaigns were fought during the 1914-18 war. However, there might not have been as much if any military action on the unremarkable, even dreary (hence 'mean') Belgian coast. In Greek mythology, 'Hippolyte' is the son of King Theseus of Athens and the Amazon Antiope. Here, MacGreevy uses the French Hippolyte rather than the English Hippolytus.⁶⁸⁷

Let Neptune crumble in the rain!
Let the gods of Romans go after
The arts of Britannia
And the withering rose.

They are gone, they are gone
Gandon and Smyth
We have no Smygandons to-day

'We have no Smygandons to-day' echoes the music-hall song, "Yes we have no bananas, no bananas today".⁶⁸⁸ Smygandon is a composite of Smyth and Gandon. George Smyth, great-grandson of the famous Edward Smyth, had an office at 192 Great Brunswick Street that MacGreevy would have passed on his journey. Smyth was a statuary and stone carver who did small church commissions. His family address was in the Dublin seaside suburb of Sandymount.⁶⁸⁹ Sandymount strand, which has large expanses of slobland when the tide is out, is where Joyce had his Martello tower as featured in *Ulysses*. Following this, MacGreevy continues:

Our Gandons turn mariner
And, quarrelling, sail oceans.

In this phrase, 'Our Gandons turn mariner' is a reference to 1797, when Gandon was forewarned about the Rebellion of 1798. He was advised to leave Ireland, which he did, moving his family to London. In 1799 he returned to Ireland, where he was to live until his death in 1823.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 119

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Gandon, pp. 170-171.

Oh a wet sheet and a row
 And a wind that
 And the rain
 That's all there is for sweet Molly
 Though she seek in the night
 For dangerous occasions of beauty

Here the verse 'Oh a wet sheet and a row', echoes in fragmented, damaged form, as if weather-damaged, perhaps, the first stanza of a poem popularised by the Scottish writer, Allan Cunningham (1784-1842), later popularised as a song:

A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
 A wind that follows fast,
 And fills the white and rustling sail,
 And bends the gallant mast...
 Away the good ship flies
 And leaves old England on the lee⁶⁹¹

Following the description (and allusion to) a flowing sea complete with an aged and weather-inflicted sailboat is a reference to rain, which is 'all there is for sweet Molly' during the night, on her quest for 'dangerous occasions of beauty'. In Catholic usage, 'Dangerous occasions of beauty', alludes to external circumstances inciting to sin which are described as occasions of sin; this is a familiar theme in Catholic sermons and is encountered by the young and 'sinful' Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*.⁶⁹² The passage, alluding to 'Sweet' Molly's prostitution, is followed by:

Veni Creator...
Vivificantem...

'Veni Creator' is a fragment from *Veni Creator Spiritus*, 'Come, O creator, (Holy) Spirit', the Hymn to the Holy Spirit sung at Pentecost. 'Vivificantem,' as in MacGreevy's 'Homage to Vercingetorix' is an allusion to the life-giving Holy Spirit from the Nicene Creed. '(Credo) in Spiritum Sanctum Dominum et Vivificantem', '(I believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and giver of life'. On the surface, the meaning is religious. Yet perhaps MacGreevy's intent is to rather daringly suggest that art and beauty might be life-giving in the manner traditionally claimed for the Holy Spirit. This intention could be behind his reference to the Roman Catholic Confession ('How long since your last confession?') that follows:

How long?
 How long?

⁶⁹¹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 120.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

MacGreevy's reference to the last Confession also echoes Psalm 12:1-4:

How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me unto the end?
 How long dost thou turn away thy face from me?
 How long shall I take counsels in my soul,
 Sorrow in my heart all the day?
 How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
 Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God.

The confessional theme continues in the last section of the poem, Section V.

Section V

MacGreevy starts this section by addressing the political challenges of Dublin, and questioning when his subject had his or her last Confession:

How long since
 Long since
Ego te
 A lifted hand
And ego te absolvo –

'And ego te absolvo-' meaning 'I absolve you' (from your sins) is the absolution formula in Confession.⁶⁹³ In the quotation 'Your one hope of absolution', as before (section IV: 10-20), MacGreevy is addressing Dublin, 'the unfaithful city'. 'Our goddess is kept in Limbo' refers to the Catholic belief, which held that the righteous who lived before Christ had to wait until his death on the cross before being liberated from Limbo. 'Being put to death he preached to those who were in prison' (I Peter 3:18-19). Here Ireland, like the patriarchs and prophets (and like the Children of Lir), must still wait in hope for her freedom. Possibilities of the phrase 'La victoria es a los dos' include *La victoria es a las dos* (The victory is at two o'clock), or the more logical, *La victoria es para los dos* (The victory belongs to both of them). 'Both of them' could refer to Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, who also serve as the basis of the phrase 'This plaster riddle-me-riddle-me-rie'.⁶⁹⁴ MacGreevy continues:

But how should we not believe
 In that extra-real brightness
 Of political absolution?
 For reality is but the lifted hand
 Of oppression

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

During and after the Civil War, Catholics in anti-Treaty forces were excluded from church sacraments unless they gave allegiance to the new State: ‘Of political absolution... the lifted hand / Of oppression’. The image of the priest in confession is fused here with the oppressor’s hand about to strike. Political absolution was therefore possible, but MacGreevy is speaking here of the political absolution needed by the supporters, not by the opponents, of the new order.⁶⁹⁵

An undated letter to Jack B. Yeats explains the verse, ‘This plaster riddle-me-riddle-me-rie’, explaining that ‘The plaster affair [is] in front of the statue of the Prince Consort on Leinster Lawn’.⁶⁹⁶ To the west and east of Leinster House (the home of the new Free State Parliament) were statues of Queen Victoria and her Prince Consort Albert ‘Albrecht’. The ‘plaster affair’ or Cenotaph commemorating Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, was because the Dáil grounds were surrounded by sandbags in front of the statue of Prince Albert. It was erected on 12 August 1923, the anniversary of Griffith’s death.⁶⁹⁷ Wreaths were laid against it ten days later to commemorate the murder of Collins. The Cenotaph was a plaster and timber construction with a stylised Celtic cross flanked by walls with medallions (one on each side of the cross) for the two founders of the state; an Irish inscription translated, ‘to the glory of God and the honour of Ireland’ was on the cross shaft. The Cenotaph was replaced in 1950 by the Obelisk in the centre of the Dáil grounds. The monument, visible from Merrion Square once the defences of the Dáil grounds were dismantled, marks the last point on MacGreevy’s cab journey.⁶⁹⁸

Backfiring of Albrecht der Jude,
Rotting against rain-soaked wreaths against it

MacGreevy’s reference to ‘Albrecht der Jude’ refers to Prince Albert who was rumoured to have Jewish ancestry.⁶⁹⁹

And they
And it
And all
Wrecks
Artists
Married

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Property of Anne B. Yeats.

⁶⁹⁷ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 121.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.

Dead
 Soldiers in shadows
 Molly Malone
 And cabs
 And me
 Merely multiple
 In the wet night.

How long?
 How long?

‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ is punctuated by thoughts of Ireland’s centuries-long colonial past, conceived as a ‘sin’ that independence has failed to absolve: ‘How long since your last absolution? / Answer: *Seven hundred years*’.⁷⁰⁰ The same question, repeated in fragmentary form, brings the poem to an inconclusive close, ending not with a bang but a whisper, as Eliot would have put it, as it merges with the faltering hoof beats of its opening lines.⁷⁰¹ MacGreevy ends his poem with imagery of the hoofbeats of the trotting horse, and an indication of the date of completion for the poem: ‘*Easter Sunday, 1923*’. The leaders of the Rising surrendered on Easter Saturday 1916. On 29 and 30 April 1923, the seventh calendar anniversary of Easter Sunday 1916, the Republican forces in the Civil War declared a cease-fire and ordered those still in the field to dump arms, thus effectively ending the war.⁷⁰²

By ending the poem with ‘*Easter Sunday, 1923*’ MacGreevy puts a timestamp that reminds his reader of Ireland’s nationalist cause lying at the heart of Modern Dublin. His political and poetic aspirations commingle. He sought to achieve this through the incorporation of several aesthetic sources, from operatic to poetic, mythical to modernist. The influences behind ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’, Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Wagner’s *Der Ring des Nibelung* and, Dante’s *Inferno*, all had their part to play. Each had their own place in the creation of ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’, and MacGreevy was indebted not solely to one, but to all. The influences are wide-ranging, but work together to achieve a broad vision that incorporated MacGreevy’s Catholicism and Nationalism. ‘Crón Tráth na nDéithe’ is a distinguished poem of significant proportions that speaks to a Dublin that had gone through, and ultimately survived, a bloody civil war that saw a nation ripped apart for the achievement of a Republican ideal.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁰¹ Davis, *Life and Work*, p. 26.

⁷⁰² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 122.

Chapter VI

The Poet Among Paintings

Well ahead of his time and long before such attitudes were encouraged by Irish [engagement within a much larger European Union](#), MacGreevy thought himself European simply by being Irish. His complex identity as an Irish Nationalist, Catholic, and European Modernist permeated his life and published works. It is what can be learned from this that a greater understanding of MacGreevy's role as a leading Irish Modernist can be gleaned.

MacGreevy: Critic and Lecturer

[During](#) his stay in London, MacGreevy occasionally acted as deputy lecturer at the National Gallery, [a post he](#) obtained in September 1925. [In his letter](#) of introduction to [the](#) then Deputy Director, he asked if there might be an opening for a lecturer, 'even as relief lecturer'. He explained that he had written recommendations from a wide range of distinguished contemporary artists [including](#) 'Dermod O'Brien, P.R.H.A., Mr. Jack Yeats, and A.E.' as well as 'Sir John Lavery.'⁷⁰³ He had enclosed a magazine that contained a copy of an essay of fine art criticism, 'The Daemon of French Painting' published in the August 1924 edition of *The Dublin Magazine*.

Writing from his Chelsea [home](#) on 13 October 1925 MacGreevy confirmed that he would be able to 'talk on Constable on Monday.'⁷⁰⁴ No further correspondence between MacGreevy and the National Gallery of London is archived until MacGreevy's [return](#) to London in 1934. At this time, [the](#) Gallery was between Directors. When he enquired again about 'lecturing or obtaining some other work in connection with pictures', [he](#) enclosed a short summary of his qualifications.⁷⁰⁵ [He](#) followed up with references and enclosed a copy of 'Bosch and Mr. Roger Fry' published in *The Nation and Athenaeum* on [13](#) August, 1927. [This](#) essay was a response to 'Flemish Art. A Critical Survey' by Roger Fry, [Slade Professor at Cambridge and](#) a leading critic of modern art [as well as a painter in his own right](#). [Fry's essay](#) was originally given as a lecture at the Queen's Hall with reference to the Flemish Exhibition at Burlington House, and MacGreevy's article [credited it with](#)

⁷⁰³ National Gallery of London File 130.2 Lecturers 1925-28, letter dated 19 September 1925.

⁷⁰⁴ National Gallery of London File 130.2 Lecturers 1925-28, letter dated 13 October 1925.

⁷⁰⁵ National Gallery of London File 130.4 Lecturers 1931-34, letter dated 20 November 1925.

'high distinction'.⁷⁰⁶ MacGreevy argued that 'everyone who heard it and everyone who enjoyed the exhibition will want to possess [the essay]'. He further complimented publishers Chatto & Windus for presenting the essay in a pleasing format, explaining how the 'the photographic reproductions, over thirty in number, many of them full (quarto) page, are excellent'. MacGreevy was very complimentary of Fry: comparing him to Reynolds, whose famous *Discourses* Fry had edited, he claims

The Reynolds tradition is represented with, to say the least of it, more distinction than it has ever been represented since the death of Sir Joshua by Mr. Roger Fry, and it is characteristic of our age that Mr. Fry is regarded as an artistic anarchist, whereas, in reality, he is probably the only living English painter-critic who could fill the post of President with a dignity, an enthusiasm and an understanding or artistic essentials which Reynolds would approve.

In MacGreevy's opinion, Fry possessed a 'tireless industry not only in searching for but in expounding the principles of painting'. He further explained how the most important part of Fry's work has been his ability to 'integrate the modern theory of art into the aesthetic philosophy that Reynolds built up as a result of his study of the Italian, Dutch, and Flemish schools of painting'. MacGreevy views this as an 'ideal realised by the Renaissance Italians and by Rubens and Rembrandt'. At the basis are 'technical questions' which simplify 'the power to construct even such complex forms as the human figure by means of mathematical formulae'. However, MacGreevy also challenges Fry's viewpoint, which he finds limiting for the artist. In his opinion, 'painting as well as the other arts has its origins farther back than mere technicality. The best technique is created by the artist who wants to say what he has to say as effectively as possible. And what he has to say is not without effect on the artistic values of his work. Mr. Fry's attitude to Hieronymus Bosch shows his limitation most clearly'.⁷⁰⁷ The mentality of the aesthetic, as professed by Reynolds and used as a point of departure for Gainsborough and Constable, is seen as an inhibition to creativity.

In MacGreevy's opinion, what makes Bosch a superior artist to Fry is his intense preoccupation with morality, which remains an important aspect of MacGreevy's aesthetic, a legacy of his Irish Catholic upbringing. As MacGreevy

⁷⁰⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Bosch and Mr. Roger Fry', *The Nation and Athenaeum*, 13 August 1927.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

explains, 'no great artist is 'merely a pair of painter's hands';⁷⁰⁸ it is the ability to move past a 'preoccupation with determined shapes' and 'plastic form' that makes an artist truly influential. As he argues in his essay, Bosch

was clearly an abnormally sensitive man, sensitive in more ways than one, sensitive especially to the contrast between moral beauty and moral disorder. He probably knew the difference between moral and immoral experience and the states of mind consequent on such experience.

This morality was explored visually, through application of technical skill and in an intensity of shapes that enabled him to work out his own sense of mortal limitation. He was impelled to express them visually, and was 'commended as a moral influence and learnedly commented by Spanish pietists. That enigmatic and sinister figure Philip II of Spain, who found delight in the freest of Titian's mythological poesies, found edification in contemplating Jerome Bosch's pictorial sermons'.⁷⁰⁹ These sermons Bosch realised with a pictorial intensity that 'influenced not only Philip II but also El Greco and Goya'.⁷¹⁰

MacGreevy's achievements as an art historian and as an art critic were intricately connected. He saw contemporary and historical art as part of the same continuum. While this attitude was widespread in the first half of the twentieth century, before boundaries between modern art and the past were more clearly drawn, the fluidity between past and present was of particular relevance to MacGreevy as it provided the means for establishing a role for visual art within the cultural formation of the new Irish state.⁷¹¹ By linking past and present, MacGreevy's writings on art provide a rare attempt to make both contemporary and historical visual art, and Irish art in particular, meaningful and relevant to an Irish public.

MacGreevy's work as a literary critic and editor showed him to be widely read and well informed, while as a writer he produced a body of work that demonstrated an enriched knowledge of artists and art history. In his letter to the Director, he went into great detail about his experience in Paris. He wrote that his [position](#) at the Ecole Normale Supérieure [had](#) for three years, 'provided an opportunity of gaining fuller knowledge of modern art movements abroad and also made it possible to travel to places [he] wished to see at less expense than from England'. Italy [was a preferred](#)

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹¹ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 61.

[destination and](#) he ‘paid repeated visits...for periods ranging from three months to a fortnight’. This experience enabled him to ‘know every work of major importance and most of minor importance between Paestum [southern Italy] and the Alps’. He demonstrated a developed knowledge of France and commented on additional travelling throughout ‘Spain, Austria, South Germany, Holland, and Belgium’. He further established [an](#) extensive knowledge of ‘the art and archaeology of the British Isles’.

[MacGreevy was considered a man of integrity and](#) he had a spiritually devout nature. This is evidenced by the trust that fellow artists and literary critics placed in him. The references he provided were from contacts he had made while living and working in Paris- at the Ecole Normale and while employed as editor of *Formes*.⁷¹² Possibly the most important contact [he](#) referenced in his application was Monsieur Waldemar George, editor of *Formes* from 1929.⁷¹³ Jerzy Waldemar Jarocinski (1893 – 1970), known as Monsieur Waldemar George, was a Polish born, French émigré and art critic. Naturalised French for his voluntary enlistment in the French army in 1914, Waldemar-George settled in Paris after the war where he became an art critic and journalist. He frequented similar Parisian art circles as MacGreevy, and would later have an impact on MacGreevy’s art criticism. In *Richard Aldington, an Englishman*, MacGreevy comments on the way in which Richard Aldington and Jean Lurçat, ‘men who were haunted by the necessity of expressing the always living realities and consequences of the war’ [did not paint *natures mortes*](#). Instead, in the end, they ‘paint only *natures vivantes*’.⁷¹⁴ In a footnote in his monograph, MacGreevy makes a special attribution to the phrase ‘*natures vivantes*’, noting ‘I borrow the distinction from my friend, Monsieur Waldemar George’.⁷¹⁵ It is worth considering here that the common thread uniting Aldington, Lurçat, MacGreevy, [and](#) Monsieur Waldemar George is that they all fought [in](#) and survived the First World War.

In his monograph, MacGreevy goes on to explain how ‘the effect of the war on Aldington and Lurçat has been to bring their work closer to objective reality’, or *natures vivantes*.⁷¹⁶ He further notes how neither artist is in ‘immediate danger’ of

⁷¹² *Formes*, an international journal of the plastic arts, was published in Paris during the first half of the twentieth century.

⁷¹³ National Gallery of London File 130.4 Lecturers 1931-34, letter dated 20 November 1925.

⁷¹⁴ MacGreevy, *Richard Aldington*, p. 31.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ [Ibid.](#), p. 32.

‘returning to the indiscriminating realism of the nineteenth century’, because ‘the principal reality that has been impelling them to expression is so vast and so terrible to look back on, that, grasping its full tragic significance as they slowly and sensitively and thoughtfully have done, they cannot, in the nature of things, fall into the mere pathetic [sic] of, say, Monet or Zola’.⁷¹⁷ It is worth noting here how he has provided as examples a painter and a novelist, indicating how the visual and the textual belong together in his imagination. The *natures vivantes* that compelled and inspired the quartet of war veterans were the actual experiences of war and the horror that surrounded them.

It is also worth noting that Waldemar George was a follower of French post-impressionist painter Henri Rousseau (1844–1910). In 1931 George wrote as an art critic, ‘The avant-garde was full of yearning for a lost paradise and Rousseau came at the right moment. Fifty years earlier or later he would have gone unnoticed’.⁷¹⁸ The term *natures vivantes* not only relates to the use of the war as inspiration for Great War veterans in the arts, but also reflects the zeitgeist that captured the works produced by the post-impressionists and the avant-garde in the late nineteenth century prior to the First World War. MacGreevy’s use of terminology applicable to post-impressionist art, ‘nature vivantes’, in relation to an aesthetic and literary movement that proceeded directly from the aftermath of the Great War, illustrates his ability to connect disparate influences. This talent for establishing a deeper context between incongruous elements reflects his natural aptitude and proficiency in matters of art. It also reflects a distinguishing thread throughout MacGreevy’s art criticism that would serve him well as Director of the National Gallery, Dublin, later in life.

Poems

In May 1934, MacGreevy’s only collected volume of poetry *Poems* was published. This marked the distinction between the causes that inspired his poetic endeavours, such as his experience in the Great War and creative and literary affiliations in Paris, and the consequences – some of the first still anthologised Irish modernist poems, and his established standing as literary and art critic.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Roderick Conway Morris, ‘Rousseau’s Wide Circle of Devotees’, *The New York Times*, 28 July, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/arts/international/rousseau-wide-circle-of-devotees.html?_r=0 [Accessed 29 May 2017].

In his essay on MacGreevy, aptly titled ‘Tom,’ artist and writer Brian O’Doherty writes in memory of his friend and mentor. Recalling early readings of MacGreevy’s poems, O’Doherty conveys how he was moved by the impact of his friend’s poetic craft: ‘Tom’s poems knocked me out: a fragile line thrown up – but a line of great tensile strength, the next delicate line searching for and fitting perfectly into its own quota of space. There was something very visual and physical about those lines, almost like a loose passage of brushstrokes in a painting’.⁷¹⁹

Poet and novelist Vita Sackville-West (1892-1962), reviewing *Poems* in *The Sunday Times* (13 May 1934), likened it to ‘a wind... of freedom’:

It is difficult to estimate the value of young poets... who have read, perhaps too often, ‘The Waste Land’; and ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’. The indulgence and the spell are as yet bewilderingly strong. Still, a certain emancipation even in the midst of slavery, seems curiously to emerge. A tradition has been broken and, out of the breaking, a wind of freshness and of freedom has blown through the overlush coppices of poetry.⁷²⁰

Sackville-West [was](#) calling to the reader’s attention more than the sparseness of MacGreevy’s poetic style, [as she pointed to](#) the way in which his work [was](#) rooted in everyday objects and events. At times, his verse bordered on near-surrealism, with links to the bizarre, unnatural shapes of ruined landscapes and shattered limbs and trees on the Western Front. The impetus for much of [his](#) poetry [sprang](#) from some identifiable events: a conversation, a scene from the war, a moment alone with nature, the viewing of a masterpiece in a museum.⁷²¹ The experimental works of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce most influenced MacGreevy’s body of poetry. However, through [his poetry’s](#) active use of [visual imagination](#), MacGreevy [went](#) beyond both Eliot and Joyce. Imagism, more than any other poetic movement, gave his poems their distinctive quality.

As Irish poet Michael Smith astutely pointed out in an essay on MacGreevy’s poetic style, ‘the cadence of his free verse has the fine delicacy of Eliot’s poetry; but what MacGreevy learnt from the imagists, especially [Richard] Aldington, was the use of the image to articulate experience’.⁷²² MacGreevy ‘dispenses with narrative plot and emotional gush’.⁷²³ In fact, ‘it is the combination of his fine ear for rhythm and his

⁷¹⁹ O’Doherty, ‘Tom’, *Life and Work*, p. 269.

⁷²⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xx.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

skill in selecting the telling image that most distinguishes MacGreevy's poetry'.⁷²² It was the use of imagism that would come to embody the poetic style of MacGreevy's *Poems*.

Fighting for Nationalism: The publication of *Jack B. Yeats*

In January 1938, MacGreevy began writing *Jack B. Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation*.⁷²³ It is important to understand the two narratives that occur in the published version of the book. The main body of the text was written in 1938 [in London](#) and reflects his attitude and political and religious leanings at the time. [He](#) made numerous attempts to publish the book in London but was unsuccessful until 1945, after he had relocated to Dublin. The introduction and postscript were written [in Dublin](#) seven years after the main body [of the text was written. The publication of the book coincides with his residency in Dublin later in life and reflects the successful relationship he had developed with Dublin publishers.](#) The postscript reflects his development as an art critic and illustrates a strengthened critical acumen and literary style than contained within the original text. [The](#) introduction specifies that although the book was 'undertaken in the first instance as an act of homage to a great artist and great Irishman', it was not written from Ireland with a view of publication in Ireland, but instead in 'London, with a view of publication in London'.⁷²⁴ MacGreevy conveys here that the book is [not](#) designed to pander to the taste and preconceptions of bourgeois England [or Dublin](#). The norm in genteel London, he assumes, would be to have a merely superficial aesthetic interest in art while knowing nothing and caring less about Ireland and about the social context of art. [He](#) is also implying that his book is not narrowly partisan and [patriotically](#) Irish. Instead, [he is attempting to](#) tell a wider non-Irish audience about someone who is not only a great artist by international standards, first and foremost, but also [Irish](#). MacGreevy insists he is 'an Irishman, writing about an Irish artist, but faced with the problem of dealing with his subject in such a way 'as to interest an England that had no such advantage in the matter of Irish education as Ireland had had in that of English education'.⁷²⁵ A lesser complication is

⁷²² Michael Smith, 'A Talent For Understanding', *Life and Work*, pp. 267-270, (p. 269).

⁷²³ Although written in 1938, the publication contains a postscript written in April 1945. The book was first published in June 1945.

⁷²⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, *Jack B. Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation* (Dublin, Victor Waddington Publications, 1945), p. 3.

⁷²⁵ Ibid.

his ‘premature anti-Fascist’ feelings behind his writings, in a publication intended for a ‘London of appeasement’.⁷²⁶ Rather than conceding to ‘whatever was valid in English critical standards’, he writes for his friends who are ‘interested in Ireland and anxious for a better understanding of and with Ireland on the part of their own countrymen’.⁷²⁷ It is important to note that MacGreevy’s reference to premature anti-Fascism is a reflection, with the benefit of hindsight, on work he undertook before the [outbreak of the Second World War](#) and exposed the full horrors of Fascism and the folly of pre-war British attempts to appease Hitler [to](#) avoid war.

[It](#) is this very willingness to ignore the ‘critical standards’ of London publishers—presumably thought to emphasise form and aesthetic surface at the expense of social, political, and indeed religious context—that caused MacGreevy’s publication to be denied and rejected by ‘at least a dozen’ publishers [in London](#). Eight years went by before an Irish publisher decided it was worth publishing. When the literary work was finally published, MacGreevy could only hope that it would ‘not seem as un-Irish in Ireland as it seemed un-English in England’. [The](#) book belongs both in the narrative of [his residency](#) in England and the narrative of [his residency](#) in Ireland. With this in mind, it must be considered that upon publication of the book, MacGreevy did not ‘feel called upon to apologise for introducing questions of either religion or patriotism in this essay’. For in [his](#) opinion, ‘if art is concerned with religion and patriotism’, then he could not see ‘why art criticism should ignore them. And art is much more frequently concerned with them than is generally realised’.⁷²⁸ It is with this outlook that he wrote *Jack B. Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation*.

[With](#) regard to Jack Yeats’s association with Republican tradition, it is important to recognise that the work MacGreevy produced during this time consistently ‘figures the Catholic church as a progress force in Irish life’.⁷²⁹ In his mind, the two forces of [Republicanism](#) and Catholicism were inextricably linked. It was through these circumstances that contemporary Irish history was defined, in which ‘the various strands of a submerged but emerging Irish Catholic identity came

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ [Ibid.](#), p. 4.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 192.

together'.⁷³⁰ MacGreevy saw [Jack] Yeats as representing the people of Ireland at a time when the country was emerging as a nation state and was beginning to express its unique cultural identity through the arts.⁷³¹

MacGreevy first compared Yeats to Watteau in 1922 in his essay 'Painting in Modern Ireland: The Rise of a National School' published in *The Gael*.⁷³² Here, MacGreevy lamented the influence of mainstream European and English art on Ireland and stated that Jack Yeats was *the* leading light for a national school of Irish painting: 'a Velazquez is as Spanish as a Rembrandt is Dutch, or as a Watteau is French'. 'Though there have been fine Irish painters in the past, of none of them can it be said that he painted anything that was essentially, characteristically Irish'.⁷³² By the 1940's, Yeats had fully emerged as Ireland's first expressionist painter and was beginning to sell more work.⁷³³ MacGreevy's published writings on Yeats increased the painter's reputation at home and abroad at a time when Ireland was forging a national identity in both politics and culture.

Jack B Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation gave national and international viewers a clear framework within which to understand the artist's paintings.⁷³⁴ He was *the* national Irish painter at one of the supreme points in the nation's evolution, and MacGreevy used his writings to spark debate about Yeats' involvement with Irish politics and Republicanism.⁷³⁵ Given the political charge of MacGreevy's writings, it is prudent to look not only at the content but also his readership and influence. He praised contemporary critics for acknowledging a 'great occasion in the history of Irish art' through 'their desire to understand the art of Jack Yeats'.⁷³⁶ Appropriately, the connections MacGreevy was making in his writings about Yeats's work gave 'greater context for MacGreevy's Christology in the face of societal change in Ireland'.⁷³⁷ However, by not explaining enough about painting style and technique, in other words, by 'emphasising the historical and political

⁷³⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

⁷³¹ Brown, *Life and Work*, p. 204.

⁷³² Thomas MacGreevy, 'Painting in Modern Ireland – The Rise of a National School', *The Gael*, (27 February 1922), p. 19.

⁷³³ Brown, *Life and Work*, p. 210.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., p. 212.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

⁷³⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, 'The Great Exhibition', *Father Matthew Record*, (July 1945) pp. 3–4.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., p. 209.

backgrounds to the work over the analysis of the formal elements', MacGreevy's position as an art historian comes into question.⁷³⁸

In 1938 Thomas MacGreevy became chief art critic for *The Studio*. This position increased his already keen knowledge of contemporary developments in art history. As an art critic, his major output was in the form of short journalistic essays. With a preference for shorter, more conversational writing –rather than detail-driven and high-brow– MacGreevy demonstrated an understanding of British, American, and French art history and criticism. His essays of fine-art criticism show his intention and purpose as a historian, establishing what modern commentators have described as [an](#) 'almost photographic memory of works of art' and [a](#) 'keen sense of observation'.⁷³⁹ Through his writing, [he](#) was able to open 'the subject to the wider public' and make 'art a topic of general concern'. His informal and conversational manner of writing would become a central feature of [his](#) style. This 'sense of fluidity between history and the contemporary moment' would come through his accounts of Italian Renaissance art, which [he](#) would connect to modern Irish Art [through a focus on Catholicism](#).⁷⁴⁰

[In](#) February 1939, MacGreevy was invited [by the Keeper of the National Gallery](#) to 'give occasional lectures in the Gallery'.⁷⁴¹ [The opportunity was presented as 'an ordinary lecture to the public' for which](#) the 'fee is very small, ten shillings for an hour's lecture until the end of March and fifteen shillings in the coming financial year'. [While](#) MacGreevy was [asked](#) to choose his own subject, [he was requested to](#) 'avoid the painters of Cologne, Crivelli, Giorgione, Titian, the Norwich School, and Rembrandt'.⁷⁴² MacGreevy [agreed to](#) lecture on 'Ingres and French Nineteenth Century', [a topic he thought](#) would 'allow a fair amount of latitude', while enabling him 'to emphasise the qualities of the four Ingres in the gallery, literary and historical points of interest...which might be illustrated by reference to works by other painters in the room, or carried back momentarily to works in the Gulbenkian and the other French room next door'.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁸ Ibid., p. 210.

⁷³⁹ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 52.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷⁴¹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiii.

⁷⁴² National Gallery of London File 130.5 Lecturers 1935-39, letter dated 21 February 1939.

⁷⁴³ [Ibid.](#), letter dated 23 February 1939.

The City of God: An Experience and an Interpretation

In April 1939, MacGreevy was invited to volunteer for the Gallery, for work connected with the Air Raid Protection Services (A.R.P.S.) in emergencies at the behest of William Gibson, the keeper of the National Gallery. The assignment was described as ‘chiefly a matter of getting the pictures down from the walls to be taken out of London’.⁷⁴⁴ The assignment was designed to remove the paintings from the Gallery for safekeeping in Wales for the duration of the war. Throughout the spring and summer of 1939, MacGreevy took part in drills as a volunteer with the A.R.P.S. In August 1939, MacGreevy worked tirelessly in the evacuation of the artwork to caves in Wales. In a letter postmarked 9 February 1940, MacGreevy wrote of the event to his friend Ernie O’Malley:

I had been lecturing at the National Gallery with great success tho’ I says it – all the summer and was booked to go on all thro’ the winter. But now it’s all off and my income which looked as if I might begin to be solvent has in consequences been reduced by half. I am not grateful to the Hitlers of the world who are responsible for the war that put me back where I was. But one must go on waiting one’s time patiently and believing that God, or good sense of whatever one likes to call it, will give one one’s turn just the same, in spite of all the politicians, whether they be cretinous illuminate or unimaginative dullards.⁷⁴⁵

The removal of the paintings to Wales would prove catastrophic for MacGreevy: his lecturing at the National Gallery would be cancelled, and his income would reduce by half. The fear and immanency of an attack from Germany prompted a loss of employment and reduction of income, and created chaos within MacGreevy’s world. Although he would rely on his faith to get him through this deeply troubling time, the dire situation he found himself in prompted his relocation to Dublin in the 1940s.

In December 1940, MacGreevy gave a lecture to the members of the NUI Club in London on ‘The Cultural Dilemma for Irishmen: Nationalism or Provincialism’. He later delivered a similar lecture before the Irish Society at Oxford University.⁷⁴⁶ Here he referenced Padraig de Brun, a famed translator into Irish from Maynooth, who remarked that if the Irish ‘were to develop a culture really expressive of ourselves and our environment, then our artistic models were too one-sidedly

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, letter dated 6 April 1939.

⁷⁴⁵ Letter from Thomas MacGreevy to Ernie O’Malley. 9 February 1940. Thomas MacGreevy Private Collection. Autograph letter signed. *The MacGreevy Archive*. [Date accessed 16 September 2017].

⁷⁴⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Art and the City of God’, *Father Mathew Record* (May 1942), pp 3-4.

English'.⁷⁴⁷ Padraig de Brun had made his name known to MacGreevy when he translated the Christian tragedy *Polyeucte* by the great French dramatist Pierre Corneille into Irish. *Polyeucte*, a 'tremendous religious play' in five acts, was finished in December 1642 and debuted in October 1643. It is based on the life of the martyr Saint Polyeuctus, and is set in ancient Armenia during a time when Christians were persecuted there under the Roman Empire. *Polyeucte* is one of the last [seventeenth-century](#) French dramas with a religious subject; later playwrights were not as willing to mix religious and worldly themes.

In MacGreevy's opinion, Corneille had ['the Vision of the City of God'](#) that the great English dramatist Shakespeare [did](#) not. This [was](#) a bold sentiment, since at the time that *Polyeucte* debuted on stage, William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) was widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. What MacGreevy considers 'the Vision of the City of God' is Augustinian in concept. Augustine of Hippo (354 AD – 430 AD) was an early Christian theologian and philosopher whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. Augustine is viewed as one of the most important Church Fathers in Western Christianity. [The City of God](#), one of his most important works was written in response to allegations that Christianity brought about the decline of Rome. [It has become](#) a cornerstone of Western thought, expounding on many profound questions of theology, such as the suffering of the righteous, the existence of evil, the conflict between free will and divine omniscience, and the doctrine of original sin.

St. Augustine [argued](#) that Christianity was not responsible for the Sack of Rome,⁷⁴⁸ but instead was responsible for its success. He attempted to console Christians, writing that even if the earthly rule of the empire was imperilled, it was the City of God that would ultimately triumph. Regarding Corneille's translation of *Polyeucte*, there seemed to be 'no doubt' in MacGreevy's mind that

the *eternelle clarté* [clearness or limpidity] with which the French dramatist stated the divine vision of the universe is more heartening in itself and more congenial to the Irish mind than the despairing cynicism of the phrase which is

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ [On August 24 410 A.D., barbarian tribesmen under the Visigoth King Alaric entered the city of Rome and launched into a three-day frenzy of murder and plunder. The sacking played a major role in the eventual fall of the Roman Empire.](#)

so frequently accepted as summing up the great William's view of existence, 'A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing.'⁷⁴⁹

The phrase, which MacGreevy quotes here, comes from the despairing rant of murderous Macbeth near the end of the [eponymous](#) play. In this passage, MacGreevy uses his own mocking phrase when he implies that Shakespeare does not grasp universal existence. *Macbeth* was Catholic in tone and took place prior to the Scottish [Reformation](#). Although Corneille gives Irishmen access to the universal truth and wisdom enshrined in the Catholic religion that France shares with Ireland, Shakespeare also [understood](#) 'the divine vision of the universe' in a way that broadly [encompassed](#) Catholic ideology.

MacGreevy would realise the 'City of God' in the context of his life in the days leading up to the Blitz and the eruption of World War II. He would be forced to rely upon his faith to get him through this deeply troubling and uncertain time. His devotion to Catholicism and application of ideological principles towards his personal circumstances would ultimately enable him to prevail.

Back By Necessity: MacGreevy in Dublin- The Later Years

When the National Gallery suspended its lecture series in 1941 due to the Blitz, MacGreevy returned to Dublin. [Having spent a large portion of the previous fifteen years abroad](#), one may speculate that MacGreevy re-entered the cultural atmosphere of Dublin as an alien to his home country. The stifling, post-independence atmosphere would not have been congenial to the continental and modernist Irishman. However, because he was intellectually and emotionally sympathetic to Irish (mainly Catholic) nationalism [he](#) would have felt a sense of inner conflict, as there is at least potentially between nationalism and international modernism more generally.

It is important to take into account that MacGreevy's post-war work was produced in straitened circumstances. On returning to Ireland in 1941, [he](#) 'had no job, no prospects, and must have experienced the terror, not unknown to those...who resist fleeing to Academe, of imminent penury'.⁷⁵⁰ The 1940s were lean times, and in his search for employment [he](#) was obliged to fall back on whatever outlets existed. In an essay on his friendship with MacGreevy, O'Doherty [wonders](#), 'How did he live before he was appointed the Director of the National Gallery in 1950? Was it unholy

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 257.

poverty that drove him deeper into the Church's embrace? Did some generous churchmen appreciate Tom and support him modestly? Of all this, if true, Tom gave no sign'.⁷⁵¹

His penchant for modernist art, and literary and cultural criticism would not [be](#) welcomed after the Censorship of Publications Act took effect in the Republic of Ireland in 1929. While there was the potential for problems, it was not inevitable, as not all modern art and literature automatically [upset](#) Catholic opinion. [In spite of an](#) element of reverse culture shock, he would [quickly have learned to conform to](#) the political climate of 1940s Dublin. It is not surprising, therefore, that MacGreevy adopted a Catholic viewpoint for much of his cultural commentary.⁷⁵² Benjamin Keatinge explains, 'the exigencies of employment, the wish not to bite the hand that would feed him, undoubtedly accounts, in large measure, for MacGreevy's alignment with the Catholic status quo and its representative journals.'⁷⁵³ [However, this](#) judgement is too cynical because MacGreevy's alignment with Catholicism was a matter of conviction rather than mere expediency. As a Catholic with experience of other parts of Catholic Europe, MacGreevy did not need to adapt much of his behaviour to the cultural milieu of the Dublin he returned to. Given his religious identity, he could strengthen the advocacy of his instinctively Catholic convictions to make him better suited to his new environment. [On his relocation to Dublin, his](#) modernism did not quietly [disappear](#) to be quietly replaced by European traditionalism. Instead, the two coexisted, deepening MacGreevy's modernism and sharpening his sense of the complex relationship between the two.

Once in Dublin, he began a lecture series for Trinity College on the 'History of Fine Arts' for the Scholarship and Diploma in the History of European Painting. He wrote art criticism for the *Irish Times*, and, in 1942, became a regular contributor to the avowedly Catholic *Father Mathew Record* and its companion publication, the *Capuchin Annual*.⁷⁵⁴ His work for these [two Catholic publications](#) was an important, if slender, resource. It is arguable that the Catholic note in his articles and reviews were necessary to the outlets his work had found. These were clerical publications linked to the Capuchin [Order](#) in Ireland and [were the result of the](#) enterprising and

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

⁷⁵² Benjamin Keatinge, 'A Matrix of Correspondences: The Critical Voice of Thomas MacGreevy', *Life and Work*, pp. 65- 78 (p. 70).

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiii.

successful publishing venture engineered by Father Senan, a Capuchin friar. With a permanent staff of [twenty-five](#), the *Annual* had a circulation of 20,000 and was distributed as far afield as Australia and North America. Through this position, Father Senan [became](#) a lifelong friend of MacGreevy.

In the *Collected Letters of Samuel Beckett*, Beckett commented that his friend MacGreevy was '[r]ather under the Capuchin weather and longing to get away and not able to'.⁷⁵⁵ [His personal circumstances at this time help to explain](#) how [his](#) literary criticism ~~of this period~~ tended towards 'a narrowly nationalistic Catholicism in as far as it touched on confessional issues'.⁷⁵⁶ If there were accommodations to be made, MacGreevy did not find [them](#) dreadfully difficult to make, as his friend Beckett was more or less correct in his assessment that MacGreevy was doing 'the kind of work he likes, for the kind of people he likes'.⁷⁵⁷

[Apart from](#) the rather strident Catholicism of MacGreevy's critical work, the work he produced for *The Father Mathew Record* and *Capuchin Annual* was the most relevant way to frame critical discussions on Irish cultural production.⁷⁵⁸ The journals provided [him](#) with a populist platform for his ideas and an opportunity to guide the general reader towards an appreciation of Irish art history. Among the 'few avatars of culture' in Dublin during the 1940s and 1950s, the *Capuchin Annual* enabled MacGreevy to increase his knowledge of contemporary developments in art in mid-twentieth century Ireland. The *Capuchin Annual* had no proselytising edge, and its brown monkish cover offered a friendly invitation'. As a critic, 'MacGreevy was in a powerful position to not only influence the reception of Irish art but also to shape the contemporary art world'. However, as Anthony Cronin has noted, the *Capuchin Annual* and *Father Mathew Record* may not have been 'the ideal ambience for his talents'.⁷⁵⁹ As a prominent Catholic and friend of Father Senan, MacGreevy's views went uncontested in his publications. The tone of his criticism had mellowed from [his](#) modernist writing [of](#) the 1920s and he was no longer seeking to experiment with his literary voice or writing style. The central tenets of his views on both contemporary

⁷⁵⁵ Craig et al., *The Collected Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume II, 1941–1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) [p.](#) 32 (Beckett in a letter to George Reavey, dated 27 May 1946).

⁷⁵⁶ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 70.

⁷⁵⁷ Craig et al., [p.](#) 10 (Beckett in a letter to George Reavey, dated 20 May 1945).

⁷⁵⁸ Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 194.

⁷⁵⁹ Anthony Cronin, 'Thomas MacGreevy: Modernism not [Triumphant](#),' *Heritage Now: Irish Literature in the English Language*, (Dingle: Brandon Books, 1982), pp. 155–60, (p. 159).

art and art history remained the same and continued to promote the artists he had favoured during the 1920s.⁷⁶⁰ Because his views went unchallenged by his readership, Coulter and Kennedy suggest that the ‘cosy relationship between art, politics and the Catholic church promoted by the *Capuchin Annual* may have discouraged MacGreevy from airing his ideas in more challenging contexts’.⁷⁶¹ The sentiment implied by these authors is that MacGreevy was assuming the position of a ‘yes-man’ and pandering to his Irish audience. However, it can be argued that the strong Catholic element in MacGreevy’s writings was not just opportunistic but also a reflection of his strong sense of his Catholic heritage. It is the Catholic heritage of Ireland that needs to be asserted over and against the secularist aesthetic of England to help forge a new identity for Ireland in the twentieth century. As Egan puts it, MacGreevy was ‘an Irish Irishman, familiar with Gaelic language and story, seeking both to inform Ireland with the finest that the rest of the world could offer to bring it out of its insularity and to make Irish thought and sensibility internationally recognised’.⁷⁶² In this context it can be correctly viewed that MacGreevy fostered an understanding of ‘an appropriate standard of Irish art’ that projected both his ‘Irish nationalist and Catholic sensibilit[ies]’.⁷⁶³

MacGreevy in the Public Sphere

As a cultural commentator and art critic, MacGreevy was in a powerful position to not only influence the reception of Irish art but also to shape the contemporary art world. As S.B. Kennedy has noted, at the beginning of the twentieth century there was an almost complete absence of detailed discussion or analysis of art in the Irish press.⁷⁶⁴ Monographs were rare and there were few other outlets for art criticism. This lack of critical apparatus left a void that MacGreevy was perfectly placed to fill. Within this context, his views of modernist Irish art provided a historical context for contemporary art that both educated the public and provided a platform to view the work that illustrated roots firmly planted in the past. Through his prolific criticism, MacGreevy became a well-known commentator on art and culture

⁷⁶⁰ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 58.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷⁶² Egan, Mary Joan. ‘Thomas MacGreevy and Wallace Stevens: a correspondence’. *Wallace Stevens Journal*, 18.2 (1994). 123-45 (p. 124).

⁷⁶³ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 51.

⁷⁶⁴ S.B. Kennedy, *Irish Art and Modernism: 1880–1950*, (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1991), p. 6.

[and](#) two of his publications for the *Capuchin Annual*, ‘Pictures in the National Gallery’ and ‘Leonardo Da Vinci 1452-1952’, [were](#) later published independently.⁷⁶⁵ His prolific reviews effectively prompted serious art criticism in Ireland and his opinions made a significant impact on the writing of Irish art history that endures to this day.⁷⁶⁶

In 1942, and again in 1943, MacGreevy was invited to give the Hermione Art Lecture on French and Spanish art respectively. [This lecture, established in 1896 to coincide](#) with the Hermione Art exhibition, [is presented](#) annually by [persons of distinction](#). Each year the Hermione Art Exhibition features work by some of Ireland’s finest emerging and established contemporary artists. MacGreevy’s review of ‘The Dublin Painters Exhibition’, published in February 1942 and subtitled ‘Expressing Irish Ideas’, claimed that ‘a number of the artists represented have cast off English influence and, with guidance from the Principles of French art, have learned to be authentically Irish’.⁷⁶⁷ It is precisely this wider European tradition that MacGreevy sought to recover as the basis of an independent Irish intellectual tradition. At times he [claimed](#) that links between Ireland and Europe were broken by colonialism, whereas at other times he [suggested](#) there was ‘a continuous religious and cultural interchange’.⁷⁶⁸ The exhibition was dominated by female artists who participated in [the cultural exchange of bringing modernist ideas back to Dublin after-](#)
[having previously studied in Paris](#). MacGreevy’s review commented:

What an artist has to learn from those principles is... to be in his work his native and essential self... what Paris had to teach such artists as Nano Reid, Mainie Jellett, Norah McGuinness... and others of the Dublin painters, was to be, to the highest degree of consciousness of which they were capable, their Irish selves.⁷⁶⁹

For MacGreevy, the Irish had become ‘culturally Anglicised’, and this could only be

⁷⁶⁵ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Pictures in the National Gallery’, *Capuchin Annual*, 22 (1943), 386–443 was published as a book by Mercier Press in 1945, reprinted by Batsford, London, 1946. ‘Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1952’, *Capuchin Annual* (1952-2), 135-54, was reprinted as a pamphlet, Dublin, 1953.

⁷⁶⁶ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 61.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁷⁶⁸ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Ireland and the Renaissance’, *Father Mathew Record* (June 3, 1945), 3; Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Art and the City of God’, *Father Mathew Record*, (3-4 May, 1942), 3.

⁷⁶⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Dublin Painters’ [Exhibition: Expressing Irish Ideas](#), *Irish Times*, (6 February 1942), 2. *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

redressed by immersion in European traditions.⁷⁷⁰ The main point, however, was to re-establish or reinvigorate that process of exchange, by overturning or reversing the damage inflicted on the Irish psyche by colonialism. MacGreevy understood the fractured state of Irish culture and saw the cultural interchange with Renaissance Europe as the way to restore the Irish psyche. Further, through re-establishing links with continental Europe, he sought to 'reassert Ireland's place in the grand tradition of intellectual production sponsored by France, Italy, Belgium and Spain.'⁷⁷¹ [He](#) saw contemporary artists such as Mainie Jellett, Norah McGuinness, and Nano Reid – artists who had studied and worked in France – as opening the doors on a wider world that Ireland desperately needed to re-encounter.⁷⁷² [He](#) encouraged the public to take their work seriously and helped confirm the central role of women in the contemporary Irish art world. His demonstrative sympathy for female artists enabled [him](#) to shine a light on the progressive style of their work, their art as well as their creative influences.

In September 1943, MacGreevy supported the first Irish Exhibition of Living Art (IELA) and championed the work of Mainie Jellett and other female artists such as Norah McGuinness and Nano Reid. [He](#) was one of the few critics to unreservedly praise the IELA.⁷⁷³ He also tried to justify the exhibition to the public by providing the historical context of the Parisian *Salon des Refusés*. Contemporary art in Dublin, as earlier in Paris, might not have been encouraged by the art establishment and consequently rejected by the major exhibitions in Ireland; such had been the case in Paris prior to the establishment of the *Salon des Refusés*. With the IELA, contemporary art was now being given the exposure it deserved. MacGreevy took this a step further when he suggested that the IELA was an improvement [on](#) the *Salon* because it included members of the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) and deemed it as 'the most vital and distinguished exhibition of work by Irish artists that [had] ever been held'.⁷⁷⁴

In a paragraph of his review, MacGreevy focused on Mainie Jellett, then chairman of the IELA committee. Among his comments, [he](#) recognised Jellett's long

⁷⁷⁰ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Saint Francis de Sales', *Father Mathew Record*, (2 June, 1943) 2.

⁷⁷¹ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Writers on Art' *Father Mathew Record*, (February 3, 1944), 3.

⁷⁷² Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 196.

⁷⁷³ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 59.

⁷⁷⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Living Art – a [New Departure](#)', *Irish Times*, (16 September 1943), 3. *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

battle to promote modern art in Ireland and argued that the IELA [was](#) the ‘fulfillment of her most cherished ambition’.⁷⁷⁵ In the article ‘Mainie Jellett: [An Appreciation](#),’ published in the *Irish Times* soon after Jellett’s death in 1944, MacGreevy celebrated Jellett as a theorist, teacher, and artist. It was believed that Jellett had fulfilled her potential through late religious paintings such as *Madonna of Eire*.⁷⁷⁶ It has been argued that Jellett’s late religious paintings represented the culmination of her efforts to translate a foreign abstract aesthetic into a visual language comprehensible to her Irish audience. Even *Decoration*, one of the abstract paintings that MacGreevy had defended in 1923, is essentially a devotional work. Composed on a vertical format within a pentagonal frame, the abstracted forms suggest affinities with a Madonna and Child.⁷⁷⁷ MacGreevy enthusiastically celebrated religious art and found Jellett’s modernist interpretation of iconic Catholic images particularly compelling.⁷⁷⁸ In another [1944](#) article, MacGreevy [linked](#) Jellett to Italian Renaissance art [arguing](#) that a study for the painting *Madonna of Eire* ‘carries a far-off reflection of the glow of the golden age of Venetian painting’.⁷⁷⁹ These efforts to provide a historical context for Jellett’s work were a part of MacGreevy’s strategy to not only educate the public in the classical underpinnings of modern Irish art but also make Irish modernism relevant to his contemporary readership.

By exploring the impact and purpose of Jellett’s work, MacGreevy established a connection between contemporary Irish art and the history of art. His contributions to the history of European and Irish art of the pre-twentieth century demonstrated the [relevance](#) of [his](#) role as an art critic of contemporary Irish art. Through his critique of Jellett’s abstract compositions, [he](#) revealed that he was influenced not only by the production of Irish art but also by the writings of cultural historians and his own reading of European art history. Further, through his emphasis on the contexts in which works of the past were [created](#), he drew attention to the ongoing need for patronage and support for modern Irish artists who faced challenges. This

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁶ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Mainie Jellett: [An Appreciation](#),’ *Irish Times*, (17 February 1944), 3. *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

⁷⁷⁷ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 60.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Art Exhibition’, *Irish Times*, (24 February 1944), 3. *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

championing of Irish artists provided [him](#) with a key platform for his writing on contemporary Irish art.⁷⁸⁰

MacGreevy's published writings during this period came to identify the pitfalls and limitations of Irish nationalist and constitutional republican consciousness as it found expression in the increasingly conservative and repressive regime that comprised the newly liberated Irish Free State. He used his Catholicism with its inherent incorporation of the local and the national in the universal as a 'profound spiritual and intellectual resource to be mined for the greater good of Ireland in its quest for self-definition'.⁷⁸¹ These sentiments [were](#) reflected in his article, 'Dublin – [City of Art](#)' published in the [September 1944 edition of](#) *Father Matthew Record*, during the 'emergency' or Second World War. Because Ireland was neutral during [the war](#), it was particularly cut off from war-torn Europe and a resentful Britain. MacGreevy's emphasis on broader transnational ties and Catholic contexts are of notable importance.

MacGreevy's published writings during this time stressed [both](#) Ireland's cultural independence from Britain and Ireland's true home [as a part of](#) Catholic Europe. [In](#) his essay "'Too Absolute and Ireland Haunted": MacGreevy, Beckett, and the Catholic Irish Nation' [Kennedy argues that](#) MacGreevy's cultural production can be most usefully described as 'a form of constitutional republicanism', with 'lingering resentments' and 'frustrations with the post-independence state'. MacGreevy sought to resolve this conflict by seeking to outline the terms in which the post-independence state 'might reasonably seek to differentiate itself from England in quest of a truly independent political and aesthetic/critical life'.⁷⁸² *Jack B. Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation* is one of [the best](#) examples of this.

MacGreevy and Wallace Stevens: An Epistolary Friendship

MacGreevy was a man with a rare talent for many and deep relationships. He was a great letter-writer, and 'had the gift of stitching together different friends and acquaintances in mobile, ever-changing networks'.⁷⁸³ His postal networks 'must have offered stimulation, company and friendship', and he held considerable influence

⁷⁸⁰ Coulter and Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 56.

⁷⁸¹ Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 196.

⁷⁸² Kennedy, *Life and Work*, p. 193.

⁷⁸³ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 258.

through his letter-writing.⁷⁸⁴ One of the most tangible examples of MacGreevy's ability to connect with others is his epistolary relationship with the American poet Wallace Stevens, beginning in April 1948. MacGreevy had initiated the correspondence when a mutual friend, Barbara Church,⁷⁸⁵ told [him](#) that Stevens had [praised](#) some of his published poetry.⁷⁸⁶ This exchange ignited a correspondence that [lasted](#) until [Stevens'](#) death in 1955; [the pair only met once](#), when Stevens was already seventy-four.⁷⁸⁷

[By](#) this time [MacGreevy](#) had largely given up writing poetry [and](#) seems to have needed acknowledgement for his life's work. [He](#) wanted to know if the American poet, whom he had long admired, had seen merit in his work. [He](#) offered to send a copy of a *Jack B. Yeats: An Appreciation and an Interpretation*, as well as his own collected poetry.⁷⁸⁸ In response to MacGreevy's book, Stevens wrote:

Your essay on Mr. Yeats is right on the rightness of his realism. The mind with metaphysical affinities has a dash when it deals with reality that the purely realistic mind never has because the purely realistic mind never experiences any passion for reality — I think Mr. Yeats visibly does.⁷⁸⁹

MacGreevy had argued that in his choice of subject matter and his rendering of attitudes, poses, and expressions, Yeats had captured the uniqueness of the Irish mind and spirit; and he had included twenty plates to illustrate his claim. Later, when [MacGreevy](#) sent him a newspaper photograph of himself and Yeats, Stevens wrote, 'In his picture although Mr. Yeats has the lean look of the visionary, he also has the extremely live look of the man to whom reality means as much as the imagination ever could mean, if not more'.⁷⁹⁰ The importance of the fusion of reality and imagination has been well established as the very core of Stevens' poetics. He seems to have recognised this demand for reality in [MacGreevy's](#) work as well as in that of Yeats.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁵ Mary Joan Egan, 'Thomas McGreevy and Wallace Stevens: A Correspondence', *The Wallace Stevens Journal*, 18:2 (Fall 1994), 123-145.

⁷⁸⁶ Lee Jenkins, 'Minor Poet among the Major Players?', *The Irish Review*, [19](#), (Spring/Summer 1996), 113-120.

⁷⁸⁷ William Fogarty, 'Wallace Stevens, in America, Thinks of Himself as Tom MacGreevy', *Wallace Stevens Journal* 35.1, (Spring 2011), 54-76.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁹ Holly Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), p. 597.

⁷⁹⁰ Stevens, p. 652.

The relationship was mutually beneficial to MacGreevy and Stevens. Stevens, who never left the United States, had

established a network of foreign correspondents through whom he could experience voyeuristically the wider world. Through their letters and postcards, Stevens could import into his imagination, and into his own poetry, the ‘exotica,’ to use a Stevens-word, of farflung places like Cuba and, less exotic though further flung, MacGreevy’s birthplace in Tarbert, Co. Kerry.⁷⁹¹

The relationship between [the two](#) evolved to meet the ‘psychological needs of both poets’.⁷⁹² MacGreevy, as a poet who frequently chose to ‘pay “homage” of some kind to those writers and artists whom he perceived as his “masters,”’⁷⁹³ had developed a reciprocal relationship with Stevens who ‘needed imaginative passports into worlds beyond his immediate local environment’, and ‘preferred to correspond with minor poets - preferably foreign ones - than with his major contemporaries in America’.⁷⁹⁴ MacGreevy combined his cultural charisma with an artistic awareness to promote an ideal of Irish life that [placed](#) him in the position of offering his American friend the ‘centre of a creative, spiritual Ireland... and spurred on by his own desire to become part of that same coterie that he has abandoned through his inability to write more verse’.⁷⁹⁵ It was this centre versus periphery idea that fuelled the relationship between the two poets.

Throughout the duration of their correspondence, MacGreevy [left](#) a mark on at least three of Stevens’ poems and two of his last four major essays.⁷⁹⁶ These included [the following](#): ‘Tom McGreevy [\[sic\]](#), in America, Thinks of Himself as a Boy’, ‘The Westwardness of Everything’, ‘The Novel’, ‘Imagination as Value’, and ‘Two or Three Ideas’. In 1948, Stevens wrote a poem called ‘Our Stars Come from Ireland’, [an adaptation of MacGreevy’s](#) ‘Recessional’ and ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’.⁷⁹⁷ In Stevens’s poem, subtitled ‘Tom McGreevy [\[sic\]](#), in America/Thinks of Himself as a Boy’, ‘clarifies both the remarkable sympathy the Hartford artist felt for the Dublin

⁷⁹¹ Ibid.

⁷⁹² Jenkins, ‘Minor Poet among the Major Players?’ *The Irish Review*, p. 115.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁵ Tara Stubbs, “‘So kind you are, to bring me this gift’: Thomas MacGreevy, American Modernists and the “Gift” of Irishness’, in *Life and Work*, pp. 221 – 232 (p. 238).

⁷⁹⁶ Peter Brazeau, ‘The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy’, *The Southern Review*, (Summer 1981), 533 – 541 (p. 534).

⁷⁹⁷ Fogarty, ‘Wallace Stevens, in America, Thinks of Himself as Tom MacGreevy’, *Wallace Stevens Journal*, p. 61.

writer at the start and its creative [effect](#) on Stevens the poet'.⁷⁹⁸ Stevens' [lines](#), 'The sound of him/Comes from a great distance and is heard', [caused](#) MacGreevy [to](#) remark that the poem 'was like talking to myself'.⁷⁹⁹ Stevens used [MacGreevy's](#) poems as inspiration for his own work, thus further nurturing the relationship the two shared.

Stevens clearly found things to value in MacGreevy's verse.

Poems, influenced but not dominated by the techniques of Joyce and early Modernism ranged in subject matter from the Anglo-[Irish](#) War to art to love. In the autobiographical poem 'Recessional,' MacGreevy portrays the lure that his homeland had on his imagination during his years abroad and the sense of nostalgia it provoked. As author Peter Brazeau explains, 'The literary associations of the area, where a Jamesian hero had spent some of his last days, soon gave way in the young poet's mind to more vital personal associations.'⁸⁰⁰ Narrating an experience from his first trip to Switzerland, MacGreevy focused on the development of his thoughts as he stood on the riverbank at Engelberg:

In the bright broad Swiss glare I stand listening
 To the outrageous roars
 Of the Engelbergeraa
 As it swirls down the gorge
 And I think I am thinking
 Of Roderick Hudson.
 But as I stand,
 Time closes over sight,
 And sound
 Is drowned
 By a long silvery roar
 From the far ends of memory
 Of a world I have left.

The 'outrageous roars' brought to mind the sounds of the Atlantic off the Irish coast at Mal Bay. Overlooking the gorge, MacGreevy recalls himself as a child, who could hear the 'long silvery roar' of the cataracts 'From the far ends of memory / Of a world [he] had left' (his home in Tarbert). There is here also a reference to the more negative 'melancholy, long, withdrawing roar' of the sea in Matthew Arnold's 'Dover

⁷⁹⁸ Brazeau, 'The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy', *The Southern Review*, p. 534. See also Mary Joan Egan, 'Thomas McGreevy [sic] and Wallace Stevens: A Correspondence', *Wallace Stevens Journal* 18:2 (Fall 1994), 123-45.

⁷⁹⁹ Jenkins, 'Minor Poet among the Major Players?', *The Irish Review*, p. 115.

⁸⁰⁰ Brazeau, 'The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy', p. 535.

Beach’, a poem about personal and religious crisis. As Brazeau clarifies, ‘So attractive was the image of his youth and home conjured up in that sound that the Irish exile ended his poem pondering the advantages of drowning’.⁸⁰¹

Where listeners still hear
That far-away, dear
Roar
The long silvery roar
Of Mal Bay.⁸⁰²

The crashing and tumbling of the rapids mimic the sounds that so powerfully affected MacGreevy and created the nostalgic tone of ‘Recessional’. Wallace Stevens mimicked MacGreevy’s emotional grip when he wrote ‘The sound of him / Comes from a great distance and is heard’.⁸⁰³ MacGreevy’s view of a poet framed by his nostalgia for home as found in ‘Recessional’ resonated with Stevens, whose native region of Pennsylvania “served as an analogous point of imaginative reference in such poems as ‘Credences of Summer’, where Oley and other Berks County areas had some of the same hold on Stevens as the Mal Bay area had on the Irish poet”.⁸⁰⁴

In the second stanza of ‘Tom McGreevy [sic], in America,’ Stevens [rewrote](#) a stanza from another MacGreevy poem, ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’ to fit the meditational pull which Stevens had sought to emulate. In ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’, MacGreevy writes:

High above the Bank of Ireland
Unearthly music sounded,
Passing Westwards.⁸⁰⁵

For Stevens, the ‘unearthly music’ represented the ‘nostalgie du divin (which [was](#) obviously epidemic in Dublin)’.⁸⁰⁶ Note this phrase seems to be a kind of parody or inversion of ‘nostalgie de la boue’ (i.e. mud), often applied to the poetry of Baudelaire. In Stevens’ poem, however, the music changes both direction and meaning:

Over the top of the Bank of Ireland,
The wind blows quaintly
Its thin-stringed music,
As he heard it in Tarbert.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰² Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 41.

⁸⁰³ Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955), p. 455. All future references will be abbreviated ‘*Collected Poems*’.

⁸⁰⁴ Brazeau, ‘The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy’, p. 536.

⁸⁰⁵ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. 12.

⁸⁰⁶ Brazeau, ‘The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy’, p. 537.

⁸⁰⁷ Stevens, *Collected Poems*, p. 454.

Here, it is the musical sound MacGreevy heard when he was a youth in Tarbert that Stevens asserts [he](#) hears in the Dublin wind. The appeal that MacGreevy's hometown of Tarbert had on him was permanent. His feelings were deeper than 'an expatriate's homesickness, as his country village continued to draw him on visits during the years in Dublin when he was writing'.⁸⁰⁸

In the same letter in which he noted the lines from 'Homage to Hieronymus Bosch', he wrote that his correspondent's poems 'are memorabilia of someone I might have known and they create for me something of his world and of himself. It is possible to see that you were (and I hope are) a young man eager to be at the heart of his time'.⁸⁰⁹ This high praise was offered to MacGreevy in only the second letter Stevens sent him. The two poets had at this point only scratched the surface of the epistolary friendship that would arguably become 'the most valued . . . of Stevens' later life'.⁸¹⁰

In a letter to Barbara Church dated 19 August 1948, Wallace Stevens [revealed](#) the spiritual way in which he [viewed](#) his new Irish correspondent:

I need not say that if you go to Dublin I should like to be remembered to Mr. MacGreevy and all his saints. He sent me a cable and also a letter and he is a blessed creature. He is entitled, however, to more than thanks and that must somehow come about and I don't know how. I should of course write to him and shall.⁸¹¹

Steven's statement, 'all his saints', is a knowing parody of 'all the saints', a phrase used several times in St Paul's letters, e.g. 2 Corinthians 1:1, refers to MacGreevy's friends and associates in the church. Here, Stevens' suggestion that MacGreevy is surrounded by spiritual figures in Dublin [implied](#) that the American poet [had](#) already come to associate MacGreevy and his circle – including, most notably, Jack B. Yeats – with a level of sainthood that [related](#) both to their artistry and to their national identity. There is, however, a jokiness about the letter, as 'blessed creature' continues the affectionate mock-religious tone, and for Paul 'all the saints' just means 'Christians', not necessarily very special ones; so here it could mean just friends and fellow-workers in the cause of art and literature. Implicit, also, is the sense that Stevens needs to thank MacGreevy for a gift he has given him – even though Stevens

⁸⁰⁸ Brazeau, 'The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy', p. 538.

⁸⁰⁹ Stevens, p. 596.

⁸¹⁰ Jenkins, *Life and Work*, p. 146.

⁸¹¹ Stevens, p. 610.

does not quite seem sure what that gift is: for despite merely receiving a ‘cable and a letter’ from MacGreevy (this is early on in their correspondence), Stevens notes that thanking MacGreevy ‘must somehow come about and I don’t know how’.⁸¹² In a subsequent letter to MacGreevy, Wallace [wrote](#), ‘The *Banner*, the Dove, the Crown, the Virgin and arms of Kilkenny, so beautifully presented, do bring one from the world of the many to the world of the one. So kind you are, to bring me this gift, and your cares are many’.⁸¹³

In an article published in 1948, MacGreevy [argued](#) that in every society there are taste-makers whose opinions on art and culture influence others and educate the general populace about art.⁸¹⁴ Stevens’s two-part poem ‘Our Stars Come from Ireland’ [offers](#) the most tangible example of how MacGreevy’s own poetic voice influenced and helped to inspire others. Although there are [fifty](#) stars in the American flag, and indeed many [American](#) states experienced substantial early settlement by the Irish or those of Irish descent, Stevens [was](#) possibly referring to stars as in star-performers. Directly inspired by both the language of MacGreevy’s ‘Homage to Hieronymus Bosch’, and the childhood reminiscences of ‘Recessional’, [Lee Jenkins summarises](#) MacGreevy’s influence on Stevens as follows:

MacGreevy evidently occupied a special place in Stevens’ mental geography, and it could be argued that Stevens’ association with MacGreevy, going beyond the postcard imagination, contributed to the ‘regionalism’, or descriptions of places, of Stevens’ late poems.⁸¹⁵

[Stevens wrote](#) to MacGreevy: ‘Whatever I have comes from Pennsylvania and Connecticut and from nowhere else. That too, no doubt, is why Ireland, green as it is, seems to me so much greener than it is, and why you seem to be the best of all my correspondents’.⁸¹⁶ To see Wallace Stevens in an Irish light, in the light of his friendship with Thomas MacGreevy, is to see a bit more clearly the influence MacGreevy held during the latter part of his life.

In 1948, MacGreevy was awarded the Chevalier de l’Ordre de la Légion d’Honneur by the French government for his services to the arts.⁸¹⁷ We know from his

⁸¹² Stubbs, *Life and Work*, pp. 221 – 232.

⁸¹³ TCD MS 8121/7 Moore underlines ‘Banner’ in his letter to MacGreevy.

⁸¹⁴ Thomas MacGreevy, ‘Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris’, *Father Matthew Record*, (4 September, 1948). *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

⁸¹⁵ Jenkins, ‘Pressure’, pp. 146-7.

⁸¹⁶ Jenkins, *Life and Work*, p. 147.

⁸¹⁷ Jim McMahon, ‘Tom’s Saturday Friends in the Gresham’, *Life and Work*, pp. 261-265.

friend O'Doherty that he had often spoken about Paris, 'where he had moved easily among legendary artists and writers'.⁸¹⁸ If there is such a thing as a 'European consciousness', MacGreevy had it: as O'Doherty recalls, "When I put foot on the continent," he said once, "I have this feeling I could walk to Moscow". Away from Dublin, a sophisticate among sophisticates, his graces were appreciated as they rarely were at home. His senior colleagues showed obvious respect. Young scholars gravitated towards him.⁸¹⁹ MacGreevy's scholarship had been held in high regard, and honours followed.

Right Place, Right Time: A Dream Fulfilled

Still residing in Dublin, MacGreevy was therefore at the right place at the right time when the Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, George Furlong, retired in 1950.⁸²⁰ He had been seeking the position of Director for some time, having first applied in 1927, when the public servant Dr Thomas Bodkin was appointed.⁸²¹ His application for the post outlined his 'exhaustive first-hand study of the chief works of painting and sculpture in most of the public and private collections of the countries of western and central Europe'. His application, dated 16 March 1950, listed extensive critical and literary work, and lecturing at London's National Gallery. He noted that when his book *Pictures in the Irish National Gallery* was published in 1946 he had sent a copy to Dublin for the attention of Dr. Furlong at the Gallery.⁸²² He knew many of the members on the Board of Directors for the Gallery.

After the third attempt, MacGreevy was nominated and appointed [Director](#) of the National Gallery of Ireland on 1 July, 1950.⁸²³ The appointment heightened his feeling of achievement, as he had been experienced, qualified, and [eminently](#) suited to the post for some time. As Director, MacGreevy was 'aware that the success of this post represented...the pinnacle of his life's work'.⁸²⁴ Thomas MacGreevy was aged 57 when he attained the top post at Ireland's premier art institution. Although his life

⁸¹⁸ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 253.

⁸¹⁹ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 254.

⁸²⁰ Marie Bourke, 'Thomas MacGreevy, (1893–1967) and the National Gallery of Ireland, (1950–63): A Director of His Time', in *Life and Work* pp. 93–109.

⁸²¹ MacGreevy's first application for the position of Director of the Gallery, dated 12 March 1927, NGI Box 8 Administration/1927-staff. His second application, dated 18 May 1935, NGI Box 16 1935 Administration Part 1 of 2/1935 NGIA).

⁸²² NGI Box 121, Thomas MacGreevy Director's Papers 1950–57/1950 NGIA

⁸²³ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiii.

⁸²⁴ Bourke, *Life and Work*, p. 93.

was affected by declining health, his hard work would hallmark this later chapter, highlighting MacGreevy's sense of satisfaction at what he would accomplish for the National Gallery of Ireland.

MacGreevy had built the later part of his career by combining aspects of an Irish-Ireland agenda, with what the art historian Keatinge has described as a 'broad-minded, cosmopolitan embrace of the most daring aspects of high modernism'.⁸²⁵ The Gallery had acquired a Director whose sense of mission and purpose was intensified by a motivation to change the institution, [reorganise](#) the collection, and place the Gallery at the heart of the cultural life of the country. [Recognised](#) as a significant cultural figure, MacGreevy, having survived two world wars and economic recession, was determined that his vision for the Gallery would triumph.⁸²⁶ MacGreevy is fondly remembered by his niece, Margaret Farrington,

I remember how happy he was when he was appointed by his own country of his knowledge and appreciation of art. He was ready to do great work. He loved the gallery and wrought remarkable changes there, despite the fact that he had no assistant for most of his period as Director.⁸²⁷

When he assumed his role, MacGreevy wrote to the secretary of the Department of Education [to](#) set out his requirements for the post, [which were](#).⁸²⁸

to return the post of Director to a full-time one; to improve the salary of the registrar and head attendant; to appoint staff, including a secretary, an assistant director and restoration staff, with accommodation; to publish a new catalogue of the collection together with postcard reproductions; to hold regular lectures; and to install a new lift and build an extension to the building.

This challenging list was the outcome of his vision and ambition to reorganise the Gallery and to bring it in line with 'the chief picture galleries in other countries'.⁸²⁹

As Director in 1951, MacGreevy [was](#) appointed to the first Arts Council (An Chomhairle Ealaíon).⁸³⁰ In 1952, [he](#) published in the *Capuchin Annual*, 'Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1952',⁸³¹ which was reprinted as a pamphlet [the following year in](#) Dublin. [His](#) distinguished reputation as Director of the National Gallery was noted when, [in](#) July 1953, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York invited [him](#) to [represent the](#)

⁸²⁵ Keatinge, *Life and Work*, p. 66.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

⁸²⁷ Margaret Farrington, 'My Uncle Tom,' in *Life and Work*, pp. 245-248, (p. 248).

⁸²⁸ The cultural institutions had been placed under the Department of Education in 1924.

Bourke, *Life and Work*, p. 96.

⁸²⁹ Ibid.

⁸³⁰ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

⁸³¹ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1952', *Capuchin Annual* (1952-3), 135-54.

[gallery on](#) ‘the distinguished occasion of the holding in the new galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of the inaugural exhibition in honour of the Bicentennial Celebration of Columbia University’. [As a](#) guest of the Museum [he](#) was awarded a sum covering ‘round trip first class train fare from Dublin to Cobh, round trip first class passage on the “America,” and also a small fund for out of pocket expenses during [his] journey’.⁸³² Upon arrival in New York, the museum [further awarded him](#) ‘a suitable per diem allowance to cover hotel and other living expenses during the period of the Congress’.⁸³³

In January 1954, MacGreevy made his first and only trip to the United States as Irish delegate to the Congress in Art History and Museology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.⁸³⁴ Two side journeys from New York were arranged by the Museum, ‘one to the museums in Boston, Worcester, Hartford, and New Haven, and the other to Washington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore’.⁸³⁵ After exchanging some sixty letters, Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy finally met at a luncheon at the home of Barbara Church.⁸³⁶ Despite a strenuous schedule during much of his month-long stay as the Irish delegate, his meeting with Stevens had been arranged in Church’s New York apartment, during an overnight stop on a New England museum tour arranged for the delegates.⁸³⁷

The last decade of MacGreevy’s life remained an active and productive one. It was when he was finally acknowledged and awarded for his relative success as an art historian and art critic. In 1955, [he](#) received the *Ufficiale al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁸³⁸ In 1957, he was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the National University of Ireland. He was receiving [more](#) distinguished acknowledgement for his work over the years as an art-gallery man and art historian than as a poet. He then became executor of the estate of

⁸³² MMA records regarding International Council of Museum, 1951-1965 Box 1 Delegates Cuervo, Borda, Benoist d’Ay, Ainaud de Lasarte, Fakhry, Fierans, Aysin, Hendry, Hu Shih, Khalig, Malraux, McGreevy, International Congress, ICOM Box 1 Folder 2 Letter dated 1 September 1953, from Secretary of Metropolitan Museum of Art Dudley T. Easby, Jr. The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

⁸³³ Letter dated 1 September 1953, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

⁸³⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

⁸³⁵ Letter dated 1 September 1953, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives.

⁸³⁶ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

⁸³⁷ Brazeau, p. 539.

⁸³⁸ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

Jack B. Yeats upon the artist's death.⁸³⁹

Throughout his career, MacGreevy preferred to undertake shorter, more controversial writing on art history rather than detailed scholarly studies. His conversational and fluid style was influenced by his translation of the poet Paul Valéry's *Introduction to the [Method](#) of Leonardo da Vinci* in 1929, and continued into his later writings, most notably, *Nicolas Poussin*, his [longest](#) study at [fifty-five](#) pages. *Nicolas Poussin* was published in 1960 by the Dolmen Press.⁸⁴⁰ In an article published by *The Capuchin Annual* in 1960, MacGreevy [summarised](#) his attitude towards art history: 'For me, all art criticism, all art history, all art interpretation, remain, however well documented, basically personal and basically impressionistic, even in relation to the enduring canons of aesthetics'.⁸⁴¹ Noted for its 'humanism' and 'sense of grandeur', it has been considered 'a connoisseur's inspired if somewhat eccentric stroll' through the work of an artist MacGreevy honoured.⁸⁴² The Counter-Reformation figures prominently, along with Poussin's paintings (once he said, 'It's the counter-revolutions that make revolution bloody').⁸⁴³ In 1962, MacGreevy was made *Officier de la Légion d'honneur*,⁸⁴⁴ and was asked by the Cultural Relations Committee of the Department of External Affairs to act as a commissioner and [organiser](#) of the Yeats exhibition for the Irish section of the Biennale in Venice.⁸⁴⁵

Towards the end of his Directorship, [he](#) was asked to write an autobiographical memoir, at the request of his [old](#) friend Brian O'Doherty, [whom he had mentored since he was a young lad](#). O'Doherty had often wondered about the poet,

what went to the making of Thomas MacGreevy? How had that extraordinary complex of connoisseurship, knowledge, generosity, invention and literary gifts, which roamed with ease across history and modernism, been assembled behind the high forehead (hair brushed straight back) and the blunt, square face?⁸⁴⁶

O'Doherty tenderly recalls of his mentor,

⁸³⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid., p. xxiv.

⁸⁴¹ Thomas MacGreevy, 'Art [Criticism](#) and [Science](#)', *Capuchin Annual*, 27, (1960), 161-70, (p. 164). *Thomas MacGreevy Archive*.

⁸⁴² O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 253.

⁸⁴³ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁴ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

⁸⁴⁵ Brown, *Life and Work*, p. 208.

⁸⁴⁶ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 259.

I saw MacGreevy as a precious one-man archive that should not be lost. An editor from the *Atlantic Monthly Press* asked me to write a book I didn't want to write. After sharing with him Tom's pedigree (poet, museum director, connoisseur) and showering him with names – including T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Hemingway [sic], Joyce and Yeats, – the editor (tall, tweedy, no socks, indelibly WASP) became, as the Americans say, enthused.⁸⁴⁷

After the connection was made, [MacGreevy](#) began to write his memoir. Perhaps a year later, in MacGreevy's 'airy office at the National Gallery', O'Doherty caught a glimpse of the long-anticipated memoir. A [manuscript](#) in progress of [about one hundred](#) pages, brought [MacGreevy](#) at length 'through his Kerry childhood', and ended 'with the young MacGreevy outside Buckingham Palace watching a Royal investiture'. There was 'not a word of Joyce, Beckett, Stevens, Eliot London, Paris'. O'Doherty, knowing that 'when the *Atlantic* editor read this [he] would drop Tom',⁸⁴⁸ does not say what ever happened to the manuscript; [it was simply](#) never published.

MacGreevy retired from the National Gallery [in 1963 after two heart attacks while serving as Director](#). He [gave](#) failing health as his reason for retirement. [In](#) retirement, [he](#) received the Silver Cultural Medal of the *Direzione Generale delle Relazioni Culturali* from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and *Some Italian Pictures in the National Gallery of Ireland* was published in 1963. MacGreevy died [in Dublin](#) on 16 March 1967, the eve of St. Patrick's Day.⁸⁴⁹ Family and friends 'gathered at Donnybrook church to say goodbye to him on a cold rainy day,' and 'missed him greatly.' O'Doherty fondly remembers [him](#) as

a gentle, gentle soul, a scholar, a lover of art (Poussin was one of his specialist studies), a European figure, a poet of note, a proud Kerryman, an innocent in ways despite all his travels and experiences and friendships with so many of the avant-garde European figures of the time.⁸⁵⁰

The 'kindly religious poet and European artist' was laid to rest in Mount Jerome Cemetery.⁸⁵¹ Many years later, after [Samuel](#) Beckett received the Nobel Prize for Literature, O'Doherty wrote to him to ask him if he would write a line or two about [MacGreevy's](#) contribution as a writer. This he did by return post. Beckett's reminiscences were given to the Comprehensive School in Tarbert 'so that it could be framed on a wall to remind the children of the village that from this small place an

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 259-260.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

⁸⁴⁹ Schreibman, *Poems*, p. xxiv.

⁸⁵⁰ O'Doherty, *Life and Work*, p. 264.

⁸⁵¹ Ibid.

important man of European letters was born, who always remained proud of his roots',⁸⁵²

MacGreevy occupies a special place in the history and development of Irish Modernism. He was more than the gregarious, cultured aesthete he became in life. He had a special gift of cultivating close relationships with giants of modern literature, both American and European. He was a man of merit, held in high esteem by the heavyweights of Modernism whose own talents were nurtured by their proximity to MacGreevy. The example he set paved the way for others to achieve success. To continue his legacy, his place of prominence must be repositioned at the forefront of Irish Studies.

⁸⁵² Ibid.

Conclusion

Thomas MacGreevy haunts the margins of modernist literary and art history. All too often, he has appeared as the man in the middle around whom a largely ignored tradition of international modernism in Ireland had happened and had been waiting to be rediscovered. He is too frequently known as someone who played a critical role in the lives of those who went on to achieve greater fame, including Samuel Beckett, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce. He is also known as a poet who absorbed the modernist influences around him to write, with his own critical contributions towards the development of Irish Modernism largely forgotten or ignored. For others, he is known as one of Ireland's few art critics of the first half of the twentieth century, a champion of modernist art who published a selection of articles in various publications.

In some ways, he was one of the first modernists. His life and work present him as an active voice in the contentious cultural debates about art, poetry, and modernity that emerged in Ireland immediately after the First World War in the wake of the newly independent Free State. His rehabilitation from his war experiences came through in poems that sought to address the moral impact he felt on return from the trenches to a tense and politically fraught, indeed fracturing, homeland. In these poems, he sought to reconcile his war experience with the hostility of many Irish towards the British upon his return. It was in a turbulent Ireland that MacGreevy's war-troubled imagination had to find expression.

His ideological leaning towards Catholicism leant himself steadily to the Nationalist cause. He aligned himself with the cultural nationalism of his peers. The theological questions and nationalist ideology with which he returned to Dublin after the war greatly influenced his role as a literary critic and writer, as well as an art historian and art critic. His literary associations with other modernists of the interwar period, including W.B. Yeats and James Joyce, were crucial to his development as a modernist. The physical detachment from his homeland in the nineteen twenties and thirties was highly influential in his growing understanding of the transnational bonds of Catholicism. His ability to connect disparate influences together through his commitment to Catholicism, demonstrated by his deep conviction in a unified Catholic Europe of which he felt a part of, greatly enhanced his identity as a Modernist and as an Irish Catholic. His modernism was determined by the European locations where he lived, locations that he primarily chose because of their strong

Catholic heritage and culture (such as Spain, Belgium, Italy and France). Even locations such as London (which were not predominantly Catholic but had a long history of Catholic struggle and religious strife) crystallised his sense of nationalism, through his complex network of Irish émigrés, and literary and artistic affiliations and contacts. He was never far from Dublin and the Ireland of his youth. His basic conviction that Irish traditions can be juxtaposed against, and intertwined with, non-native traditions at the heart of European culture created space for an international identity to emerge.

While the journals he worked for provided MacGreevy with a populist platform for his ideas and an opportunity to guide the general reader towards an appreciation of Irish art history, MacGreevy realised it was vital for those engaging with Irish culture to be more aware of European rather than British traditions. His writings show his concern for and commitment to a de-anglicisation of Irish art, and a re-emergence of Gaelic and Irish identity within the art world and broader public sphere of the newly formed Free State.

The transnational influences and cultural backgrounds that fed into his writings distinguished him from other leading international modernists with whom he might be compared. His distinct appreciation of and understanding of European art history and Catholic identity enabled him to bring something of his own to his published works and literary and artistic career. He stood for a position about art rather than for or against a single movement within art. His emphasis on broader transnational ties and the Catholic context of European Art are of notable importance. They provided an impetus for his scholarship, which was ultimately held in high regard, as evidenced by the honours that followed: the Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government (1948); Appointment as Director of the National Gallery of Ireland (1950); Invitation to serve as the Irish delegate to the Congress in Art History and Museology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1953-4); The *Ufficiale al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1955); An honorary Doctorate of Letters from the National University of Ireland (1957); Made *Officier de la Légion d'honneur* and asked by the Cultural Relations Committee of the Department of External Affairs to act as a commissioner and organiser of the Yeats exhibition for the Irish section of the Biennale in Venice (1962); Finally, the Silver Cultural Medal of the *Direzione Generale delle Relazioni Culturali* from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(1963). MacGreevy received more distinguished acknowledgement for his work over the years as an art historian, critic, and gallery man than as a poet. His deeply felt Catholicism and sense of Irishness as part of a greater European literary and artistic heritage enabled him to forge native and continental resonances into a distinctly modern sensibility. He wrote with a broad range of European influences in mind, and his modernism can be re-evaluated in light of his understanding as an international nationalist and Modernist Catholic.

The role he played as a leading international modernist was driven by his desire to overturn or reverse the damage inflicted on the Irish psyche by colonialism. He sought to achieve this through re-establishing a coherent understanding of Ireland as a nation in harmony with the national cultures of Continental and Catholic Europe. His deeply felt Catholicism and his sense of Irishness as part of a greater European literary and artistic heritage enabled him to forge native and continental resonances into a distinctly modern sensibility. It is precisely this wider European tradition, one that is both available and remote, that he sought to recover as the basis of an independent Irish intellectual tradition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished:

I have not separately listed the unpublished material that can be and has been accessed electronically through the MacGreevy Archive (www.macgreevy.org).

These archives can also be accessed at the National Library, Ireland, Trinity College, Dublin, and University College, Dublin.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

File of correspondence between the MMA and international delegates including letters from 1951-65.

MMA records regarding International Council of Museums, 1951-1965 Box 1
Delegates Cuervo, Borda, Benoist d'Ay, Ainaud de Lasarte, Fakhry, Fierans, Aysin, Hendry, Hu Shih, Khalig, Malraux, McGreevy, International Congress, 1COM Box 1 Folder 2 Letter dated 1 September 1953, from Secretary of Metropolitan Museum of Art Dudley T. Easby, Jr.

National Archives, Kew (London)

MacGreevy Service Record, MS. no. 64448 National Archives, Kew.

National Gallery, London

File 130: correspondence between the NGL and the museum's lecturers including letters 1925-39.

Unpublished Theses:

Lucey, Dermot. 'Cork public opinion and the First World War', (MA thesis, University College, Cork, 1972).

Moss, Rhiannon Sarah. Irish Modernism in an International Frame: Thomas MacGreevy, Sean O'Faolain and Samuel Beckett in the 1930's (Ph.D. thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2009).

Pogorzelski, Randall J. 'Epic and the Nation in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Joyce's *Ulysses*'. (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2007).

Published:

Some of the material used has been accessed through *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*. Original sources have been provided.

Ackroyd, Peter. *T.S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

Adams, Henry. *Mont St. Michel and Chartres* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

Anon. 'Portrait Gallery: Thomas MacGreevy'. *The Irish Times*. April 1956.

- Anon. 'Art: Joan Junyer'. *TIME* (30 July 1945). Accessed 30 March 2017.
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,801682,00.html>
- Anon. 'Art: Flowing Fountain'. *TIME* (9 June 1952) Accessed 30 March 2017.
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,806473,00.html>
- Anon. 'Hieronymus Bosch, Painter of Our Greatest Fears', *The Economist*, (27 February 2016).
- Arnold, Bruce. *Jack Yeats* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).
- Athill, Catherine. *Phaidon Book of the Opera* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1979).
- Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford English Literary History Vol. 10 1910-1940, The Modern Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Bartlett, Thomas and Jeffery, Keith (eds.), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- Bauerle, Ruth H. *Picking up airs: Hearing the music in Joyce's text* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
- Beasley, Rebecca. *Theorists of Modern Poetry. T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).
- Beckett, Samuel. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Vol. 2, 1941-1956*. Ed. George Craig et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Bentley, Edmund. *Far Horizon, A Biography of Hester Dowden: Medium and Psychic Investigator* (London: Rider and Company, 1951).
- Bew, Paul. *Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism 1912-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
- Biagini, Eugenio & Mulhall, Daniel. *The Shaping Of Modern Ireland: A Centenary Assessment* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2016).
- Bowen, Zack R. *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry Through Ulysses* (New York: Gill and Macmillan, 1975).
- Bowra, C.M. *The Heritage of Symbolism*. (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1943).
- Boxall, Peter. *Since Beckett* (Hambledon: Continuum, 2009).
 <<http://www.myilibrary.com?ID=219966>> (accessed 5 January 2017).
- Brazeau, Peter. 'The Irish Connection: Wallace Stevens and Thomas MacGreevy', *The Southern Review* (Summer 1981). 533 – 541.
- Brearton, Fran. *The Great War and Irish Poetry W.B. Yeats – Michael Longley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

- Bronzwaer, W.J.M. *Tense in the Novel: An Investigation of Some Potentialities of Linguistic Criticism* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1970).
- Brown, Karen E. *'The Yeats Circle: Verbal and Visual Relations In Ireland'* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).
- Brown, Terence. *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History, 1922–1985* (London: Fontana, 1985).
- Brown, Terence. 'The Counter-Revival 1930-65: Poetry' in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* ed. Seamus Deane (Derry: Field Day, 1991) Vol. 3, 129-34.
- Browning, Robert. *Browning: Poetical Works 1833-1864*. Ian Jack (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- Browning, Robert. *The Poems*. John Pettigrew and Thomas J. Collins (eds.) Vol. 1, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).
- Caesar, Julius. *The Battle for Gaul*, trans. Anne and Peter Wiseman (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980).
- Callan, Patrick. 'British Recruitment in Ireland 1914-1918', *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, 48 (1963). 41-50.
- Cleary, Joe and Connolly, Claire (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- Cleary, Joe. *Outrageous Fortune: Capital and Culture in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2007).
- Cole, Sarah. *At the Violet Hour: Modernism and Violence in England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Connolly, James. *A Socialist and War, 1914–1916*. P.J. Musgrove (ed.) (London: Lawrence, 1941).
- Connolly, S.J. (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- Coolahan, John. 'Thomas MacGreevy: The Man and His Work', *The Listowel Literary Phenomenon* (Connemara, 1994). 60-82.
- Cooper, Bryan. *The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1918) (foreword by John Redmond).
- Corkery, Daniel. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature: A Study* (London: Longman, 1931).
- Coughlan, Patricia and Davis, Alex (eds.), *Modernism and Ireland: The Poetry of the 1930s* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995).

- Crookshank, Anne and the Knight of Glin. *Ireland's Painters 1600-1940* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).
- Cronin, Anthony. 'Thomas MacGreevy: Modernism Not Triumphant.' *Heritage Now: Irish Literature in the English Language* (Dingle: Brandon Books, 1982). 155-160.
- Cronin, Anthony. *Samuel Beckett, The Last Modernist*. (London: Flamingo, 1997).
- Cross, F.L. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- Cross, Tom Peete and Slover, Clark Harris (eds.), *Ancient Irish Tales* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936).
- Cullingford, Elizabeth. *Yeats, Ireland, and Fascism* (London: Macmillan, 1981).
- Cunningham, Valentine. *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- Davis, Alex. 'Irish Poetic Modernisms: A Reappraisal'. *Critical Survey*. 1996.
- Dawe, Gerald. *False Faces: Poetry, Politics, Place* (Belfast: Lagan Press, 1994).
- Dawe, Gerald. *Earth Voices Whispering: An Anthology of Irish War Poetry 1914-1945* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2008).
- Dawe, Gerald. *Of War and War's Alarms, Reflections on Modern Irish Writing* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2015).
- de Blacam, Aodh. 'England To-Day – Catholicism on the Defensive' in the *Irish Rosary* 40.1 (January, 1936). 16-23.
- Deming, Robert (ed.), *James Joyce, The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970). Vol. I
- Devane, R.S. 'A Catholic Social Programme: The Basis and Hope of National Unity'. *The Irish Monthly*. Vol. 64, No. 751 (January 1936). 17-24.
- Duffy, Séan (ed.), *Medieval Dublin XIII, Proceedings of the Friends of Medieval Dublin Symposium 2011* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013).
- Dungan, Myles. *Distant Drums: Irish Soldiers in Foreign Armies* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1993).
- Eagleton, Terry. *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995).
- Egan, Mary Joan. 'Thomas MacGreevy and Wallace Stevens: A Correspondence'. *Wallace Stevens Journal*, 18.2 (1994). 123-45.

- Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (London: Black Swan, 1990).
- Eliot, T.S. *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1940).
- Eliot, T.S. 'What Dante means to Me' in *To Criticize the Critic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965). 125-135.
- Eliot, T.S. *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber, 1969).
- Eliot, T.S. "'Ulysses', Order, and Myth' from *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, edited with an introduction by Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975). 175-78.
- Ellis, Stevens. "Turning Ireland English" BBC. 02/17/2011.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/elizabeth_ireland_01.shtml. Date accessed 09/09/2017.
- Ellmann, Richard (ed.), *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).
- Field, Frank. *British and French Writers of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- Fogarty, William. 'Wallace Stevens, in America, Thinks of Himself as Tom MacGreevy' *Wallace Stevens Journal* Vol 35. No 1, Spring 2011.
- Foster, Roy. *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).
- Foster, Roy. 'Orpen and the New Ireland' in *William Orpen, Politics, Sex, and Death* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2005). 63-75.
- Foster, Roy. *W.B. Yeats: A Life, Volume II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- Fowler, W. Warde. *Julius Caesar and the Foundation of the Roman Imperial System* (New York: Putnam, 1892).
- France, Peter. *The New Oxford Companion To Literature In French* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Fraser, G.S. *The Modern Writer and His World* (London: Derek Verschoyle, 1953).
- Gandon, James. *Life of James Gandon, Esq.* (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1846).
- Gordon, Lyndall. 'The Composition of *The Waste Land*' in Lyndall Gordon (ed.) *T.S. Eliot, An Imperfect Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). 168-75.
- Gray, Piers. *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development 1909-1922* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1982).

- Gwynn, Denis. *The Life of John Redmond* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1932).
- Hanke, John W. *Maritain's Ontology of the Work of Art* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).
- Hansen, Arlen J. *Expatriate Paris* (New York: Arcade Publishing, Little, Brown and Company, 1990).
- Harding, Jason. *The Criterion Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- Hargrove, Nancy Duvall. *T.S. Eliot's Parisian Year* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2009).
- Harmon, Maurice. 'The Era of Inhibitions: Irish Literature from 1920-60' in *Irish Writers and Society at Large* (ed.) Masaru Sekine (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1985). 31-41.
- Harrison, S.J. 'Some views of the *Aeneid* in the twentieth century' in S.J. Harrison (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990). 1-20.
- Hart, Liddell. *History of the First World War* (London: Papermac, 1997).
- Hodgart, Matthew J. C. and Worthington, Mabel P. *Songs in the Works of James Joyce* (New York: Published for Temple University Publications by Columbia University Press, 1959).
- Hodgart, Matthew J. C. and Bauerle, Ruth. *Joyce's Grand Operoat: Opera in Finnegans Wake* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
- Howatson, M.C. (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- Huyssen, Andres. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).
- Hynes, Samuel. *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Bodley Head, 1976; repr. London: Pimlico, 1992).
- Jeffery, Keith. *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Jenkins, Lee. 'Thomas MacGreevy and the Pressure of Reality', *The Wallace Stevens Journal*. Fall 1994. 146-156.
- Jenkins, Lee. *Wallace Stevens: Rage for Order* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999).

- Jones, Geniuses. *Approach to the Purpose: A Study of the Poetry of T.S. Eliot* (London: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1964).
- Jordan, Gerald. *British Military History: A Supplement to Robin Higham's Guide to the Sources* (New York: Garland, 1988).
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000).
- Joyce, Stanislaus. *My Brother's Keeper* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982).
- Kelleher, Margaret and O'Leary, Philip (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature Volume II: 1890-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Kennedy, S.B. *Irish Art and Modernism: 1880-1950* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, 1991).
- Kennedy, S. 'Beckett Reviewing MacGreevy: A Reconsideration.' *The Irish University Review*, 2005. 273-88.
- Kiberd, Declan. 'Beckett and Kavanagh: Comparatively absurd?' in *Hermathena* 141 (Winter 1986). 45-55.
- Kiberd, Declan. *Inventing Ireland, The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996).
- Kiberd, Declan and P.J. Matthews, *Handbook of the Irish Revival, An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writings 1891-1922* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).
- Kitchin, G.W. *A History of France Down to the Year 1453* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).
- Knowles, Sebastian D.G. *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce* (New York: Garland Pub, 1999).
- Knowlson, J. *Damned To Fame: A Life of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).
- Kojecky, Roger. *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971).
- Latham, Sean. *Am I a Snob? Modernism and the Novel* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).
- Lee, J.J. *Ireland 1912-1985, Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- Leech, Geoffrey N. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1969).

- Leed, Eric J. *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
- Littlewood, Ian. *Paris: A Literary Companion* (London: John Murray, 1987).
- Littlewood, Ian. *Paris: Architecture History Art* (London: George Philip Limited, 1992).
- Lloyd, David. *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993).
- Lloyd, David. 'Republics of Difference: Yeats, MacGreevy, Beckett' in *Field Day Review* 1 (2005) 43-69.
- Lyons, F.S.L. *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Fontana Press, 1985).
- Macardle, Dorothy. *The Irish Republic* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1966).
- MacDonagh, Donagh (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Irish Verse: XVIIth Century- XXth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).
- MacGreevy, Thomas- All MacGreevy publications will be listed first chronologically, second alphabetically, if more than one publication in a given year:
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Reviews. The King's Threshold. By W.B. Yeats. Abbey Theatre, November 15th, 1921. The Saloon. By Henry James. Dublin Drama League, November 13th, 1921.' *Old Ireland* (26 November 1921). 570-571.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Painting in Modern Ireland – The Rise of a National School', *The Gael* (27 February 1922). 19.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Art and Morality: The Drama League's Excursion to America' in *New Ireland* (1 April 1922). 270.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Religious Art and Modern Ireland', *Gaelic Churchman* 3 (2) (1922). 128-129.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Irish Stained Glass', *The Leader*, 45.20 (1922). 496-497.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Daemon of French Painting', *The Dublin Magazine*. Dublin. (August 1924). 30-34.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Need for a Gaelic Encyclopaedia', *The Irish Statesman* 2.26 (6 September 1924). 82.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Gaelic and the Anglo-Irish Culture', *The Irish Statesman*, 3.26 (7 March 1925). 816.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The London Group' and 'Old Coloured Prints', *The Connoisseur* (March 1926). 189, 192.

- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Review of Margaret Morris dancing', *The Criterion* (June 1926). 570-3.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Ballet' in *The New Criterion* (October 1926). 741-5.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Bosch and Mr. Roger Fry', *The Nation and Athenaeum* (13 August 1927).
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'To Vanessa Herself', *The Irish Statesman*, 12.16 (22 June 1929). 309.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Irish national anthem', letter to the editor, *The Irish Statesman*, 12.19 (13 July 1929). 371-2.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Catholic Element in *Work In Progress*', in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929). 117-127.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. *Richard Aldington: An Englishman* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931).
- MacGreevy, Thomas. *T.S. Eliot, A Study* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931).
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Review of Ernest Psichari, *Mon frère* by Henriette Psichari' in *Criterion* (April 1934). 523-25.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Joan Junyer' *Art* (May 1934). 245-249.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. *Poems* (London: William Heinemann, 1934).
- MacGreevy, Thomas. *Poems* (New York: Viking Press, 1934).
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Three Historical Paintings by Jack B. Yeats', *Capuchin Annual* (1941). 238-51.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Dublin Painters' [Exhibition: Expressing Irish Ideas](#)', *Irish Times* (6 February 1942). 2.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Art and the City of God', *Father Mathew Record* (May 1942). 3-4.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Saint Francis de Sales' *Father Mathew Record* (June 1943). 2.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Living Art – a [New Departure](#)', *Irish Times* (16 September 1943). 3.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Writers on Art', *Father Mathew Record* (3 February 1944). 3.
- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Mainie Jellett: [An Appreciation](#)', *Irish Times* (17 February 1944). 3.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Art Exhibition', *Irish Times* (24 February 1944). 3.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Sea-Divided Gael', *Father Matthew Record* (March 1945). 5-6.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Ireland and the Renaissance', *Father Mathew Record* (June 3 1945). 3.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'The Great Exhibition', *Father Matthew Record* (5 October 1945). 3-4.

MacGreevy, Thomas. *Jack B. Yeats, an Appreciation and Interpretation* (Dublin: Victor Waddington Publications, 1945).

MacGreevy, Thomas. *Pictures in the National Gallery* (London: Mercier Press, 1945).

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Count your blessings', *Irish Bookman*, 1 (2) (August 1946). 43-52.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Dante – and modern Ireland', *Father Matthew Record*, 41 (1) (January 1948).

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Art Criticism, and a Visit to Paris', *Father Mathew Record* (September 1948). 4-8.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Thomas Moore, 1779-1852'. *The Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, 1948). 286-293.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'How Does She Stand?' *The Father Matthew Record* (September 1949). 3.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Development in the Arts'. *Studies* (Dublin, December 1951). 475-78.

MacGreevy, Thomas. *Illustrations of the Paintings: National Gallery of Ireland* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 1951).

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Leonardo da Vinci 1452-1952' *The Capuchin Annual* (Dublin, 1953-54). 135-154.

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Art criticism and science', *Capuchin Annual* (1960). 161-66.

MacGreevy, Thomas. *Nicholas Poussin* (Dublin: The Dolmen Press, 1960).

MacGreevy, Thomas. 'Artistic Relations between France and Ireland' *University Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8 (Winter 1961) 3-7. *Irish University Review*, JSTOR. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25504490> accessed 09/03/2015

- MacGreevy, Thomas. 'W.B. Yeats – A Generation Later', *University Review* (1966). 3-14.
- MacKillop, James. *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- Martin, Augustine. 'MacGreevy in the Best Modern Way'. *Irish Literary Supplement* (Fall 1991). 26.
- Marvell, Andrew. *Complete Poetry*, (ed.) George deF. Lord (New York: Random House, 1968).
- Mayer, John T. *T.S. Eliot's Silent Voices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
- Mays, J.C.C. 'Young Beckett's Irish Roots' in *Irish University Review*, 14.1 (1984). 18-33.
- McDiarmid, Lucy. *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot and Auden between the Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- McParland, Edward. *James Gandon: Vitruvius hibernicus* (London: Zwemmer, 1985).
- McParland, Edward. "Chapel or Church? The case of St. Mary's, Pope's Quay, Cork" in Gillespie, Raymond and R.F. Foster (eds.) *Irish Provincial Cultures in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012). 231-242.
- Mellor, Leo. *Reading the Ruins: Modernism, Bombsites and British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Menand, Louis. *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Morris, Roderick Conway. 'Rousseau's Wide Circle of Devotees'. *The New York Times*. 28 July 2015.
- Munson, Gorham. 'The Esotericism of T.S. Eliot' in *1924* (1 July 1924). 3-10.
- Nash, John. 'Thomas MacGreevy and "The Catholic Element" in Joyce' in T. Conley (ed.) *Joyce's Disciples Disciplined* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011). 71-80.
- North, Michael (ed.), *The Waste Land, T.S. Eliot, A Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001).
- O'Brien, Conor Cruise. 'The Fourth Estate III: The Catholic Press' in *The Bell* 10.1 (April 1945). 25-35.
- Olden, A. 'A Storm in a chalice', *Library Review*, 25.7 (Autumn 1976). 265-9.

- O'Malley, Ernie. *On Another Man's Wound* (Dublin: Anvil Press, 2002).
- Orpen, Goddard Henry. *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333* 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911-20).
- Orr, Philip. *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell their Story* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1987).
- O'Tuama, Sean and Kinsella, Thomas (eds.), *An Duanaire, An Irish Anthology, 1600-1900: Poems of the Dispossessed* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
- Pericles, Lewis. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Potter, Rachel C. *Modernism and Democracy: literary culture 1900-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- Pound, Ezra. *'Make it New!'* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935).
- Pound, Ezra. *Personae: The Shorter Poems*. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz (eds.) (New York: New Directions, 1990).
- Purser, Michael. *Jellett, O'Brien, Purser and Stokes* (Dublin: Prejmer Verlag, 2004).
- Putnam, Samuel. *The European Caravan: An Anthology of the New Spirit in European Literature* (Brooklyn: Braunworth & Co., 1931).
- Rabaté, Jean-Michel. *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2007).
- Rainey, Lawrence. 'The Price of Modernism: Publishing *The Waste Land*' in *T.S. Eliot: The Modernist in History* (ed.) Ronald Bush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). 91-133.
- Rainey, Lawrence (ed.) *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).
- Reynolds, Paige. *Modernism, Drama and the Audience for Irish Spectacle*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Riordan, Susannah. 'The Unpopular Front: Catholic Revival and Irish Cultural Identity, 1932-48' in Cronin, Mike and Regan, John M. (eds.), *Ireland: The Politics of Independence, 1922-49* (London: MacMillan, 2000). 98-120.
- Robinson, Lennox. *Curtain Up* (London: Michael Joseph, 1942).
- Ross, Martin. *Music and James Joyce* (Chicago: Argus Book Shop, 1936).

- Ryan, Desmond. *The Rising: The Complete Story of Easter Week* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books Limited, 1957).
- Schreibman, Susan. 'A brief view into the poems of Thomas MacGreevy'. *Studies* (Autumn 1986). 328-33.
- Schreibman, Susan and Mhac an tSaoi, Máire. 'Máire Mhac an tSaoi and Susan Schreibman on Thomas MacGreevy' in *Poetry Ireland* (Summer 1991). 73-83.
- Schreibman, Susan. *Collected Poems of Thomas MacGreevy, An Annotated Edition* (Dublin: Anna Livia Press, 1991).
- Schreibman, Susan. 'The Penman and his Bleaters'. In *Principle, Beckett is Joyce*. Friedhelm Rathjen (ed.) (Edinburgh: Split Pea Press, 1994). 1-19.
- Schreibman, Susan. 'Richard Aldington, An Englishman, Thomas MacGreevy: An Irishman' in Blayac, Alain and Zilboorg, Caroline (eds.) *Richard Aldington: Essays in Honour of the Centenary of his Birth* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1994). 113-127.
- Schreibman, Susan. 'When we come back from first death; Thomas MacGreevy and the Great War', *Stand To* (January 1995). 15-18.
- Schreibman, Susan. 'Introduction to *The Connoisseur*'. *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*. 1999. Accessed 27 February 2017.
- Schreibman, Susan. 'Introduction to the Klaxon'. *The Thomas MacGreevy Archive*. 1999. Accessed 27 February 2017.
- Schreibman, Susan. 'Thomas MacGreevy' *Dictionary of Irish Biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002*, v. 5. James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 1064-1065.
- Schreibman, Susan (ed.), *Historicizing Modernism: The Life and Work of Thomas MacGreevy, A Critical Reappraisal* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014)
- Segall, Jeffrey. *Joyce in America: cultural politics and the trials of Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- Sekine, Masaru. *Irish Writers and Society at Large* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1985).
- Seldes, Gilbert. 'T.S. Eliot' in *Nation* (December 6 1922). 614-16.
- Senz, Javier Pérez 'La viuda del pinto Joan Junyer dona un retrato de Lluís Companys a Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya'. *Cataluña* (31 Diciembre 1998).
- Smith, Stan. 'From a Great Distance: Thomas MacGreevy's Frames of Reference' in *The Lace Curtain* (Autumn 1978). 47-55.

- Smith, Stan. *Irish Poetry and the Construction of Modern Identity: Ireland, Between Fantasy and History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005).
- Stevens, Wallace. *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1955).
- Stevenson, David. *1914-1918: The History of the First World War* (London: Penguin Books, 2005).
- Svarny, Erik. *'The Men of 1914' T.S. Eliot and Early Modernism* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988).
- Thacker, Andrew and Brooker, Peter. *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines Vol. 1, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Tobin, R. *The Minority Voice: Hubert Butler and Southern Irish Protestantism 1900-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- Vance, Norman. *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London: Longman, 2002).
- Vandiver, Elizabeth. *Stand in the Trench, Achilles: Classical Receptions in British Poetry of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- Virgil, *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).
- Walsh, Pat. *The Curious Case of the Mayo Librarian* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2009).
- Walshe, Éibhear. *Sex, Nation and Dissent in Irish Writing* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).
- Walshe, Patrick. 'Catholicism influencing English Literature' in *Irish Monthly*, 60:10 (October 1932). 636-42.
- Walter, George. *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2006).
- Walter, Gerald. *Caesar* trans. Emma Crauford. Vol. II. (London: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1953).
- Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C. Wright (eds.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).
- Welch, Robert. 'George Moore' *Dictionary of Irish Biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002*, v. 6. James McGuire and James Quinn (eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 634-639.
- White, Harry (ed.), *Music and the Irish Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Wills, Clair. *That Neutral Island: A Cultural History of Ireland During the Second World War* (London: Faber, 2007).

Wilson, James Matthew. 'Thomas MacGreevy reads T.S. Eliot and Jack B. Yeats' in *Yeats Eliot Review* 23 (Fall 2006). 14-26.

Winter, Jay. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Wiseman, Nicholas Patrick. *The Dublin Review, Vol. 4* (London: Booker & Dolman, 1838).

Yeats, W.B. *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse 1892-1935* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).

Yeats, W.B., *The Plays*. Clark, David R. and Clark, Rosalind E. (eds.) (New York: Scribner, 2001).

Yeats, W.B. 'An Irish Airman Foresees his Death' in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (London: MacMillan, 1982). 152.

Ziolkowski, Theodore. *Virgil and the Moderns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).