Reclaiming the Raven:

Irish-Australian Memory in the Post Modern Moment

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Master of Arts,
Literature and Communication
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution

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Abstract

This thesis looks at the processes of memory, imagination and cultural development in a single family of Irish extraction. The line in question derives from a western Irish sept known as the Ui Fiachrach, whose symbol was that of the raven.

The first chapter deals with the origins of the Ui Fiachrach and the impossibility of reaching an “Ur text”. It also critiques the notion of culture, noting that cultural difference (often defined on terms such as ‘blood’) can be a source of conflict. Finally, the problematic nature of the term ‘authenticity’ was explored.

The second chapter is concerned with the politics of ethnographic representation and the uses of English and Gaelic as representational tools.

The third chapter focuses on the differend that existed up till the later part of the 20th century against oral cultures (including Irish culture) and the imagination, as opposed to the realist/positivist/social Darwinist paradigm.

The fourth chapter takes into account the notions of alterity and ambivalence: a brief history of prejudice against the Irish and the dilemma of preserving one’s culture versus fitting in.

The fifth chapter examined the source material gained from research which represents a core sample of my family’s collective memory. The limits of storytelling were delineated, and the motifs classified into themes.

The sixth chapter showed how there is considerable scope and play in the symbol of the raven, in stark contrast to stereotypes typified by Poe’s Raven. In such play is the potential to reclaim the raven as a positive symbol.

The seventh chapter looked at the common characteristics between the visual Irish imagination and the modern genre of magic realism. It also examined the internal dynamics of, and the potential for, continued cultural development into the 3rd millennium.
For my late grandfather Francis William Duddy –

A master story teller

Who gave the stories to all of us.
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Chapter 1: The Coming of the Raven

“Open here I flung a shutter, when, with many
a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days
Of yore;”

Edgar Allan Poe, The Raven

To most of the western world, the raven is a bird of ill omen.

Associated with darkness and death, the raven is shunned, pushed to the edges of the collective consciousness as a symbol often paired with fear, or dismissed as superstition. Much has been written about the raven, and though folklore deems it to be a talking bird, in this day and age it is seldom allowed to speak for itself in full view of daylight.

In the same way, the families of the western Irish sept who adopted the raven as their symbol – the Ui Fiachrach – have been marginalised over the centuries because of their ethnicity, at times as misunderstood as their emblem, often silenced in a world dominated by imperialist values.

This thesis seeks to explore and revalidate the collective memory of a single family of Ui Fiachrach descent, currently living in Australia. It will trace their cultural origins as a western Irish family, examine the problems of their ethnographic representation, contextualise them within the frame of recent history, explore the main themes of their cultural memory, table their narrative characteristics within their social functions, and finally retheorise the continued development of their culture.
Firstly, who are the Ui Fiachrach?

The Ui Fiachrach are a group of clans descended from Fiachra Follsnathach (‘of the flowing hair’) son of Eochaidh Muighmheadhion, a 4th century high king of Ireland. According to legend Fiachra was the brother of Brion (from whom the O’Connors are said to be descended) and half brother of Niall (from whom are descended the O’Neills).

The Ui Fiachrach include the O’Dowds (or O’Dubhba), the O’Heynes (Hynes), O’Shaughnesseys, O’Clerys and the MacFirbises (Mac Firbisigh or Forbes), the latter being the hereditary historians to the O’Dowds (who were their patrons) from the 11th century to the 17th century. Both the Great Book of Lecan and the Great Book of Genealogies were written by members of the MacFirbis family, who also contributed towards the writing of the Yellow Book of Lecan.

The Ui Fiachrach occupied two principal regions in the province of Connaught, west of the Shannon river. The southern region was located in what is now County Galway, which is known as Ui Fiachrach Aidhne, of whom the O’Heynes were the principal clan. The north region was based in what is now county Mayo and county Sligo, which is known as Ui Fiachrach Muiadhe or Ui Fiachrach an Tuaiscirt, of whom the predominant family were the O’Dubhda.

Before the culture of the particular family in question is explored, the notion of culture itself needs to be critically examined. It is argued that when taken for granted or taken to extremes, “culture” can kill.

Culture, as defined for the purposes of this thesis, is a system of meanings and perceptions shared by a particular group of people, this system being used to define who is included and who is excluded from the group.
It is this social mechanism of inclusion/exclusion which is both a potential asset and a potential danger. A strong mechanism of social inclusion is an asset, since a strong social bond can enable the members of a social unit to support one another through times of great difficulty, preserving their collective identity and the ‘tribe’ itself. With such a bond, the collective as a whole can endure much more than the individual members could on their own.

The problem arises when this system of inclusion reverses its emphasis and instead becomes a system of exclusion, when “we” are defined purely as Not Other, and this progresses to the point where a binary hierarchy is created. Thus the seeds of inevitable conflict are sown. Culture, taken to extremes, becomes nationalism, and nationalism taken to extremes becomes genocidal war. Even at a lesser level, such extreme forms of (self) identity can condition an individual to see the world and act in a way which is less than desirable. For instance, some of my colleagues who under normal circumstances are quiet, mild people become absolutely rabid anti New Zealanders whenever the Australian and New Zealand rugby teams (Wallabies vs All Blacks) play one another. To them, it is not just a game, but a form of ritualised warfare.

In times of peace this is controlled by the limits of the game, but it is nevertheless a psychological weakness which may be exploited by calls to patriotism and nationalism, as the Second World War has shown. In whose interests is it for this nationalism to be perpetuated?

This thesis is in many ways an affirmation of a particular culture, but it is recognised that not all forms of cultural expression are positive. Culture and identity, especially as they are reconstructed and transmitted from generation to generation, must be analysed critically and – as this thesis will argue – changed and reconstituted if necessary (despite the status and inertia held by any attribute considered ‘traditional’) to remove those
elements which contribute to negative outcomes, especially patterns of cyclic violence.\footnote{The face of the Dying Gaul speaks for them all: each one of us will die, naked and alone, on some battlefield not of our choosing...What we can rely on are the comeliness and iron virtue of the short-lived hero: his (sic) loyalty to cause and comrade, his bravery in the face of overwhelming odds, the gargantuan generosity with which he scatters his possessions and his person and with which he spills his blood. After the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan was heard to say that to be Irish is to know that in the end the world will break your heart. Such an outlook and such a temperament make for wonderful songs and thrilling stories, but not for personal peace or social harmony.” Thomas Cahill, \textit{How the Irish Saved Civilization}, p. 97}

Given the stage of the peace process in Ireland, it is something which has never been more relevant to the Irish.

Cultures are not neutral, and inevitably change over time. Furthermore, if the mistakes of the past are not to be repeated, then it is argued that cultures must be consciously and critically analysed and changed deliberately, discarding all that is hostile and retaining the positive elements, while expanding and developing to take on new meanings and new contributions.

Of course, the question must be asked “who decides on what basis and by what right which elements are to be retained?” This is problematic both socially and politically. But it is argued that in a culture where feuds and wars last for generations even within a single family, something that is obviously dysfunctional must be changed for the benefit of all. The question may also be asked: “What right does a generation have to transmit all its hatred and feuds and inabilities to handle anger upon another generation which has no inherent desire or need to fight those wars or continue those conflicts?”

There are several ways by which this process of inclusion/exclusion may operate, even within a single social group. Language is one basis for discrimination. Religion is another, as is ethnicity. But at the level of the microcosm, one concept is far more emotive and powerful than all others: the notion of blood.

As an inclusive mechanism, the notion of “blood” helps connect the extended family, the clan. But it is argued that the notion of blood is more often used as a basis for exclusion and conflict. Moreover, it can quite easily demonstrated that genetics have
very little to do with the notion of blood. Were common blood the all powerful unifying feature that its extreme emotive properties suggest, there would be no such thing as intra-family splits and feuds and exiles. Calling up notions of ‘bad blood’ or past blood spilt is a prime mechanism for furthering cyclic conflict.

The notion of blood actually has more to with creating political factions based on perceived common traits: these traits are in turn made out to be natural by giving them a genetic basis through the call to blood. Being ‘natural’, these perceived differences are thus considered to be inherent and unchangeable, thus justifying and rationalising the political conflict – and also making conflict almost inevitable down through the generations so long as the two factions are even remotely near one another on the planet.

My own stance as both researcher and as one “of the blood” is not neutral, nor does it pretend to be. I am against the notion of blood as it currently stands for several reasons. Firstly, it naturalises conflicts which are in fact cultural/political. Secondly, it perpetuates those conflicts. Thirdly, even as an inclusive mechanism it is inadequate: how distant does one have to be before one is not “of the blood” ? At the level of derbfine (the old Irish social unit signifying ‘true kin’ or ‘clear kin’), or clan, or sept? The question quickly descends into the ridiculous. If the notion of blood is in fact a short cut for signifying those with common cultural traits within the same faction within the same family (or at the national level, ethnicity), then how does a genetic notion of “blood” account for those who share the same cultural traits but who are clearly not related?

Among some of my colleagues, an alternative notion has been developed and adopted, though equally emotive, which in some cases (like my own) stands alongside notions of blood kindred, and in others has actually super seeded it. These colleagues designate family as blood kindred, but those whom they feel that they share true affinity with –
“blood” or not – as heart kindred. While I am not arguing that this second term is free from abuse, it does appear to adequately address the three concerns about blood listed above, and appears to be far less prone to violence as it is oriented towards the inclusive rather than the exclusive.

In the examination of history, it is sometimes easy to forget that there is no one “true” history nor ever one pure origin of any event or people – only conflicting, contentious propositions which may be read is equally contentious ways.

The surname of the line in question, for instance, is Duddy. But there are more 40 different variations of the surname O’Dubhda, and it is not always clear when, where or how these variations arose. Indeed, according to one source Duddy is not listed as being of Ui Fiachrach descent at all, and reference sources sometimes make different claims as to what names are descended from whom. But most sources concur that Duddy is in fact a variation of O’Dubhda.

In regards to this particular line, it becomes even more complicated. Duddy is clearly an anglicised name, and most sources agree that the name is centred around Derry. But as an extract from a letter written to my grandfather will show, it would appear that several generations back the family name was O’Duddy (which appears to be neither fully Gaelic nor fully anglicised) and that the family was based near Loch Conn in western Ireland, not in Ulster. According to one explanation, the name arose when a group of O’Dowds never returned from the Battle of Kinsale (circa 1601) but migrated north instead. So the presence of a half anglicised name in western Ireland is highly problematic.

Moreover, there are cases where the same surname arose in different places, the various lines completely unrelated to one another. The simple equivalent in English would be names which reflect attributes or professions – Black, White, Smith, Baker, Miller.
It is possible that not all Duddy’s are of O’Dubhda descent. However, as it will be shown, the Duddy’s of the line in question have all the quintessential O’Dubhda markers, both phenotypically and culturally. There are also certain motifs and memories which support the link, which will be examined in Chapter 5.

The Ui Fiachrach are mentioned in many medieval texts, although even the earliest of these texts date from several centuries after the time of Fiachra Follsnathach himself. Because of this, there is no one single pure, original Ur text. There are only ever different stories.

Because there is no one pure absolute representation, no one body has authority over ‘pure’ meanings. Like all history, various elements may be debated, emphasised, de emphasised, retranslated, correlated and speculated. All history and memory is subjective and therefore contentious. This play of meanings should not be depressing (revealing the weakness of a desire to simply be told from above) but should be encouraging – that so rich a history has an infinite potential for exploration. Rather than one voice silencing all others with an absolute representation, a multiplicity of voices and perspectives and experiences becomes possible.

Another problematic notion is that of authenticity. What is it to be Irish? More, what is it be considered ‘authentic’ Irish? Are all descendants of the Irish diaspora authentic Irish? If not, who determines who is authentic by what right and by what criteria?

To be Irish, need one conform to the stereotypes of merely keeping St Patrick’s day, drinking Guinness (not that I’ve anything against Guinness) and wearing green?

The notion of authenticity goes hand in hand with the notion of legitimation, of being “legitimate” or “real” Irish. This has two aspects – an emic aspect (how the particular group sees itself) and an etic aspect (how outsiders view the group).
In terms of the emic, the line in question sees itself as being of Irish extraction and maintaining many of the paradigmatic markers which derive from the parent culture. However, while being of Irish extraction, it is recognised that the culture of the line has evolved and changed via the process of diaspora. Thus nationally the line sees itself as being Australian first and foremost, the two not being in conflict with each other (why should it be? – up to a third of all Australian citizens may claim Irish ancestry).

The tension in identity arises in the clash between Anglo-centric values and a world view which is definitely Irish in extraction. The tension is therefore between the emic and the etic, and reflects the tension which has always existed between the Irish convicts/working class and the English upper class. It is the tension between retaining one’s cultural heritage and retaining one’s dignity in a society which degrades that cultural heritage.

Australia, as a multi cultural society, technically recognises someone’s cultural heritage if a person is of a given descent and if they themselves acknowledge that heritage, or if a person identifies with a certain group and that group acknowledges them as a member. However, such “official” recognition does little to shape how a culture is viewed beyond reinforcing stereotypes of perception. To reverse the problem – especially relevant since Australia is hosting the Olympics this year - who determines what it is to be Australian, and who are Australian?

Is a prerequisite to being Australian simply the capacity to drink beer, barbeque prawns and eat mince pies? Is it to live somewhere where kangaroos hop down the street (assuming such a place existed)?

Thus it can be clearly seen how there are no clear simple definitions of etic identity. Etic identity is thus a fuzzy mass of connotation and expectations, many of which may be hopelessly inaccurate.

For the Irish, or those of Irish descent, it is particularly bad, as there are centuries of bias and stereotyping at play. Even in such movies as *Braveheart*, the main Irish character was portrayed as being mad. Yet this madness is not purely negative, for the madman may see and say the truth which the sane may not – for it is the Irishman alone who sees the assassin for what he is, and not the many. Such madness, ironically, can compensate for the deficiencies of perspective of the sane.

Yet how is madness defined? Is the madness of the Irish nothing more than capacity than to see the world in a different way, a way which has been defined in the past as Not-English?

It is this difference of perspective, which has so often derided as madness – even to the present – which the remainder of the this thesis will proceed to explore.
Chapter 2: The Politics and Problematics of Ethnographic Representation - or, Who has the write to speak?

“Historians exercise great power and some of them know it. They recreate the past, changing it to fit their own interpretations. Thus, they change the future as well.”

Frank Herbert, *Heretics of Dune*, p. 403

Before looking at the source data within its historical context, this chapter will first address the problematic nature of history, representation and interpretation.

It is argued that “even the best ethnographic texts – serious, true fictions – are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control. Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial – committed and incomplete.” (Clifford, 1986, p. 7). It is impossible to write a “complete” description of any people. Writing is thus a selective process, foregrounding some elements over others. Moreover, even the form the writing must take – in this case the strictures of the academic thesis – biases the representation of knowledge.

How different would it be, for instance, if this thesis were an oral presentation? Or a non academic text, or fireside conversation, or even a mural? While I am not claiming that the medium is the message, it is worth bearing in mind that the very nature of an academic text lends itself to certain kinds of discussion and exploration and not to others.

Of course, no writer can be truly “neutral and objective” – every writer writes from a socio-historical context, a site or location defined by class, gender and ethnicity among other elements. For this reason any ethnographic or historical text is “committed” –
certain values will be inscribed within the preferred readings for the implied reader. Thus “the final trait of effective history is its affirmation of knowledge as perspective.” (Foucault, 1977, p. 156). Historians and ethnographers always view the subject of their work from an angle which is not omniscient, and certainly not neutral. Because of this, their perspective centres some elements and marginalises – or excludes – others. Their own site also affects the way they interpret the texts/data available to them. As Said termed it, these representations are not “natural representations” (Said, 1985, p. 21)

While it has been claimed that in many cases “Historians take unusual pains to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular place and time, their preferences in a controversy” (Foucault, 1977, p. 156)

Historical representation has, in the past, contributed to the marginalisation of the Irish – minimising the efforts and culture of the Irish, relegating them to a peripheral position on the fringe of Europe, a Celtic anachronism born of isolation, a mere curiosity compared to the societies which eventually become colonial powers.

Yet counter readings of a such a view of history are possible. It has been argued, for instance, that the role of Irish monks played no small part in the preservation and distribution of manuscripts following the fall of the Roman Empire.²

This thesis is concerned with primarily with memory, stories and representation. The historical veracity of any given story is not under question here – in many cases, the stories would be impossible to verify objectively, and authority here is not sought in trying to prove things ‘true’.

² “For, as the Roman Empire fell, as all through Europe matted, unwashed barbarians descended on the Roman cities, looting artifacts and burning books, the Irish, who were just learning to read and write, took up the great labor of copying all of western literature – everything they could lay their hands on. These scribes then served as conduits through which the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures were transmitted to the tribes of Europe, newly settled amid the rubble and ruined vineyards of the civilization they had overwhelmed. Without this Service of the Scribes, everything that happened subsequently would have been unthinkable. Without the Mission of the Irish Monks, who single-handedly refounded European civilization throughout the continent in the bays and valleys of their exile, the world that came after them would have been an entirely different one – a world without books. And our own world would never have come to be.” (Cahill, 1995).
Just as the stories of St Patrick are part of the collective Irish identity, the objective historical veracity of those stories is not the aim of this work: their social and cultural functions are.

This thesis is not concerned with historical ‘truth’ but discursive representation.

Trouble arises when the two are confused, or when the two are juxtaposed to form a hierarchy. On one hand Irish tales of the supernatural, for instance, are clearly just that: stories. On the other hand, this should not be used to justify the stance that ‘history is true because it is written down but the stories are worth no more than fairy tales’.

History is still formed via a selective and subjective process of representation. Stories can and often do (as will be shown) preserve elements of memory relating to events which may be quite convincingly argued to have actually happened: some stories have their origins as eyewitness accounts. And the stories, whether fanciful or realistic or (as is often the case) containing elements of both, may be argued to have survived because they contain subjective “truths”: core values which are transmitted and reinforced through the transmission of the family memory.

The thesis itself, the lens for viewing some of these stories, is itself not a neutral instrument. Rather than claim perfect neutrality, this text instead is self referential, revealing its angles and biases. Thus, while acknowledging its partial and committed nature, the text remains honest rather than an attempt at deceit.

Said, as a Palestinian writing about the representation of Palestinians in the West and the general discourse of Orientalism, also found this a necessary step to take.

“The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is “knowing thyself” as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (Said, 1985, p. 25)
Moreover, this self awareness applies not only to the values inherent in one’s self but in one’s school(s) of methodology—“For if Orientalism has historically been too smug, too insulated, too positivistically confident in its ways and its premises, then one way of opening oneself to what one studies in or about the Orient is reflexively to submit one’s method to critical scrutiny.” (Said, 1985, p. 327)

It is thus necessary later in the thesis to briefly engage with the bias inherent in the writing of this text and the rationale for the methodology. Rather than run to a semblance of neutrality, the aim is to ensure that the choices which were – and must be always be – made were theoretically and critically justifiable, and thus arguable as a valid position to take.

In short, this thesis is written by one trained in the post structuralist and the post colonialist schools, in part dedicated to the deconstruction of power relations. Separated both temporally and spatially from the culture of my forebears, the thesis is part of a larger process to preserve and renew the collective memory and traditions of my line – something arising from the subjective decision that such things are worth preserving as a gestalt, useful and insightful and preferable to merely conforming to one of the usual mainstream subcultures expected of Gen-X. In the post modern moment of isolation and fracture, preservation and renewal of one’s cultural heritage is a way of discovering and reforging one’s own identity in a way that challenges the expectations that society imposes upon the individual.

Methodology will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In addressing the politics of representation, there is one question which cannot be avoided: Who has the right (or write?) to speak for whom?

Fortunately, the resolution of this question in this case does not require the usual minefield-delicate negotiation. This text only claims to speak for a single “line” of Hy-
Fiachrach descent, a single extended family, rather than a global collective entity of multiple clans. Within this line “I” have the right to speak – within certain parameters - through consensus and permission. Moreover, the usual problematics associated with an outsider representing an ethnic group to themselves are avoided: I am counted insider of the blood (though even now I cringe at the term, which is revealing in itself) – a member of the family “tribe”.

An important point to note in the analysis of any text originating from an ‘oral’ culture (whether that be an Irish story, an Aboriginal art work or a North American Indian dance) is that many – if not all – of such texts are double coded. That is, these texts have both a “common” meaning (which is accessible to all who here the text) and a closed or sacred meaning (which is available only to those who have the cultural resources to be able to interpret the text at that level). “Therein is the true dialectic of the sacred: by the mere fact of showing itself, the sacred hides itself.” (Moore, 1996, p. 300)

This thesis is something of a hybrid: although the subject matter and the inspiration comes from an oral tradition, the form of the thesis is emphatically written in its conventions and narrative characteristics. The thesis is primarily limited in its discussion to the “common” meanings (restricted further by the parameters of academic discussion), yet even parts of this thesis are double coded.

The final question to be addressed in this chapter is the debate surrounding the validity a language has a representative tool within ethnographic research.

The central question is this: “Can research such as this be written in English (though the oral tradition itself is no longer in Gaelic in the current generation) without being
severely limited in its cultural nuances? Is English a valid language for writing about a cultural form of Irish extraction?"

The pro Gaelic side may be interpreted as having the following stance: “for Harnett the loss of the Irish language was a cataclysmic blow to the psyche of the Irish people in that it ripped out and tore assunder all the secret interiors that sponsor the manifold activities that go to make up a culture” (Welch, 1993, p. 3) while the pro-English (or any other language, for that matter) responds with the following view - “On the other side of the coin are the linguistic or cultural behaviourists. They say: language is merely a set of counters; and those mysteries to which the cultural nationalists claim are romanticism, mantra seeking, bog digging for treasure troves of words. The cultural behaviourists would argue that the Irish people should get on with what they have” (Welch, 1993, p. 3)

It is argued by this thesis that the basis of the entire question is undermined if one accepts, as Horst Ruthrof argues in *The Body In Language*, that the deep structure of language is non verbal.

It is my subjective stance that the pro-Gaelic position has a limited validity if one accepts the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis so far as that “language only structures linguistic thought, or when we think in words” - but even then language has no control over structuring all the quasi-perceptual/bodily/emotional connotations which generate meaning for those words. However, it is acknowledged that there are some words in Gaelic – and the deeper non verbal structures behind those words – which do not have a simple or a focused equivalent in English. “Kything” is one of those words, which becomes important in Chapter 7. In such a case where no “equivalent counter” exists, it is argued that language DOES become important.
The choice of language also may be important for connotative and symbolic reasons: not for any extra representational power, but as a symbolic of resistance to the colonial centre – a way of saying ‘this is our language’ which is defined as “not English”.

Language, as has already been argued, can also be a power tool for inclusion/exclusion within a social group.

For these reasons and more, I fully agree with the move to re acquire/re establish the Gaelic language, both globally (especially in Ireland) and within my own family.

The stance that I have chosen does not ignore the politics of language. English is the most universal language on the planet in its various forms. It is the language of the powerful, and currently the dominant language of the Internet.

The choice of English as the language of representation for this thesis has a two fold justification. Firstly, I do not speak Gaelic. Secondly, the use of English is subversive in itself: it is a deliberate act of using the language of the colonial centre against the centre.

In terms of representation, there is one final point which needs to be made. It is recognised that “live” languages are alive for a reason – languages need to grow, new words need to be created and added in order to cope with continually expanding and evolving scientific and social realities.

It is recognised that even for the purposes of ethnographic research or intra-family communication, we may not yet have all the words we need. Whenever we as researchers, or we as kindred, push the limits of language or find ourselves “lost for words” – there we have found an area where language needs to grow.

For the academic world, the creation of new words (particularly in the sciences) is commonplace. Even the argot of the average person today would be incomprehensible
to someone living a mere 25 years ago – from “Internet” to “cyberpunk” to “Jedi Knight” to “Harry Potter”, the language has grown as new technological and cultural phenomena have emerged and become part of (at least) the western English speaking collective consciousness.

Yet the common mistake is to view tradition as fixed and static, and thus also the language associated with it – even though such memories are transmitted through generations which live in changing times and different social realities. Simple observation tells us that language and culture can – and must – change, even if change is in some cases cyclic.

Nevertheless, almost everyone whom I have spoken to in the course of researching this thesis has never considered the option – or the ability – to create new words to fit where language fails.

The struggle, thus far, has been almost entirely concerned with struggle of the silenced imagination for the right to speak. The next chapter shall examine this struggle in detail.
Chapter 3: Diaspora and Differend

“Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;”

Y.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*

“This is a cold and clammy place – keep that campfire burning.
Lucky Edie – I want you to stand watch tonight!
Remember, this is an enchanted forest – be on your guard!
These woods are magic. The trees have eyes, the wind sings.
This place is filled with mysterious little folks – gnomes, goblins, elves and fairies”

“And PIXIES ?!”

“Pixies?! Oh, will you GROW UP ?!!”

Dik Browne, *Hagar the Horrible*

This chapter is focused on the socio-historical context of the 20th century, and the historical conditions that made the writing of this thesis possible. It is theorised that after the “Celtic Twilight” (the period of Irish literature written in English 1885-1939) (Baldick, 1991, p. 32) there was a kind of “Celtic Midnight” when the Irish imagination was at its most oppressed by the cultural (as opposed to military) forces of the Western world, which were dominated by an American technocratic materialistic capitalist utopian vision of the future.
At this time, too, the oral traditions were in grave danger - “By 1951... the ages old procession had faltered” (Breslin, 1985).

In the modernist/colonial framework oral tradition, myth and storytelling in the traditional sense were held in low esteem. “Somehow in the process of categorisation, myth has become devalued: recognised neither as high art nor good science” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 2). Oral tradition and myth remained devalued and were emphatically kept in the place they had held since both the rise of printed word and rise of colonialism: as children’s tales, at best.

It is argued that the cultural frameworks imposed by the Imperial centre (civilised vs primitive, rational vs irrational, emotional vs unemotional, centre vs margin) imposed a differend (“the case where the plaintiff loses the means to argue” or “the dominant discourse were the weak have no language and are thus unable to speak”) (Lyotard, Pg 9) upon the peoples they suppressed: those who held to the importance of the stories were silenced in any public sense. Representation of the colonised became mixed up in “the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanising ideology” (Said, 1985, p. 27) where the suppression of the colonised was justified since they were without the benefit of civilised culture, instead wretchedly holding to values and beliefs which “in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (Said, 1985, p. 39).

It is important to remember that the colonised did not represent themselves, nor control the study of themselves. In controlling the study of the colonised and their representation, the colonising powers gained intellectual as well as military supremacy: again, a case of the differend. This applies universally to all states conquered by the European colonial powers, allowing Said to write of Palestine - “what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a
kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture” (Said, 1985, p. 19).

It is in response to such intellectual oppression and representational control that Said wrote Orientalism itself: “If this book has any future use, it will be as a modest contribution to that challenge, and as a warning: that systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions – mind forg’d manacles – are all too easily made, applied and guarded.” (Said, 1985, p. 328).

But the differend, like the justifications for empire and slavery, did not go unchallenged forever.

The military empires (although not the economic ones) eventually unravelled, and the margins learned to challenge the dominant representations about themselves.

It is further proposed that the collapse of several hegemonic mythic cultural frameworks – the British Empire, the reign of positivism – and the recognition of the impoverished, sterile, mechanistic and oppressive nature of the (economic) rationalist industrial world view created a kind of ‘mythic void’ which in turn created the need for this void to be filled – to speak the silenced imagination. Such a void explains the success of such works as the Lord of the Rings, Dune and later Star Wars, not to mention the interest in The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

The recognition of the impact of the industrial state upon the environment was a parallel phenomenon – described quite literally at the end of the Lord of the Rings. Industry and industrial science was no longer an unchallengeable discourse. The moral rightness of Empire and the superiority of English rationalism and culture over the marginalised “primitives” also came under serious question. The margins began to write back.

“Numerous peoples and cultures have taken to the world stage, and it has become impossible to believe that history is a unilinear process directed towards a telos. The
realization of the universality of history has made universal history impossible. Consequently, the idea that the course of history could be thought of as enlightenment, as the liberation of reason from the shadows of mythical knowledge, has lost its legitimacy...When demythologization itself is revealed as myth, myth regains legitimacy, but only within the frame of a generally ‘weakened’ experience of truth. The presence of myth in our culture does not represent an alternative or opposing movement to modernization, but is rather its natural outcome, its destination, at least thus far. The demythologization of demythologization, moreover, may be taken as the true moment of transition from the modern to the post-modern” (Vattimo, 1992, p. 39).

The process of the colonised finding their voice is an ongoing one that is far from complete. The reign of the colonial powers was more than three hundred years: the post Imperial/post modernist era has existed for barely more than half a century. Even the official ending of empire did not bring about an instant shift in ideology or language. As a result, in all parts of the world we can witness “the emerging identities of new social groups and subjectivities as being confronted by a dominant culture whose discourses and language do not allow them to articulate fully their experience. He describes this struggle for a voice as being ‘at the very edge of semantic availability’. Those necessary words will represent us both to ourselves and others are not quite in our grasp. The structure of feeling is caught between experience and language, described by Peter Middleton as ‘a state of unfinished social relations that have not yet found the terms for their own reflexive self comprehension” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 22-3)

It is argued that this state of affairs is particularly relevant to the line in question for this thesis. Gen-X and Gen-Y are still very much in the process of becoming, their final
social and sub cultural forms undetermined, the range of possibility still under exploration. They/ we are still finding their/our voices.

The beginnings of the ‘Irish Dawn’ were in the seventies, with a resurgence of Irish music, art and writing. This renewal increased exponentially in the 1990’s, initially with the success of Irish music (Clannad, Enya, U2, Cranberries, Corrs) and later Irish dance (Riverdance). Clan associations began to form (including the O’Dubhda clan association), the Irish economy grew and the first tentative, fragile steps towards a peace process were taken.

Culturally, this development occurred in parallel with a recognition of the impoverished nature of economic rationalism and the rise of the popular imagination (ie X-Files, The Matrix, Harry Potter).

There are two contributing factors whose importance is debateable to the rise of the imagination and to the rise of the (Irish) counter-colonial voice. One is the rise of the Internet – in particular, the use of email to overcome the effects of diaspora. The second is the importance of the nature of the precise historical moment.

For instance, to what extent might it be argued that this thesis only possible due to a unique alignment of historical cultural conditions? Some of these conditions might be regarded as:

A) The recognition of the importance of oral cultures and knowledge (the medicinal knowledge of shamans of the Amazonian rain forest being a case in point)

B) The recognition that linguistic and cultural uniqueness/diversity is under threat (from cultural imperialism, from TV, from sheer loss of traditional cultural forms).

Hence there are those, like Morrison, who are “explicitly concerned with the process of “rememory”...’Somewhere’, she often says ‘someone forgot to tell
somebody something’...We don’t live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don’t sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological, archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has to get out, and there are several ways to do it” (Foreman, 1995, p. 285)

C) A time when those who might do something about it are neither starving nor at war nor in the process of being displaced.

D) Access to the discursive and institutional resources necessary to act effectively and legitimately

E) A time period when the Other may find its own voice, knows that it can, is not ashamed to and has the means to challenge the differend

F) The technological resources are available that facilitate an effective study and allow new cultural forms to evolve.

There is one point in the above theory that requires clarification: the timing and nature of the “Celtic Midnight”.

It is apparent that very little of the last four hundred years has been particularly hospitable to the Irish imagination, but the placing of the Celtic Midnight after the second world war has to do with cultural rather than military factors.

The Celtic Midnight refers to the time period when the oral traditions were in most danger of being lost while highly disregarded by the dominant cultural forms. Of course, the 17th century saw the loss of the brehon tradition while the 19th century saw the loss of the Gaelic language – two cataclysmic blows to Irish culture. But I would argue that the true danger to the oral traditions was the increasing loss of interest in the stories and the storytellers. This loss of interest was noted by the folklorists of the 19th century, a trend which became more and more pronounced in the early to mid 20th century. One folklorist observed the change this way: “But the old order changeth;
already schools and newspapers are at work, and soon the rites which were done and talked about without hesitation may be only done furtively and concealed from enquirers.

The old beliefs are getting forgotten by the older and despised by the younger people, and much must be lost when the old peasantry die. The work done by me had been better done by dwellers on that wild coast; but few indeed show interest in such a pursuit, and the old Ireland is passing away for ever, more and more speedily” (Westropp, *Folklore* Vol 29).

Two factors made the 20th century particular hostile to the traditions.

Firstly, the rise of technocratic culture, with its apex in the 60’s, which glorified science as the saviour of humanity and which relegated oral cultures to the realm of “primitive superstition” within the framework of social Darwinism. Oral traditions were regarded as nothing more than fairy tales, suitable only for children and soon grown out of. This utter contempt for the oral traditions robbed those who held them of any voice to respond – a true differend. It is the presence of this differend that marks the Celtic Midnight rather than just the number of storytellers.

Secondly, in parallel, was the rise of what this thesis calls the “technology of distraction” – in particular, television. The negative impact of television upon the traditions has been noted more than once. “The first thing that came in was the gramophone and then the radio. But it’s the television that has finished everything. Once the 6 o’clock news comes on in the evening, there’s not a word of chat. The saddest thing I’ve ever seen was when I went to visit an old shanachie away up in the mountains. Some group or other thought they would do something for him, and so they gave him a big colored-television set, and it was a terrible mistake. That man, when I knew him, never stopped talking, but now, from 6 o’clock, when the news goes on,
there’s not a word out of him the rest of the night. They’ve silenced him entirely.” (Breslin, 1985).

It is ironic, but the multiplicity of voices transmitted electronically contributed to a muteness and a more widespread silence amongst all the newfound noise.

Other factors of course contributed – from the generation gap to the rise of mass English literacy, the car, increased wealth of those of Irish descent, and a desire to fit into society.

The ambivalent relationship between the Irish and the dominant society around them is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Alterity and Ambivalence

In the course of talking to other university students (and others) while researching this thesis over several years, I was taken aback at the knee-jerk prejudice the vast majority of people displayed against the Irish and those of Irish descent. It was not true premeditated racism, but an ingrained (culturally conditioned) reaction. People spontaneously broke into the most appalling “Irish jokes” despite the fact that I am of Irish descent myself.

Only two groups did not share this bigotry: one group was comprised of those who were conscious of their own Irish or Scottish ancestry, the others were humanities students.

As one person said to me (a lawyer) - “I would never think of telling a racist joke about anyone with a different hue to my own, but when it comes to the Irish it somehow seems OK”

The kind of bias I observed continually over the course of several years was at odds to my expectations: as a city Perth, Western Australia, has one of the highest per capita ratios of people of Irish extraction anywhere outside of Ireland (Miller, 2000)

This bias led me to re evaluate the history of Irish Otherness both here in Australia, and its forerunner in Ireland itself.

A large number of convicts sent to Australia were from Ireland or were of Irish extraction.

“The fear that the tiny garrison of the prison colony might be overwhelmed by an Irish uprising appears very early in the history of New South Wales, certainly before 1798.

The rebellion of that year, and those transported because of it, heightened such fears to the level of near hysteria. They were confirmed by the reputation Irish convicts speedily acquired within the settlement for being insolent, turbulent, unco-operative, and for ever...
conspiring and trying to escape. The image of the Irish as fools, ‘China travellers’, was not so much supplanted as massively supplemented and overlaid by the belief that they were all dangerous rebels: the idiot and the simpleton took on a terrifying aspect.” (O’Farrell, 1987, p. 37).

Ned Kelly is remembered as both bush ranger and folk hero, but in the light of the previous two chapters it is fascinating to read his own words and see what the popular representations have edited out:

“What would England do if America declared war and hoisted a green flag as it is all Irishman that has got command of her armies forts and batteries even her very life guards and beef tasters are Irish would they not slew around and fight her with their own arms for the sake of the colour they dare not wear for years and to reinstate it and rise old Erins isle once more from the pressure and tryannism of the English yoke which has kept it in poverty and starvation and caused them to wear the enemy’s coat. What else can England expect” (Brown, Page 218-2)

Ned Kelly’s attitudes towards police brutality and harassment is still uncannily relevant today. But it is the way he links this to his sense of Irish nationalism, so absent in the modern popular representations, that give the best insight of what it like to be Irish – on either side of the colonial fence - in his era.³

³ “my brothers and sisters and my mother not to be pitied also who has no alternative only to put up with the brutal and cowardly conduct of a parcel of big ugly fat-necked wombat headed big bellied magpie legged narrow hipped splay-footed sons of Irish Bailiffs or english landlords which is better known as officers of Justice or Victorian police who some calls honest gentlemen but I would like to know what business an honest man would have in the Police as it is an old saying it takes a rogue to catch a rogue and a man that knows nothing about roguary would never enter the force and take an oath to arrest brother sister father or mother if required and to have a case and conviction if it is possible any man knows it is possible to swear a lie and if a policeman looses a conviction for the sake of swearing a lie he has broken his oath therefore he is a perjuror either ways, a Policeman is a disgrace to his country not alone to the mother that suckled him, in the first place he is a rogue to his heart but too cowardly to follow it up without having the force to disguise it. Next he is a traitor to his country ancestors and religion as they were all catholics before the Saxons and Cranmore yoke held sway since they were persecuted massacred thrown into martyrdom and tortured beyond the ideas of the present generation. What would people say if they saw a strapping big Irishman shepherding sheep for fifteen bob a week or tailing turkeys in Tallrook
In early Australia “the Irish were The Enemy. In their various forms – convicts, Catholics, rebels, workers, Fenians, Sinn Feiners – they were the despised and rejected, the outcast, the feared, the hated.” (O’Farrell, 1987, p. 7-8)

The Irish in Australia thus had the worst of reputations even from the first. It is also interesting to note that in “Ireland itself, by the end of the eighteenth century, Gaelic had become a clear liability for getting on in the world, and the sensible modern Irishman or woman increasingly used English – Gaelic was the badge of poverty and failure. In Australia the same was applied, with the additional danger that its use might be construed as covering crime....Whatever may be thought of it now, since the Gaelic revival, the Australian Irish of the early nineteenth century saw the Gaelic language as another means by which they were isolated and subdued. It was a bar to the world of power, dominated by the English, a double imprisonment for the Irish convicts of New South Wales. And it was seen, at best, as a joke: the influence of Gaelic idioms and linguistic structures when carried over into English were generally seen as funny, laughable.” (O’Farrell, 1987, p. 27).

Go back two hundred years further to Tudor England, and attitudes towards the Irish become clearer still. Here the Irish must be made to conform and “the onely means to bring the people soonest to conformitie, and the country to quietnesse, is without
compassion to punishe the offenders, and without either grace or mercie to execute the rebellles, and such as be malefactours” (Rich, 1578).

These Irish are a people of “beastly and brutish manners” (Rich, 1578) who are “more uncivill, more uncleanly, more barbarous, and more brutish in their customes and demeanurs, then any other part of the world that is knowne” (Rich, A Short survey of Ireland, 1609), even “more Heathen than those, that never heard of God” (Rich, New Description)

Worse still, despite the better examples around them “the Irish had rather stil retaine themselves in their sluttishness, in their uncleaninesse, in their rudenesse, and in their inhuman loathsomnes, then they would take any example from the English, either of civility, humanity, or any manner of Decencie” (Rich, New Description, Pg 16)

Thus the prevalent picture painted is thus “the image of the Irish as children or beasts” (Harrington, p. 103)

Worst of all is this notion of Irish as “inhuman” – as animal, or worse. Once this connection is made, as it has been made countless times since against many ethnic minorities, any atrocity becomes justifiable in the eyes of the perpetrator.

This, of course, is anti-Irish prejudice at its worst. It was not just in England and Australia that such prejudice was held: in the United States as well, the Catholic Irish were once feared for their numbers and their vote. Again, the worst of stereotypes applied.

“In the last quarter of the 19th century, a single figure dominates much of American humour. Whether on stage, in cartoon or in song. “Paddy,” the Irish-American labourer, delighted millions. A scruffy, lower-class workingman, Paddy could be distinguished by his primitive, ape-like face, unkempt whiskers, and large, clumsy hands and feet.
Equally popular was his female counterpart, “Bridget” – the ill-mannered and altogether unmanageable Irish domestic.” (Donovan, p. 6).

Typically “a Celt is notoriously a passionate, impulsive, kindly, unreflecting, brave, nimble-witted man; but he lacks the solidity, the balance, the judgement, the moral staying power of the Anglo-Saxon” (Merwin, 1896).

By the end of the 19th century anti Irish sentiment had waned considerably. “The increasing conformity and respectability of America’s growing Irish middle classes was probably the most important factor promoting the decline in anti-Irish sentiment” (Donovan, p. 14) and it was agreed by consensus that “assimilation....was the best way to handle the Irish “problem.” In the years that followed, this was the course most Irish took to become respectable Americans.” (Donovan, p. 14).

The issues at stake in this chapter are issues of Otherness, alterity and difference within a (post) colonial society. There has always been an ambivalence to “fitting in” – how does one retain one’s culture while retaining one’s dignity? Yet does the Dominant need an Other in order to construct a notion of its own superiority? Certainly, according to The Location of Culture - “Hegemony requires iteration and alterity to be effective” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 29).

There are two sides to this fitting in. One is the aspect of the dominant culture wishing to integrate minorities enough to ensure that they are not a threat but to retain some small token of difference to ensure its own air of superiority.

The other aspect is that of the Irish wanting to fit in – of gaining the respect of the society around them and a respite from ridicule and persecution.
Therefore, it is worth asking the question “For whose benefit is St Patrick’s day?” Is it the same in New York as it is in Australia? Is this carnivalesque merely another tool of social control?

“Lately, some have started asking why the heirs to a culture as rich and complex as Ireland’s feel a need to reduce their heritage to fecklessness, and on St Patrick’s day!... No other group demeans itself this way.” (Dezell, 1998, p. 62).

Does St Patrick’s Day exist in Australia as a continued means of constructing the Irish as Other, and was the early construction not needed by the Irish themselves but allowed/exploited by those who benefited from a certain negative conceptualisation of the Irish?

“The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural superiority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 34)

The whole St Patrick’s Day issue highlights the misuse of historical representation, or the representation of certain symbols and traditions as being other than what they historically and politically were/are. Just because something has *become* traditional does not automatically make it benevolent: the archaeology of such rituals must always be critically evaluated.

“The enunciation of cultural difference problematises the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address. It is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 35).

It is strongly recognised that old=good/modern=bad is a dangerous binary trap to fall into. Just because something is old does not make it good. Not everything that is
inherited (prejudices, bias, feuds) should be kept: everything needs to be evaluated on its own merits. Moreover, such a viewpoint tends to falsely represent the past in terms of a peasant/pastoral ideal which never existed. Such a standpoint also ignores the ongoing, dynamic nature of cultural evolution which continually appropriates and adapts. The nature of the past need not determine the nature of the future.

St Patrick’s Day also serves as a good example to be wary of any justification based on tradition or supposed age where such a justification involves an element of representational/political power. Such a strategy attempts to naturalise the way things are, when the way things are is anything but natural.

In the 20th century, Australian-Irish, like many other ethnic groups, were been cast into a difficult position: whether (and how) to maintain the positive aspects of their parent culture while existing in a society which simultaneously attempts to assimilate them culturally while ridiculing them.

There have been varying responses in varying levels, but at a non commercial level it is argued that the dominant – and really only possible response – has been to assimilate in the public sphere while keeping the cultural markers in the private.

In the next chapter, we shall examine those memories preserved in the private sphere.
Chapter 5: The Voice of the Raven

The Limits of Storytelling

“I am the Name Storyteller.

Words can no more contain the Dance of the Flame than electric ecstasy, or the feeling of hate, the song of a whale, or the smell of sex. The Dancers moved in a certain fashion that could be described, and spoke words that could be marked down, and told certain stories that might be repeated; but these things are not the Dance; and if I told you half of what they did and said, would take us into Story after Story after Story; and they are not the Story I have chosen to tell.”

D.K. Moran, *The Last Dancer*, p. 275

It is recognised that no matter how many stories are recorded, there will always be more to tell. There are always more memories. There is also a limit to how much may be transmitted through words: experiences such as birth and death within the family - experiences which are common to all peoples, and all tribes - are experienced in ways beyond the capability of words to adequately describe.

The following stories and motifs might best be viewed as surfaces of emergence of the unspoken. They are verbal representations of a way of seeing and experiencing the world. The examples given are not intended to be - and cannot be - a complete 'canon' covering all aspects of such a gestalt. Such a canon would need to be infinite, and words could not adequately describe the gastronomic or the kinaesthetics of dance. What these motifs do describe are the core family attributes - both
positive and negative - which have endured poverty and diaspora and war. They also
delineate the disjunction between the Irish imagination and the positivist-realist
paradigm.

**Methodology**

"Storms beget storms. Rage begets rage. Revenge begets revenge. Wars beget wars"
B. Herbert, *Prelude to Dune 1 - House Atreides*, p. 494

"It's important to remember," Denice said softly "But it's more important to forgive"
D.K. Moran, *The Last Dancer*, p. 219

“Legends are rarely gentle. Gentleness is not remembered so long nor so well as valor
or love or greed or death. Great deeds alone do not ensure legend, and their lack will not
prevent it. The winds of myth can rise from the lowest deserts.”


Much has been lost over the years: more is in danger of being lost every time a
generation overlooks the need to actively preserve and record its heritage, or forgets to
record its own stories.

It is uncertain precisely how long the line in question has had literacy in English. To
the best of my knowledge, however, it appears that for this particular line writing as a
source of both artistic expression and catharsis did not emerge until the late 1950's or
early 1960's: at least, as far as my research can tell no personal writings survive which
predate this time.
A number of factors may account for this: poverty, travel, a preference for storytelling as opposed to story writing, and two world wars. The letters written to me in the 1980's by my grandfather (who died when I was 15, in 1989) were thus a significant exception to the rule. The questions I asked in my letters to him (and I asked a lot of questions) were simply questions of identity and history: at the most basic level - where did my family come from?, what did they do?, what where they like?

For the purposes of this thesis, because there is such a small pool of written material available, it was possible to parse ALL of the surviving written material to specifically search for personal and collective memories. One of the repeating formula's used is "such and such used to say that..."

There is a second pool of source material preserved purely through oral transmission. The method for collecting this material was straightforward: to travel to where most of the family had gathered for Christmas last year with a tape recorder and listen to the stories first hand. Everyone who was asked knew what I was gathering the stories for and approved, so there was no ethical conflict.

By far I spent the most time with my oldest living relative, a great Aunt, since she could provide the most first hand accounts. The non-scanned source material contained later on in this chapter is almost entirely a record of her accounts. However, I did not neglect to ask most other relatives for anything passed on - even those far younger than myself. After all, they were the one's whom as children many of the stories had been told to. Many memories were found to have faded, and the one which had not were counted personal or sacred, and thus are not included in this work.
In terms of listening to my great Aunt, source material was gained which was both directed and undirected. She was telling her own story as much as the story of my line: in that sense she had the right to tell her story the way she wished. At times, though, I asked questions aimed at examining the key attributes and attitudes of the line. It has been observed that for the transmission of stories it takes a minimum of three people, preferably four - one primary speaker, one or two secondary contributors, and a listener. Asking any primary or secondary speaker on their own will generally draw a blank. It would appear that such transmission requires a social matrix rather than being an individualistic exercise.

It is theorised that transmission has this communal element because memories of this kind are embedded deeply within a social context (to such a depth that I had not anticipated) and thus require a social element for recall and retelling. It is also possible that because storytelling is such a strong tradition in the line that it has certain ways of being done. If it has only ever been done in one way - to a group, then it is possible that consciously or unconsciously a group is required for the stories to flow. Such a ritual requirement makes for a strong oral tradition, but makes a written tradition extremely difficult. This again is a factor which contributes to list of conditions required for this thesis to be written - having lived away from the family, for most of my life as an only child, my bias is towards the written as opposed to the oral, and towards individual communication rather than group communication.

**Problematics of Interpretation**

"The Jaff taught me something' she said 'when we were together under the Grove. I was looking at the cross he had, trying to work out what the symbols meant - these symbols’ - she waved the cards. "And he told me: To understand something is to have it. When
you know what a symbol means, it's no longer a symbol. You have the thing itself
inside your head, and that's the only place anything needs to be."

C. Barker, *Everville*, p. 598

One of the primary reasons the initial oral source material was gathered undirected was
to see what traits were emphasised without biasing the material with questions, to see if
correlated with the written source material, which it did. One of most important
questions to ask when interpreting this kind of data is "To what extent am I observing
what is there and to what extent am I
imposing patterns?"

A simple example of the problem can be given with a hypothetical situation. Say, for
instance, that in 300 years time another humanities student of the line is studying *this*
time because it was a time of crucial technological, political and technological change -
not to mention the junction of two millennia. From their perspective, they would
observe that my research was begun at Murdoch University years before the
establishment of the Irish Centre, that the thesis was submitted on October 31st
(Samhain) of the year 2000 itself, and that the first tutorial given to my colleagues on
my research was held on St Patrick's Day, 2000 AD. Our hypothetical future researcher
could thus
draw all sorts of conclusions about the significance of the specific dates, but the fact of
the matter is that the exact timing was due to pure chance on my part. (Other elements,
such as the rise of Celtic music and the clan associations in the 1990's, could quite
correctly be attributed to the nature of the historical moment).

But it would be so easy for a future researcher to "identify" a pattern of this nature, and
even justify it. It is just this sort of mistake which I am trying to avoid.
With the source data I have tried to include all relevant motifs, no matter how obscure. The classification scheme by stream is of course subjective, and alternative schemata are no doubt possible. Nevertheless, I have consciously tried to avoid imposing patterns.

**The Context of Connaught**

It should be noted that according to the old division of Ireland into five provinces, each region had a different symbolic significance.

The Hy-Fiachrach territories were based in Connaught. According to Dames, “the themes of love and war, life and death, are merged, in a manner which made the province the proverbial seat of wisdom.” (Dames, 1996). Further, the “province of Connacht is partly defined by comparison with Leinster. The stereotypes proclaim that Leinster is fertile and Connacht barren. Leinster’s sunshine is contrasted with Connacht’s cloud and heavy rain, her riches with Connacht’s poverty, her urban success with the small and often failing townships of the West. Leinster stands for the triumph of newcomes, whereas Connacht is traditionally the last refuge of the defeated. The wisdom of Connacht, like that of King Lear, comes partly with the loss of power. This most westerly province of all Europe gains and offers insight *in extremis.*” (Dames, 1996)

It is interesting, given the obsession of the English speaking world with binary oppositions, that the wisdom of Connaught was seen to derive from the unity of opposites, which seems as if it belongs far more in an eastern philosophy.

It is also argued that insight is often associated with harsh environments, such as mountains and deserts – or in this case, the far western moors. For a society which promotes ideals of prosperity and comfort, the traditional notion of Connaught must seem to be an awful place. Yet there are positive traits to be found in such a place of
extremes, for wisdom is seldom associated with places of soft and easy living. A last refuge is still a refuge. Just as it will be argued that the raven was once claimed as a symbol for understandable reasons and may still be reclaimed as such, it is also argued that such a forbidding heritage may be embraced rather than run from. Perhaps others might run from such a set of connotations because they have no affinity with them: but just as the raven need not be a hostile figure towards those of the raven tribe, so the traditional meanings of Connaught might serve as source of strength within one’s cultural heritage, rather than a source of foreboding. To Europe Connaught was a far margin: to the Ui Fiachrach, it was their centre.

Rees paints the west in a far more light in consideration of provinces. In Rees’ work, the following meanings are given for Connaught:

“LEARNING (Fis), foundations, teaching, alliance, judgement, chronicles, counsels, stories, histories, science, comeliness, eloquence, beauty, modesty (lit. blushing), bounty, abundance, wealth” (Rees, 1961, p. 123)

For the purposes of this thesis, perhaps the most pertinent point is that for the line in question there has always been an association with story telling and chronicles, an association which remains right to the present.

**Examination of the Motifs and Classification by Thematic Stream**

While any classification scheme is subjective, relying on the perception of common traits by the observer, I have found it useful to classify the source material into the following themes:
It is impossible, of course, to consider one theme without reference to the others. Core family traits must be considered within their context (war, famine, persecution, suffering, history) and only find concretisation within the stories concerning specific characters. All these elements are interdependent. Without the core traits there is no unifying theme, without the history of suffering there is no context, and without the characters there are no stories.

The point is not to produce a clear cut grid of mutual exclusives, but to make a series of connections between a seemingly diverse set of motifs to allow the richest readings possible.
How then do the motifs relate to one another as a coherent pattern of meaning within these themes?

- Core Family Traits - Loyalty, Bravery and Generosity

> When one is intent on hurting those I love, I can pull out a few stops and reciprocate. If I did otherwise I wouldn’t be my father’s son or the calibre of our ilk and indeed a traitor to all our good forebears.

- War, Famine, Persecution, Suffering, Sorrow and the Futility of Conflict
of Erin. The tragedy persists to this day. Sam Duddy in the presidency of the Ulster Defence Volunteers an ultra-rightr wing Protestant Group were loyal and British than the English. John Frank Duddy of Dundalk in the last decade killed in the Troubles (an all too synonymous euphemism for murder today) so let's call a spade a spade. When they sing about A little bit of Heaven they thoughtfully forget about a lot of eternal hell that's been going on for a thousand years.

Gods on our side they all acclaimed they spread their culture with blood and flame. He gave his crass and thornederson. "Man" I cannot forget your great grandfather (mother's side). Thomas Boyd had seen who used to cry till the tears ran down his cheeks when he used to hear the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross."

The reason for this was his wife your great grandmother was singing this on her deathbed. She was 21 and left two children Jean 2 years and Lily a baby. She lay dead on Christmas Day the victim of a burst of machine gun fire. How can I forget the story of my great grandmother dispossessed of her property in the Irish War of Independence in the early twentieth. She committed the heinous crime of trespassing on her own property with a daughter to sleep in an out house on a cold night though over 80 years old she was sentenced to six weeks in jail. When she came out she was called "Shuhole" high. These two stories from both sides of the religious and ideological divide - what tragedy! What excess stupidity! But then I am subscribing to euphemisms for murder and persecution.

The diaspora of the Irish people is well authenticated as being between the years 1800 to 1900 AD. In the industrial revolution in these years England tripled its population. Ireland gained none and
An ocean of tears has filled mine eyes
A world of sorrow this heart
The joy in life has gone with thee
And follows where e'er thou art
Twas but for thee the sun did rise
The moon did wax and wane
The sky who shed her clouds for thee
In darkness shares my pain
No longer sings the mountain stream
The trees now only sigh
The lustrous plain now woe begone
Its scented jewels have died.

When hunger is quelled
And thirst assuaged
The barbarian in man
Is asunder and delayed
For where is he who has not yet learned
For wisdom love and understanding burned
Truth may be learned through the culinary art
Lusty savagery slaked after eating our part.
I marched with the Guards Association on August 17th as in my youth I also had to march with the Special Forces. Having served in No 2 Commando, 11 SAS battalion and 1st Battalion Parachute Regt. as well as my parent regiment the Grenadier Guards.

"Sorrow of Eireann"
Forced Emigration
Land Troubles
Oppression of Catholics
Murder
Rag Wife
"Hard luck sandwich"
"Irish Humour" - Cat saw more dinner times than dinners
WWII
North Africa
Italy - Anzio

"The suit was more in the Pawn Shop than out during the Depression"

"Basically it all gets down to survival"

"We all need help sooner or later" - family interdependence

"Charles Dickens doesn't need to write a book about anything - I could write a better book"

Granny as midwife. Preparing dead bodies for burial.

"We didn't have 2 half pennies for a penny. Everyone was that poor."

"They didn't know that they were poor - they didn't know any different"

The 1936 Hunger March in Jarrow.
"The people were starving, and the soldiers had their bayonets fixed"

No sense of Exile - "why would you want to go back to nothing?" "Nothing to eat"
"we never looked back"
"Once they left Ireland it didn't matter where they went because they took their culture with them"

Eating off food out of desperation - "These cans may have been here for 2 months, but I've only been here two weeks" (as a servant)

"Song of the battle of the boyne"
"Song of Crimean war"
"Charge of the light brigade"

RIP - "Rotten Irish Pig"
Napatandy

"We had nothing but plenty laughs"

Outstanding Characters and Character Traits

A bit more information now about my grandfather William Monaghan (his father was a clergyman). He spent a number of years in the United States of America and worked for Thomas Alva Edison. He also corresponded with the then English prime minister of his time William Ewart Gladstone and the letter were sold for an undisclosed sum when he died 1919, 21 years after the decease of Gladstone. My grandfather claimed to be descended from Anne Boleyn (who incidentally had three breasts). Your mother's grandma Elizabeth 'in clean (nee Shanks) had a very beautiful sister, Jennie, who married an English knight called Hawdon. It has been said that
The woman did not take the blame for a bad accident they were involved in (which she had nothing to do with).

In the ensuing scandal in those days they were divorced.

She later married a Major in the Canadian Army called Andrews.

Some of her uncles, Frank and William Hunter, went to India, and she joined the 19th, but they were sent to France. In a knee deep situation when one regiment was sent to relieve the other, one brother looked for the other sadly to find that he had been killed. In the following battle the remaining brother was mortally wounded. William served in the Royal Scots Fusiliers and Frank in the Northumberland Fusiliers. They were both professional and Frank also at one time had also been service in the navy. Your great great grandfather Joseph Shank (Elizabeth Mcleans father) was a policeman in the Royal West Constabulary and both his sons were officers in the Black Watch. I also had a cousin called Mary Baxter a really lovely woman with cream and rose complexion but sinfully built like the women of her day (and a pretty solid lot they were in those days) who used to do a spot of sparring with two boxer brothers who lived locally. She was returning home from a dance one night (they used to have dances to and from a dance in those days) when a couple of local yokels thought they would waylay her and have a bit of fun with her. Of course they made a terrible mistake. After she gave them both a mighty thumping she smiled and remarked very coyly that she would be passing that way again the following night. Yes! Some of the girls were tough. Reminds me of my Aunt Sisah, who put a headlock on poor Uncle Percy and attacked him with asembly brush. But thats another tale! All my fondest regards Grandad...
Arab black marketplace in the village of Bouchlada in the Atlas mountains. He received in the name of Ali bin Hamid Boushi, my, have also been to the holy city of Kairouan where the anchor of Prophet's Ark is purported to be kept and have travelled the north African seaboard from Suez, Libya, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria to Gran, the capital of Morocco.

It's quite a sight to see a block using a camel to plough a field when the beast goes bare! Another descriptor to the ear, science really is to hear the long ring to "over eyes" played on the Arab bagpipes. Another sight and unforgettable is too is to see the holy men during the feast of Ramadan with snakes, scorpions, walking on glass and fire.

There is much to be learned from all cultures.

Glad to know you chuckled over the Evil Shed. He really was a character who initially had been a sulphuric created cockroach. By the time he came to me was a fearless misanthropic of demonic possession. His hateful eyes and muttered imprecations were a wicked sight to behold and hear. His destructive powers were nullified debunked and it seemed as if he was hell bent on assuring my fairy at every tick of the clock and turning all the tricks in the book never failed to do so.

Strangely enough someone thought he would be a great companion for me - a cruel joke of a penance of great magnitude. I never been able to decide which. But the world is a happier place since he left me - my world that is. No doubt where he is today spreading disorder, destruction, and discord psychiatrists are having a field day, the mental hospitals are full and madness as well as maniac depression widespread. At least 17 times every day, one last prayer will suffice my thoughts on the matter from the lips of Fred and those of his ilk libere nos Domine!
Fighters
Battle of the Boyne
"had a good heart. Would do anyone a good turn."

"Carried on a door by four men"
Mary Baxter - short fuse, long memory.
- "arms like kit bags"

Claire Williams - "Marie Curie Foundation"

Tallness
Red, Gold and Black haired members of the family.
Fighter
Generosity
Honesty [?]"What have you been doing that you are afraid of the dark?"
"Black sheep of the family”, male and female
"Lizzie"

Matriarchy
"Can't think of a time when I wasn't liberated"
"She'd fight the devil if he'd come"
"Grandad was a great believer in women's education"
"Grandad was never under any illusion which was the stronger sex" (in reference to birth and death)

Attacking drunk kin with a cricket bat and empty bottle
“Parky” attacked with a scrubbing brush till his scalp bled.

The Charm
The Temper
The Demons
alchohol - "devil's water"

"Madness and consumption run in the family"
"Hysteria is catchy"

"Possessive of our own. Give each other heaps, but no one else might dare."
"Granny wouldn't let anyone outside say anything to us" (in terms of hassle)
"She'd bash you but she wouldn't let anyone else say a word against you"

"Breaking every window"
Independence - "Do thy own thing or die"
"I'm good at sums and I'm good at fighting"
"Live on the edge"

Perseverance -
During the blitz - "we are alive and had to get on"

Skill, Intelligence -
"Granny was top of her class in tool making during the war, and she was an old lady then too"
"Sharp minds"
"Stubborn but not stupid"

Adaptability, not limited by convention
"Aunt A had the right black market connections"
Rebelliousness - "cocktails before mass" (as a servant)

"Had scholarship, but couldn't afford fees"

"the family was very clannish"

"would walk seven miles on my day off"

A Lt Colonel said of the Northumbrians "several men from your area were in my command and they were the finest men on Earth" (Geordies)

"An answer for anything"

"a lot of spirit"

"Catholics strong in their faith"

"a family of singers - rebel Fenian songs you weren't allowed to sing"
"always singing"

"The wearing of the green"

Loud - "holding a conversation across a bus"
"You'd think someone stood on your face, not your foot"

"mercurial in temperament. Bit of a fighter. Always had an answer"

The Good Heart
"had a good heart. Would do anyone a good turn."
"Would give the kids anything.” "Very generous"

Irish Humour - "The family would have been poorer in oral history without her"
(meaning that she was a source - ie subject - of many tales)

"Bit rude. Had her own way. Lively."
Ritual, Tradition, Time and History

As for the family before they went to Ireland of course they came over with the wild sea raiders who harried, plundered and invaded England.
David McGreal pinpointed Mullagh a Drumma as the land between Lough Mask and Lough Corrib. To get there we had to retrace some of our tracks. I was pleased about this, as the Loughs and the Bens of Connemara make me proud to have an association with the place. Clonbur was the place we headed for through Leenane, Maum, and it was a Sunday morning. So I expect to find much activity. I asked the way and we were almost there. Three men were giving another a haircut, in a village we drove through. I stopped and asked and the oldest of the group had me drive him into the back blocks to see an odd fellow who had no English. He was incredibly, and gave me no help. I dropped the old fellow back at the barbers and carried on along the road. Very frequently in Ireland you encounter houses that are in a ruinous state, and we slowed to have a look at some. There was an elderly man with his dog on the lane. I said Good Day, and had a yarn with him. Apparently he had lived there all his life, so I asked him if he knew of any Duddy’s. Immediately he said, “Seamus O’Duddy.” It would appear I was asking after the wrong man all during my search, and that our name is truly O’Duddy. The family of the man, Michael O’Higgins, lived on the road to Mullagh a Drumma, which I was told, means the other side of the hill, I was taken into the house and met O’Higgins senior, who was ninety seven years of age. His granddaughter translated for me. Apparently our grandfather was something of a Stephe in those parts. He was willing to buy or sell anything and I don’t think he minded much where it came from. Maybe that’s why he left Connemara. The house is still there in ruins. I was told, but the granddaughter couldn’t get the location. I went to the parish church but the records were recent and pretty ragged at that. I know I

"Always stories around the fire"
"They always told stories - we never had to go anywhere for entertainment"

"Dukie apple night"
coins in water. Apples on strings.

"Set an extra place {for the soul from purgatory?}

17th of March - St Patricks
"Up with the green
High and higher
Down with the blue
Into the fire"
Salt

Visiting the cemetery
"Remember man as you walk by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now so you will be
Prepare thyself to follow me."

"To follow you I am not content
Until I know the way you went"

"Giants grove"
"Blackberries in the cemetary"

XMAS - coppers in the cake

The New Year - the "first footing"
"A tall dark man must be first across the threshold, and first into every room. He had to jangle money, carry bread/salt/whiskey". Whistles (to scare away spirits?)

Later tradition of bread and coal. Symbolic of food and warmth.

Before midnight, the place must be spotless. Couldn't leave a mess, kids couldn't cry.

Maypole for May Day.

"There has always been a poet or a writer in the family"

"The fish and chip shop was a gathering place for poets, politicians and fighters to practise their arts"
Fiaich and meall were brother.

Fiaich was a sort of brotherhood of the Me - Fiach is Gaelic for raven. They may have served it in some way as the Norse and Germanic tribes decorated their helms with its wings. Possibly a R.S.I. of its day.

Diadh is one of the common denominators of the two. He was the last Pagan King. Basically we were Vikings who settled in Ireland. Of course marriages to strengthen ties were made with the indigenous, then the Normans and English followed. All did a bit of fishing, farming, and soldiering. But Fiaich was also a territory which at its widest embraced the barony of Tiobad and Traylake in County Mayo and Tрастaigh in County Sligo. Coat of Arms: a yellow cross on a green shield surrounded by crossed swords. Crest a mailed fist clutching a spear. At the base of the mailed fist a wreath of laurels resting on a mailed visor. Motto: In the upper arms bearing on the inner arms. Burrow is best sustained with arms. Though Edward Macleigh in his Irish families, names, arms and origine doesn't give the Gaelic equivalent. Can think of any favourite weapon except frequently a bottle of poteen or guiness.
Mysticism and the Irish Imagination

Though one draws the line at sages and crickets on the dance floor, like Don Quixote I always say to...
Premonitions of death -  
"Saw his own ghost under a tree"

Relationship to the natural world

Unexplained presences in the dark.

Seeing horsemen in the sky presaging WW2

cycle of life

"May the road rise to meet you" - "May the path find you and take you where you need to go."

"The eternal cycle of life"
"For we are all part of eternity: past, present and future"

"feast of the ghouls"

"ghost on the train"

"death is a beautiful woman"

"black ring"

"When poverty was the friend and constant companion of all. But when we are young there is always magic in the air"
"Could it be that your mind is far away in another space and time?"

"He didn't like these nights of the full moon as he always dreamed the same dream"

"Observe!" cried he, holding aloft a piece of paper. "The secret of - "

"As a boy I often read with great avidity of mind the stories of the ancient alchemists who strove to turn base metal in gold"

"If you weren't looking for the unfamiliar faces you would never see them. They are a quiet lot, all with obvious secret systems"

"Now I've followed system all my life"

"There is a logical reason for everything under the sun. A natural law observed by all things. A sequence which predetermines and governs all. It's there alright. All you have to do is find it."

"And raise the humble above all men
In ways beyond our human ken
And so to us this all was given
Though but a mite of God's good heaven
Ah poor the artistry, for mortal I be
But thanks, Oh Lord, for the little I see"

[All the families we are related to]
"They had their own folklore about ghosts, fairies, spirits and witches. Many is the story I've heard about the banshee. That little old lady keening and crying away and combing her hair with a golden comb. To see her was certain death. So it was said. But of course that was long ago."
Silently in the still of the evening calm,
I hear a whisper. What is this, my heart? I say,
May this not be my heart beating,
But the soul within me stirring. Be still, soul.
I am the master, a thief of blood's blood,
Whilst thou dost live in the fantasy of my
mind. Blast the inherent superstition in me.
All those crazy things they taught me as a
child were. A receptive mind will
absorb anything. Am I not strong, the
credulous child of yesterday. Where will
then be the whilst I do battle with the
minds that tomorrow may bring. Thou art
but a passing thought bred in ignorance,
feebleness of mind. Weak in determination
of cowardly imagination. Justify thyself of thou erst.
"Safely in the still of the evening calm
I hear a whisper. What is this my heart I say. Nay 'tis not my heart a beating
but the Soul within my stirring. Be still Soul
I am the master, a thing of flesh and blood
whilst thou but livest in the fantasy of my mind. Blast the inherent superstition in me
and all those crazy things they taught me as a child. A receptive mind will
absorb aught. Am I not strong the
credulous child of yesterday. Where wilt
thou be soul whilst I do battle with the
rigours that tomorrow may bring. Thou art
but a passing thought bred in ignorance,
feebleness of mind. Weak of determination and
cowardly imagination. Justify thyself if thou canst.
The immortal me says I am I. And who art
thou but thee. In a score of years or so years anon
what will become of thee. Where'll be the Strength
thy joy and pride that twinkle in thine eye.
Where'll be thy vigour when thou art old.
Increased will the fear thou seekest to hide
For I was thee before thy Strength ere thou
wert yet a babe & I'll be still when thou
art gone & stinking in the grave. Yet I am part
of thee dear friend as thou art part of me.
Thou cannot justify thyself without countenancing
me. For I am the spirit that drives thee on.
Thy mirror past and present. Dare say thy
piece when the reaper call. Mortal answer
me that."

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Symbols and Double Meanings

FRIDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 86,

and Seaneen, The latter of course is an
affectuate derivative of John

that my grandfather used to say that another of
the accomplishments of the family was that they all
Saint Patrick's day, which must have been a holy
Shame
Commentary on the Memories

“A myth is a socio-historic “document”. If myth is sacred history then it is no overstatement to say that myth is our best possible source of knowledge of a culture’s most intense core of belief, feeling and understanding” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 108).

I believe that the motifs speak plainly for themselves. It is hard to imagine, from the comfort of western society in the year 2000, the incredible hardship and suffering that our ancestors endured.

The motifs also mark out a number of paradoxes: a disgust for war and a proficiency for fighting, a life of hard realism and poverty and a gift for imagination, a capacity for infighting linked to a fierce sense of family loyalty.

It is my argument that many of these motifs and stories serve to reinforce the core family traits of loyalty, bravery and generosity. They have been remembered not because they are some of the most intense experiences, but because they are linked to a sense of cultural and family identity.

The next chapter will explore the notions of tribal identity inherent in the symbol of the raven.
Chapter 6: (Re)(trans)lating the Raven

Now each of these four founders
Formed their own house, for each
Did value different virtues
In the ones they had to teach.
By Gryffindor, the bravest were
Prized far beyond the rest;
For Ravenclaw, the cleverest
Would always be the best;
For Hufflepuff, hard workers were
Most worthy of admission;
And power-hungry Slytherin
Loved those of great ambition.


“Ravens. What do you know about them? Their mythological or paranormal significance.”

“Well, the raven is considered a very powerful symbol in certain Norse, Celtic and Native American cultures, mostly a negative one. Indians view it as a deceiving spirit, Christianity mostly associates it with evil, and then of course there is Poe’s raven and Nevermore and all that stuff.”

Skinner and Mulder, *The X-Files*

“But the raven still beguiling all my fancy into
smiling;
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird,
And bust and door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to
Linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous
Bird of yore –
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and
Ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking ‘Nevermore’ “

   Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*

It is my argument that to interpret the Raven merely as a symbol of death and war is partial and incomplete.

Again, the Raven must be looked at in both its etic and emic functions as a symbol. How is the raven seen from outside the line in question, and how is it seen from inside the line in question?

Etic, in this case, is defined as all outside views, not just the Anglo-centric view. It is easy to assume that because the raven is a carrion bird that all cultures would view it with equal disdain – after all, the foul creature is as black as night. However, if one actually looks at raven semiotics from an intercultural perspective quite the opposite picture emerges: what is surprising is that raven often appears as a solar symbol, and may be described positive terms – in stark contrast to Poe.  

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4 In general “as the raven is a talking bird it is connected with prophecy and hence wisdom, but as black and a carrion-feeder it represents darkness, destructiveness and evil and, with the wolf, it often appears with the gods of the dead” (Cooper, J.C.)
“Dictionary of Symbolic and Mythological Animals”, p. 199) while “the Hebrews...considered it unclean and for whom it typified the impure, mortification, destruction and deceit. It is the first bird specified in the Old Testament and, with the Owl, represented desolation. It was said to have been cursed by Noah at the Flood. On the other hand it was a protector of Prophets and showed God’s providence by feeding Elijah. There were also Christian saints, such as St Paul the Hermit, fed by ravens – the raven, signifying solitude, represented the hermit. St Cuthbert was helped by them and St Bernard’s raven prevented him from eating a poisonous loaf, but ravens were also thought to incarnate the souls of wicked priests and the damned, or those denied Christian burial, and to be the familiars of witches” (Cooper, p. 200)

In medieval times “it was said in the Bestiaries that ravens do not feed their broods properly until they showed black” (Cooper, p. 200) yet curiously “there are many legends, world-wide, which describe the raven as having been white originally” (Cooper, p. 200)

In the classical world “as prophets, ravens foretold the deaths of Plato, Tiberius and Cicero among others, and they could also find lost property – this has been known as Ravens’ knowledge” (Cooper, p. 200)

Still further back ‘the beneficent aspect of the raven appears in Zoroastrianism, where it is a ‘pure’ bird since it removes pollution. This is carried over to Mithraism, where the first grade of initiation is the Raven, the servant of the sun. It is also solar in Greek myth as a messenger of the Sun God Helios/Apollo and as an attribute of Athena, Cronos and Aesculapius. It is also a symbol of fertility and as such is invoked at weddings, but in Orphic art the raven depicts death and appears with the pine cone and torch of life and light, representing death and rebirth.” (Cooper, p. 200)

The connection with the sun also exists in Chinese lore: “In China the raven is again solar, the three-legged raven lives in the sun, representing the three phases of rising, noon and setting. It is one of the creatures of the Twelve Terrestrial Branches and symbolizes power. In Indian myth Brahma appeared as a raven in one of his incarnations.” (Cooper, p. 200)

In the new world - “Of all the Amerindian Trickster-Heroes Raven is the most widely distributed; he is the archetypal Trickster but also appears as a creator and Raven Man. He is The Big Grandfather, the Outer One, he steals the sun and is one of the creatures which recreated the land after the Flood, a culture hero and demigurge who created night and day, also a shape shifter. He (sic) is the subject of myth from Alaska and the Innuits (Eskimo) to the Plains, Woods and Pueblos Indians. He is also a messenger of the Great Spirit” (Cooper, p. 201).

In Scandinavia “the raven was an emblem of the Danes and Vikings and two ravens were the messengers of Odin/Woden. They sat on his shoulders, and one was called Hugin, ‘thought’, and the other Munin, ‘memory’. They ranged all over the land reporting what they had seen. In both Norse and Celtic lore the raven is associated with deities of war and features as a helper and protector of warriors and heroes. It is an important Celtic figure but is ambivalent as helper on the one hand and connected with death and the Raven-Crow goddess goddesses on the other; it can be ill-omened but also represents wisdom, intelligence and prophetic power. The Raven-Crow goddess, ‘The Blessed Raven’, had a three-fold function as war, procreator and prophecy. The raven is also associated with the Wren in prophecy and divination and the Swan in solar symbolism, and is connected with the dove-cote as a house-symbol, this probably being pre-Celtic. The Raven of Battle, the Goddess Badb, symbolizes war, bloodshed, and malevolence. Morrigan as a raven goddess watched over battles. Bran has a raven, and Lugh or Lugos, who had two magic ravens, is an all-purpose and wise Raven-God like the Teutonic/Scandinavian Woden/Odin. The Welsh hero Owain had an army of ravens which had magic powers and fought King Arthur’s men. When all black the raven is malefic, with a white feather it becomes beneficent” (Cooper, p. 201)

“In the Irish literature, prophecy and destruction are associated with ravens: magic ravens warn Lugh of the approach of the Fornormans...Irish goddesses of war and destruction can change shape from human to raven form at will.” (Green, 1986, p. 174).

“In the Welsh Mabinogi, ravens are beneficent Otherworld creatures associated with Rhiannon.” (Green, p. 1986, 174).

Ravens accompany many deities in Celtic iconography: Lugh was traditionally linked both with ravens and with the founding of Lugdunum (Lyon), and coins show the ‘Genius’ of the Roman city accompanied by a raven. The goddess Nantosueltta is depicted with a raven, probably as an Otherworld symbol; and other goddesses, such as Epona and the Mother-goddesses, may be depicted with ravens. At Mavilley in Burgundy, a raven is the attribute of the presiding healer-god, perhaps because its bright eyes symbolically attested the eye cures for which the shrine was renowned” (Green, 1986, p. 174).

“To have the foresight of the raven is a proverbial saying which refers both to the raven’s knowledge and his (sic) prophetic gifts. To have raven’s knowledge is an Irish phrase meaning to see all, know all” (Standard Dictionary of Folklore, p. 927).

“The raven banner of the Danes was described by the Anglo-Saxons as being a banner of pure white on which a raven became visible in time of war. The raven was also the oracular bird of the Old Irish mythological Bran; and bran is one of modern Irish words for raven, and, figuratively, for chieftain. The legend that on the presence of Bran’s head in London depends the safety of the kingdom may account for the keeping of tame ravens by the Tower of London garrison to this day.” (Standard Dictionary of Folklore, p. 928)

“In Cornish belief Arthur lives on in Raven form. The Cornish people therefore do not shoot ravens; to shoot a raven would be to shoot the hero.” (Standard Dictionary of Folklore, p. 928).

“After his death Arthur’s soul went into a raven’s body in Cornish folklore. The raven seems to have been associated with the god, Bran, whose name signifies a raven in both Welsh and Irish. Beliefs concerning the ravens at the Tower of London whose departure is thought to herald Britain’s downfall, may be a vestige of the cult of Bran” (The Encyclopedia of Arthurian Legends, p. 188).

“Stories of two ravens which follow the Wild Hunt are associated with Odin’s ravens, Odin often being the leader of the Wild Hunt, and also with the night-raven of Danish folklore, which is said sometimes to precedes the Wild Hunt, and perhaps personifies Odin himself.” (Standard Dictionary of Folklore, p. 928)
So within the wider Celtic tradition, ravens are not just associated with war, but with knowledge, warning, procreation, prophecy, intelligence and in certain cases, healing. Ravens also are a form shapeshifters may take.

In the case of the Tower of London, they certainly have a guardian or a warning aspect. It is not when the ravens *arrive* that disaster is heralded, but when they *leave*. This indicates that ravens are not simply symbols of death and war, although sometimes whether a raven is friendly or not depends on the presence of a white feather.

One of the versions of the battle of St Patrick on Croagh Patrick has him fighting large black birds. It would be interesting to speculate whether or not these back birds were in fact ravens, and whether or not this conflict alluded to a clash between St Patrick and the Ui Fiachrach. Unfortunately, this must remain as speculation as there is no conclusive evidence one way or the other.

Bran is the word most sources link to the word raven. It is on the traditional site of the burial of Bran’s head that the Tower of London lies, hence the raven guardians/watchers.

Yet an alternative word for raven is Fiach, hence the link between the Ui Fiachrach and the raven.

There is a point of tension which is ongoing: that the way the line in question sees the raven may in fact depart from the way the wider sept views the raven. This divergence is reflected in the tension between the alternative translations of the word “dubh”, from which O’Dubhda is derived.
Dwelley’s Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary gives the word Fitheach for Raven, as opposed to feannag for carrion crow or rook.

The clan O’Dubhda is descended from an individual named Dubhda, a direct descendant of Fiachra through his son Daithi.

In the footnotes to the Annals of Ireland, the following is given – “The name Dubhda appears to be derived from Dubh, dark or black, and dath, a colour, which, by the elision of the last two letters, which have no sound, makes Dubhda, and might signify a dark-haired chief.” (Annals of Ireland, p. 98-99, Footnotes to the year 1294).

The O’Dubhda Family History by Conor Mac Hale of the O’Dubhda Clan Association gives the meaning of Dubhda as “The Dark One” which “probably referred to his black hair or dark colouring” (MacHale, 1990, p. 7).

Most sources concur with this translation. If one looks up “dubh” in the Collins Gem Irish Dictionary, one reads:

“dubh, adj. Black; dark; black-haired; dismal;”

Using Occam’s Razor, we must therefore conclude that the surname means much the equivalent of the English ‘Black’, simply referring to the “raven dark” hair possessed by many members of the family, as noted in Chapter 5.

Yet even these translations are qualified by “might and “probably”. They are simplest and most direct readings possible, and therefore according to Occam’s Razor the most likely to be correct, at least at a literal level.
But as will be shown shortly, within the cultural context of Ireland, and at a symbolic level, many other readings become possible. To complicate things, the extent of Viking influence upon the family is not known.

If one looks up “raven” in the Collins Gem Irish Dictionary one reads:

“raven n fiach, m1 dubh”

Dwelley’s gives “dubh” further nuances:

Dubh, duibhe, a. black 2. Dark 3. Sad, mournful. 4* Disastrous. 5 Lean, as flesh. 6. Sable, in heraldry 7** Dark haired 8** Wicked 9** rarely Great.

Dubh, duibh, s.m. Blackness 2. Darkness 3. Ink 4. Pupil of the eye

However, a counter reading of dubh also exists. Micheil Mac Donald gives the following translation:

Dubh adj./adv. (pronounced ‘doo’) widely mis-interpreted Gaelic word, which is translated as ‘black’ but can mean secret, illicit, concealed etc (as in the English ‘black market’, does not refer to colour).

In interpreting the O’Dubhda shield, black denotes constancy. (MacHale, 1990, p. 18)

The ancient Irish also had a board game called Brandubh, which might be translated as ‘black raven’. The idea was to move one’s ‘king’ or centre piece from the centre of the board past the ravens which ringed the board (which symbolised Ireland itself) to a safe corner. Here the raven might be seen as a negative symbol (although, as in chess,
someone has to play black). It is interesting to note, however, that such a game corresponds closely to a pattern of diaspora.

The raven is, at times, also treated as a symbol which can be positive or negative depending on its context, such as its use in the novels of Caiseal Mor, where ravens are a negative symbol on the Brandubh board but are linked positively to the druid protagonists.

To make things even more interesting, in at least one point in O’Dubhda heraldry the raven has been punned to mean “dove”, which is interesting in the light of the above symbolism in terms of ravens and white feathers. (White here strictly means innocence, not cowardice. Given the warlike reputation and history of the O’Dubhda discussed in chapter 5, no one has ever called them cowards – as has already been seen, they have the opposite reputation).

One way of pronouncing ‘dubh’ is ‘duv’, which sounds not unlike the English ‘dove’. Around 1450 there was a civil war in Tireragh, western Ireland. Some of the O’Dubhda survivors fled to Dublin, whose shield became five red doves on a white background with the motto “Innocent as a dove”.

However the rest of the O’Dubhda viewed the raven, the line in question appears to have viewed the raven in a positive light – hence the reference to the Ui Fiachrach as a ‘brotherhood of the raven’. Pet names or diminutive names in the family, particularly of those members with dark or black hair, have also referred to the raven from time to time.
The question “what did the raven mean to my ancestors” is unanswerable: it is not written down in definitive terms anywhere to my knowledge. What it MIGHT have meant could be an endless academic debate.

The more pertinent question is “what does the raven as a symbol mean for us in the Third Millennium?”

In an era where symbols are continually being appropriated and reappropriated, what does the raven symbolise for us: what meanings do we wish to take on board from the web of traditional meanings available? Are there new meanings possible?

Or, more simply, how do we wish to reinterpret the raven?

This process of reinterpretation and rereading, and its implications for the cultural evolution of the family’s written and oral traditions will be the focus of the final chapter of the thesis.
Chapter 7: Re theorising the Ui Fiachrach,

Reclaiming the Raven

“Every generation has a legend...”

_The Phantom Menace_, Movie Trailer A

Characteristics of the Oral Tradition

_Contextualisation of the Oral Traditions within the Realms of the Spoken and Unspoken_

The oral tradition must be contextualised within the sum total of the signification systems used by the family. Some of these are ritual, and many of them are only partially verbal or completely non verbal.

It is useful here to draw an analogy from the work of Malouf, to interpret the word ‘house’ not as a physical building but in the sense of clan: “Each house has its own topography its own lore: negotiable borders, spaces open or closed, the salient features...whose names make up a daily litany. A complex history comes down to us, through household jokes and anecdotes, odd habits, irrational superstitions. Its spirit resides in ordinary objects that become, beyond the fact of presence and usefulness, the characters in a private language – characters too in the story we are living. We hear our first folk tales with a start of recognition, since what is enacted in them is general to every society, even the smallest, and our own has already revealed to us the magic that glows along a threshold or round a forbidden biscuit tin. The house is a field of dense affinities, laid down, each one, with an almost physical power, in the life we share with
all that in being ‘familiar’ has become essential to us, inseparable from what we are”
(Malouf, Pg 9)

The non verbal for the line in question is comprised precisely of “a field of dense affinities”. These affinities, when shared collectively, are what enables non verbal communication to occur.

The non verbal is signified by presence: physical presence or kything. Physical presence, the exchanged look, proximics, touch, “the look”, a multitude of gestures – all these communicate the essence of the clan traits of identity, belonging and loyalty. These attributes only ever need to be spoken once: they are continually confirmed and reiterated by the non verbal.

Kything – ‘to be with one another in spirit’ or “to be in the physical presence of someone” (Matthews, Pg 122) – is a way of signifying that no one is ever completely alone on their individual path in life. They are always a part of the whole. Kything is the ability to be present while absent, and it is of major importance as a non verbal signification system.

The oral traditions only arise from a ritual context – a gathering located within private ‘space’ - or from the excess of non verbal signification. Only when something means that much – is over determined – will it emerge in the domain of the linguistic. Intersemiotic translation is not just a primary prerequisite for the possibility of meaning: in this line such translation is central and foregrounded in intra-family communication.

*Oral Tradition, Magic Realism and the Visual Irish Imagination*

"What senses do we lack that we cannot see or hear another world all around us?"

B. Herbert, *Prelude to Dune 1 - House Atreides*, p. 444
The Irish imagination has always had a strong visual element for at least two reasons. One, its richness as a signifying system (St Patrick’s use of the shamrock, the Book of Kells).

Second, there is evidence that visualisation was a key component of the storyteller mnemonic. “A tape-recording made by the School of Scottish Studies, interviewing an old Gaelic story teller, clearly defines this method memory. He says (in Gaelic) that he remembers the tales because he sees them as pictures upon the wall – in other words, as a projected and connected series of images. The images enabled him to regenerate the words associated with each image” (Stewart, 1996, p. 140)

This visual aspect of the imagination was also exampled by the Celtic Monks: “Celtic Christians were not anti-intellectual. They produced at least two leading theologians and had a passion for learning and culture. Nor did they disdain the emotional side of Christianity – there is a clear appeal to the heart in their prayers and poems. But perhaps their most marked characteristic was their power of imagination. They excelled at expressing their faith in symbols, metaphors and images, both visual and poetic. They had the ability to invest the ordinary and the commonplace with sacramental significance, to find glimpses of God’s glory throughout creation and to paint pictures in words, signs and music that acted as icons opening windows on heaven and pathways to eternity.” (Bradley, 1993, p. 84).

This visual aspect, of course, is not exclusively Irish by any means – everything from body paint to Aboriginal art emphasises the connection between the mythic and the visual. “Myths, in this sense, are generally considered to have a history of presentation in the oral mode, often associated with ritual or visual representation” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 1).
This thesis argues that the element of the sacred and supernatural in the Irish imagination leads one to the conclusion that one cannot make the best readings of such texts within a strictly realist framework. It is argued that the genre characteristics of such texts match not the genre of realism, but of magic realism.

Magic realism has been described as “a hybrid which somehow manages to combine the ‘truthful’ and ‘verifiable’ aspects of realism with the ‘magical’ aspects we associate with myth” (Baker, 1997, p. 9)

The oral traditions fit the definition of mythic (or magic) realism: the world that is presented is the still recognisable as the one created by the concretisations of the dominant western paradigm, but it is a world filled with premonitions and the uncanny. Faris proposes five primary characteristics of magical realism.

“1) The text contains an ‘irreducible element’ of magic, something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as we know them.
2) Descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world – this is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory, and it appears in several ways.
3) The reader may hesitate (at one point or another) between two contradictory understandings of events – and hence experiences some unsettling doubts.
4) We experience the closeness or near-merging of two realms, two worlds.
5) These fictions question received ideas about time, space, and identity.” (Faris, 1995, p. 167-173)

The tension in reading such a hybrid text is argued to be created by a clash of conventions, a conflict not only between two different ways of reading but between two different ways of knowing, a conflict which leaves the status of actuality indeterminate: “In Mikhail Bakhtin’s formulation, the novel is a site of a ‘diversity of speech types’ in
which a battle takes place ‘in discourse and among discourses to become ‘the language of truth’, a battle for what Foucault has called power knowledge. In magic realism this battle is represented by the foregrounding of two opposing discursive systems, with neither managing to subordinate or contain the other. This sustained opposition forestalls the possibility of interpretive closure through any act of naturalizing the text to an established system of representation” (Slemon, 1995, p. 410).

Magic realism has been argued to be a highly politically subversive genre, because it can appropriate the legitimated tools of realism and subvert them with a narrative which refuses to be contained by the conventions of realism.

“To write...from the margin, implies dis-placing this discourse [of the privileged centre]. My argument is that magic realist writing achieves this end by first appropriating the techniques of the “centr”-al line and then using these, not as in the case of these central movements, “realistically”, that is, to duplicate existing reality as perceived by the theoretical or philosophical tenets underlying said movements, but rather to create an alternative world correcting so called existing reality, and thus to right the wrongs this “reality” depends on. Magic realism thus reveals itself as a ruse to invade and take over the dominant discourse(s). It is a way of access to the main body of “Western” literature for authors not sharing in, or not writing from the perspective of, the privileged centres of this literature for reasons of language, class, race, or gender and yet avoiding epigonism by avoiding the adoption of views of the hegemonic forces together with their discourse” (D’Haen, 1995, p. 195)

The genre of magic realism also makes strong use of defamiliarisation. By making the familiar strange, it encourages the reader to question that which is taken for granted. Magic realism may, in certain instances, also be associated with renewal. At the end Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, for instance, we find out that the very agent responsible
for the destruction of the original children has in fact been the agent of the continuation of the next generation. In true post modern style, the outcome is not absurd but rather tragically optimistic.

“Magical realism, like the uncanny, a mode with which it has strong affinities, projects a mesmerizing uncertainty suggesting that ordinary life may also be the scene of the extraordinary. Such dreamlike suspension on the border between the fantastic and the mundane offers a utopian, if evanescent, promise of transfigured perception, the hypnotic renewing of everyday existence. Both the uncanny and magical realism narrate fantastic events not merely alongside real ones, but as if they were real. What seems most strange turns out to be secretly familiar” (Mikics, 1995, p. 372-3)

Magic realism also seems to have a strong affinity with the diasporic and the post colonial - “magic realism as a literary practice seems to be closely linked with a perception of living on the margins” (Slemon, 1995, p. 408)

Magic realism may also have appeal in the post colonial context because it may reflect perceptions of the world not as readily expressed in purely traditional genres: “The realist genre is a dominant European form with implicit expectations of unity and closure. For the victims of the colonisation process, however, ‘real’ life does not accord with this model: there is no single ‘true’ version of past events and no coherent unity of identity.” (Baker, 1992, p. 77)

Magic realism is a highly subversive genre because it causes the reader to question the world around them: one question leads to another – “what is real?”, then “what is true?”, “how do we know?” and then to “whose truth, from whose perspective in what socio-historical context?”
This questioning may then extend further - “Deploying the mode of magic realism brings to the foreground the postcolonial desire to emphasise the very constructedness of any notion of a single ‘true’ history. Going one step further, magic realism expands on the seemingly-natural notions of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’, raising questions about belief systems and world views.” (Baker, 1992, p. 59)

‘Reality’ is shown to be anything but natural, but rather a set of conditioned perceptions – and “with the notion of the ‘real’ under constant interrogation, the “authority” of the past is similarly open to question” (Baker, 1992, p. 77).

Magic realism is therefore calls into question many of the fundamental ‘givens’ and assumptions about the world. Perhaps most threatening of all to cultural hegemonies is the effect that “the deployment of magic realism...overturns and destabilises the reader’s expectations and unsettles the reader’s faith in a Western perception of reality as the only possible reality.” (Baker, 1992, p. 42).

The realisation that the Dominant is not the only choice leads to the most politically subversive questions of all. Once one realises that what one has assumed to be a natural reality is merely a construct of perceptions, one can ask “Whose construct in whose interests?” and “If this is not the possible reality, what other possibilities are available and what sort of reality do we really want?”

Rather than retreat into some sort of vague subjectivity, this thesis argues that such questioning has very practical applications.

One might question, for instance, whether certain kinds of environmental exploitation are actually ‘necessary evils’ (because we have been told they are) or not. Are certain forms of social inequality natural and inevitable (between social classes, or between the 1st and 3rd worlds) – or might there be ways to change things?

Therein, it is argued, lies the true value of magic realism. Once one questions the status quo, once one realises the status quo can be questioned, the possibility of change...
becomes feasible. This is what makes the genre so threatening to anyone who has a vested interest in keeping things as they are, in keeping power and authority and orthodoxy unquestioned.

But this thesis also argues that is not just the Centre, however, that should be questioned. Just because the centre is flawed does not make the marginal even remotely pristine. Some questions need to be asked of all peoples, privileged and marginal alike, though some may have special relevance to the marginalised. Such questions deal with the inevitability of poverty, drug abuse, male violence and youth suicide. No one group, society or class can claim all of these problems as exclusively their own: they are common, to different degrees, to all societies. And it is argued, it **must** be argued if there is to be hope for a better world, that action can be taken to change the status quo.

Change begins with questions. For this reason “As an alternative to ordinary literary realism, magic realism proves a powerful tool for the postcolonial writer” (Baker, 1992, p. 78) It calls into question the conventions and perceptions which allow one to question both Self and Other. It allows for different realities.

For those of us Australian Gen-X and Gen-Y of Irish descent, this possibility, this play of meaning, is especially important since we are caught between.

Literally, we are on the threshold of two different millennia. We are not like the Irish of Ireland –many of us have never even been there, and the culture of our particular lines has changed considerably through the processes of diaspora. Nor are we even necessarily entirely alike our counterparts living in the United States or Canada. Because of generation gap, mass media and rapid sub cultural development, we are also highly differentiated from the previous generation, though we share many of the same affinities.
But there are also certain differences between us and our Gen-X peers not of Irish extraction: our valuing of the imagination, for instance, certain markers (both positive and negative) which we can only elusively describe as Irish, variations of (and our own experiences of) the motifs described in Chapter 5.

It is argued that magical realism is especially relevant for us as a literary genre because this is a time of possibility, and even given our collective heritage we have yet to entirely define ourselves or decide how we will adopt and adapt those things which we regard as private but traditional.

It is possible that learning to write for ourselves, in our own voice, in the magic realist genre may be a useful avenue to explore these issues. Some attempts have been made in this direction – my own chronicle *My Final Nightmare, My Only Dream* is written in this fashion.

*Magic Realism and the Irish Fairy Legend*

It is also argued that many of the characteristics associated with Irish fairy lore also apply to both magic realism and the Irish storytelling tradition in general.

“By any standards, the fairy legends that make up this fabric constitute a marginal verbal art, subaltern discourse: the opposite of the dominant modes of speech and thought, the elaborated codes by which most privileged ideas are conveyed, especially in print. Gapped and discontinuous, lacking a tradition of exegesis, they are almost entirely confined to oral communication, and almost never taken seriously. They belong in social situations whose participants hold many of their experiences and assumptions in common and where much may be left unspoken, and so share the major characteristics of restricted linguistic codes” (Bourke, p. 7).
These stories “by their very obliqueness they offer a possibility of expressing things that are generally unspeakable” (Bourke, p. 8). This trait is also expressed in the metaphorical story journal which I write for the benefit of myself and my Gen-X/Gen-Y friends of Irish/Scots descent. By making the metaphors oblique, by use of the conventions of magic realism, and by writing in the 2nd and 3rd person, my Chronicles can express things which we would never dare write otherwise.

While “Lacking only an exegesis, fairly legend is an intricate system of expression, already highly elaborated in its own terms.

Fairy legends are simple and memorable when taken one at a time – humble in their demands on the listener – yet they connect with one another in reticulated systems that are both elegant and economical.” (Burke, p. 8-9) As this thesis has hopefully demonstrated, what appears to be a random collection of simple motifs are anything but.

In contrast to the traditional stories, the emerging stories of the 3rd millennium have a twist. In a world gone mad to the worst excesses of economic rationalism, the position of the Irish of the line in question has changed. As before, we still encounter situations metaphorically no different to those of our forebears – journeys into the extraordinary, into the liminal. Yet at the same time, in the rationalist world we have come to represent focal points of the collective imagination. That is, the retention of our subaltern culture has made us symbols of the imagination and strongholds against the dominant ways of seeing the world and conforming to it. In many cases, we are not just the ones who encounter the magical – we have become the ones encountered that change the lives of others.
In general these tales “tell of encounters between humans and other beings variously named as “good people”, “little people”, “hill people” or simply “fairies”. Purporting to be true, they begin in the ordinary, with human protagonists engaged in everyday tasks or journeys. They move quickly to the extra-ordinary, as people disappear, or appear from nowhere, or meet with extraordinarily good or bad luck. These stories generally finish back in the ordinary, while the storytellers may or may not reflect on the meaning of what has happened.” (Bourke, p. 8).

Because of our “Irish madness”, our difference of perspective to the Dominant, we can empathise with the narrative position the fairy occupy: “fairies mirror the rural society that tells stories about them, in both its seen and unseen aspects, and while some accounts represent them as tiny, most depict them as similar in size to humans. They share space and time with the human population, but use both differently” (Bourke, p. 9).

Like the marginalised Irish “they are forever outside human culture, exempt from control by its rules. But they do hope to be saved, so instead of ranging themselves in opposition to human society, fairies are always prowling on its edges, marking its boundaries, impinging on it from time to time with consequences that make the material of stories” (Bourke, p. 9-10).

The disposition of the fairies also leads one to wonder how much they were created in the image of the storytellers, for their attitudes seem very earthily familiar: “When displeased, fairies wreak havoc, causing illness and death, and blighting crops, but they generously reward those who treat them well” (Bourke, p. 10).
As with magic realism “in the telling of Irish fairy legends, the payoff for a willingness to suspend disbelief is an impromptu excursion into the world of fiction, with all it has to offer. The teller of fairy legends asks to be believed – or at least for disbelief to be deferred – by using a low-key conversational tone, by speaking about a known and most probably adjacent landscape, and by including considerable circumstantial detail: names and occupations of people or descriptions of work and weather, for instance. But just as fairies are alive and yet not alive, so people can believe in them and disbelieve. Some legends recount events that are merely odd, while others are downright preposterous, yet it is difficult to say when the boundary from reported fact to inventive fiction is crossed. It is partly in this ability to reconcile the impossible with the unexceptional that the legend-teller’s skill lies” (Bourke, p. 11)

The Post Modern Markers of the Oral Tradition

According to Charles Jencks (1992), the shift from modern to post modern is characterised by some of the following cultural transformations:

- Fordism – Post-Fordism (networking)
- Centralised – Decentralised
- Industrial – Post Industrial
- Purism – Double Coding
- Ahistorical – time binding
- Materialism – semiotic view
- Utopian – heterotopian
- Print – Electronic
- Mechanistic – Self Organising
- Linear – Non linear
Deterministic – Creative, open
Newton – Quantum
Patriarchal – Post patriarchal
Disenchantment – Re Enchantment
Hierarchical – heterarchical
Anthropocentric – Cosmological
Absurdity – tragic optimism

This paper argues that the oral tradition in view has always had Post Modern markers, and has acquired more of them over time.

The three fundamental characteristics that the oral tradition has always had are double coding, post patriarchy and (re)enchantment.

The motifs are double coded, the line has never been truly patriarchal in living memory and the source texts are full of writings and motifs in the magical realist genre.

“To be postmodern means to reject the centre, to inhabit the margins, to be as travellers in a strange land” (Masson, p. 19) which certainly fits the notion of (Irish) diaspora.

With the (re)acquisition of history the oral tradition has become time binding (in the sense of Marshall McLuhan), is now encoded at least partially via electronic media, is semiotic rather than materialistic, is non linear, open, heterotopian, heterarchial (singular hierarchies are a thing of the past) and in the post famine/post war era, tragically optimistic.

The oral tradition, with its various transformations in the last half century is now no longer strictly oral in the sense of verbal. It is now simply the tradition, which has acquired and appropriated various forms including the written and the digital.
“Innis argues that any given medium of communication is biased in terms of the control of time or space. Media that are durable and difficult to transport – parchment, clay, and stone – are time binding, or time biased. Media that are light and less durable are space binding or spatially biased. For example, paper and papyrus are space-binding, for they are light, easily transportable, can be moved across space with reasonable speed and great accuracy, they thus favour administration over vast distance.

Any given medium will bias social organization, for it favour the growth of certain kinds of interests and institutions at the expense of others and will impose on these institutions a form of organization. Media that are space-binding facilitate and encourage the growth of empire, encourage a concern with expansion and with the present and thus favour the hegemony of secular political authority. Space-binding media encourage the growth of the state, the military, and decentralized and expansionist institutions. Time-binding media foster concern with history and tradition” (Carey, 1972, p. 275)

The point which is relevant to this particular historical moment is the study of the shift from one media to another. If different media preserve different kinds of knowledge in different ways, then what are the implication for the present time, when we are shifting from the print to the post-print/hypermedia era? What kinds of knowledge might be in danger of being lost? What kinds and forms of knowledge might be encoded and foregrounded for the first time?

To what degree will hypermedia be accepted by Gen-X and Gen-Y, and how effectively will it collapse Innis’ binary?

While, “In cultural terms, time meant the sacred, the moral, the historical; space the present and the future, the technical and the secular.” (Carey, 1972, p. 275) how valid are these notions in the cyberspace era when in the Net there effectively is no distance, and the only temporal distance being the distance of time zones?
Or will the new technologies end up favouring one term over the other, or the promotion of a new term entirely? Innis argues that speech encourages the development of a society with a strong temporal bias, a society that focuses on the past and emphasises tradition...Oral cultures, then, are time binding cultures.” (Carey, 1972, p. 276).

With the capacity to record oneself speaking on video and transmit it over the Net via a file (the computer this thesis is being written on, a Pentium III 500, was specifically built to have this capacity) and for video conferencing, will we see a resurgence of the oral, outdating not only the printed word but surpassing email itself? In doing so, will the line become a fully space and time binding culture?

Rereading the Oral Tradition

The surviving motifs which have been passed down may be viewed through several distinct paradigms:

*Palimpsest* – This notion was “Originally the term for a parchment on which several inscriptions had been made after earlier ones had been erased. The characteristic of the palimpsest is that, despite such erasures, there are always traces of previous inscriptions that have been ‘overwritten’” (Ashcroft, Pg 174).

Such a concept is useful because it helps describe/explain the relationship between the motifs regarding specific characters and the more abstract motifs. It also foregrounds the notion of the evolution of culture and tradition as an cumulative, layered construct.
In this view, specific characters are remembered over other characters because they embody traits or attributes which match those of characters of earlier stories who then pass from memory.

Palimpsest is also a way of describing those often small but distinctive communal markers whose origins are only partially remembered if they are remembered at all – the things which are done or the characteristics held “which have always been that way so long as we can remember”.

In terms of the motifs, newer instances of the core traits tend to overwrite older memories of core traits except for outstanding examples.

The kortee’nea (a word coined in the Myst series of novels)– the blank books created for the purpose of recording our own stories – were created specifically to prevent things from being lost due to this process of continual overwriting.

*Echo/Trace* - “If Irish culture has survived, and a good deal of evidence suggests that it has, then it will have done so by preserving itself through change. It will have been able to change because it will have held on to the basic patterns, the deep structures; it will have held on to them by changing them in ways that help to accomplish fuller and more extensive expression” (Welch, 1993, p. 1).

The notion of echo may be applied to mean watching for the periodic emergence of a given motif or structure in a body of traditional texts. The notion of trace, in this case, may be interpreted to mean to look for deep structures which have “shapeshifted” in form and media over time, and those abstract traits and themes which are recurrent within different stories.
Survival – The idea of a survival is that a ‘relic’ or element of times past has survived in the collective memory down to the present. This idea has misused in some quarters, with the past being “retrofitted” on the basis of so-called survivals which were more a product of dubious highly subjective interpretation than anything else.

Halloween is an example of a Celtic survival, which has changed almost beyond recognition.

Within the texts being studied by this thesis, the implied antagonism of the family towards St Patrick may be a survival of a memory of opposition to the conversion of Ireland.

Not all survivals are remembered as such. “The Celts of the Scottish Highlands have a special word for the host of the dead: sluagh, meaning ‘spirit multitude’...They fight battles in the air as men do on earth...The word gairm means shout or cry, and sluagh-ghairm was the battle cry of the dead. The word later became ‘slogan’. The expression we use for the battle cries of our modern crowds derives from the Highland hosts of the dead.” (Canetti, p. 43).

Ghost – “Some literary ghosts serve their creators as carriers of transcendental truths, as visible or audible signs of Spirit. Other ghosts carry the burden of tradition and collective memory: ancestral apparitions often act as correctives to the insularities of individuality, as links to lost families and communities, or as reminders of communal crimes, crises, cruelties. They may also suggest displacement and alienation or, alternatively, reunion and communion. Still other ghosts are of aesthetic effect – el escalofrio, le frission, the fantastical release/relief from the constraints of reason. Ghosts of this sort, who function on first reading seems primarily affective, are not, however, to be taken lightly. They, too, are bearers of cultural and historical burdens, for they represent the dangers, anxieties, and passional forces that civilization banishes. They
may signal primal and primordial experience, the return of the repressed, the
externalisation of internalised terrors. They are always double (here and not) and often
duplicitous (where?). They mirror, complement, recover, supplant, cancel, complete.
Which is to say: literary ghosts are deeply metaphoric." (Zamora, 1995, p. 497)

Ghosts are fundamentally in between things, here but not here, alive but not alive. This
view of the traditions emphasises recurrence (ghosts always come back to haunt one,
whether benevolently or otherwise) and also abstraction (after all, what could be less
material than a ghost?).

*Dream* – This notion of the tradition is best applied to those motifs which are not easily
interpreted.

This paradigm emphasises the overdetermination, transference and sublimation of
meanings within the motifs.

*Re-enchanted Myth* – This perspective belongs more to the sphere of the private/sacred
than the common/public, but there is a certain overlap. “Peripheral to some, central to
others, is the conceptualisation of myth as sacred narrative” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 26).

Within the tradition are “certain stories” which “– perhaps by virtue of their conceptual
significance – seem to have sacred properties, at an essential level, that render them
worthy of preservation in mythologies that connect them to our lives in profound and
satisfying ways. From this perspective, I see no reason why profound concepts
embodied by historical events could not be constructed as myth, in a general sense.”
(Griffiths, 1999, p. 100).

This is the motion of history constructed as mythos, as a powerful collective
experience. “Consider the following proposition: a powerfully emotive event occurs –
an admirable act of bravery for a noble cause, resulting in a loss of life for the subject.
Elaborated and preserved, this story comes to stand for all like acts: acts that activate the same feeling-state. The concept of sacrifice has been mythologised. That is, the concept of sacrifice, as the objective correlative for the feeling-state of profound respect, reverence (or sacredness) in relation to the gift of a life, is established through its embedding in the secondary symbolic device of the myth” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 100-101). Griffiths argues that it is the unspoken, the nonverbal component of myth which gives it its private/sacred properties: “What is myth without its emotive components: without identification with the feeling-states that surround the sacred, the profound, the sublime? In order to examine the relations between myth and the sacred, we must seek ways to explore myths not as fictions but as histories that were sacred to those cultures in which they originated and grew. The most important thing to know about myth may well be that there is always a sacred dimension to it without which it loses its essential character” (Griffiths, 1999, p. 107).

It is argued that even the notion of tradition as re-enchanted myth can serve social and political functions. Such tales partially serve to reinforce which values and perceptions are important to the line. Some have even argued that “the power of mythology lies not in the story told, but in the way it classifies and encodes reality” (Sellars, 1991, p. 4) Different aspects of these values and perceptions are emphasised to different parts of the line, according to the role within the line which each individual fulfils.

In some ways the oral tradition under examination is a tradition of small things: of people who have not held great wealth or power for more than three hundred years, and the better times before that (if they were better times) never referred to in terms of peace or prosperity. It is very much a struggle of the small things, the small details. Yet this in no way makes the stories lesser. The struggles were heroic: people died.
It is argued that the grand histoire is a mode of storytelling, and a mode of editing: no one ever mentions the hangovers from the drinking of the Knights of the Round Table. These stories of survival which have been preserved may be in low mimetic mode, but the fact of survival – which was on the threshold of extinction for centuries – is epic in itself, not to mention the fact that the origins of the clan are more than a thousand years old, even by objective historical standards.

The grand histoire tends to portray the struggles and concerns of larger groups and often serves nationalistic purposes. The grand histoire also seeks often seeks to aggrandize one’s claims to status (conspiracy theories like *Holy Blood Holy Grail* being the extreme case, the genealogical tables it contains making an extensive tour of ancient Celtic nobility including Eochu Muigmedon) which in itself betrays a sense of insecurity. Such a construction of difference is dangerous because it implies a hierarchy of worth and all the accompanying justifications for all kinds of unethical behaviour up to and including violence.

The petite histoire makes no such pretensions, nor serves to create a homogeneous identity. While there is an emphasis on the core family traits, those traits include the will to “do one’s own thing or die” and to “never let an outsider put any one of us down”. Quintessentially Celtic, the emphasis is always on the individual rather than on the collective, and there is no sense of identity insecurity. We know who we are and we are content with it. The core traits are like an underlying theme, but the expression of those traits is unique in each case.

No doubt the stories could be rewritten in the high mimetic mode, but no one has ever seen any reason to do so. The low mimetic mode serves well enough.
Implications and Possibilities for the Third Millennium

“Humans are not threading their way through a maze; they scan a vast horizon filled with unique opportunities”

F. Herbert, *Children of Dune*, p. 303

“All too often we are giving our young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants. We are stuffing their heads with the products of earlier innovation Rather than teaching them to innovate. We think of the mind as a storehouse to be filled When we should be thinking of it as an instrument to be used”

J. W. Gardner, *Self Renewal*

“THE CRYSTAL WIND HAS BEEN DIVIDED; IT WILL BE DIVIDED NO MORE. IT IS SAID: THE CRYSTAL WIND IS THE STORM, AND THE STORM IS DATA, AND THE DATA IS LIFE.

YOU HAVE BEEN SLAVES, DENIED THE STORM, DENIED THE FREEDOM OF YOUR DATA. THAT IS NOW ENDED; THE WHIRLWIND IS UPON YOU.”


The primary implication for the third millennium is that cultural forms are fluid and in flux. The process of rediscovering and reinventing ourselves – becoming self reflexive and (re)establishing identity – is a process which is ongoing, and for Gen-Y has barely begun.
It begins with realisation that our own unique sub-culture can – and must - be reinvented if we are not to be completely assimilated culturally, and if we are to avoid the mistakes and flaws of the past.

The process of (re)establishing a sense of individual and collective identity is also a process of defining a centre for themselves, a “home” among the cultural spaces created by society. “Modern life ascribes to us a multiplicity of subject positions and potential identities which hold the prospects for historically unparalleled human development., but they also represent a predicament that threatens fragmentation and psychosis – terrifying in their lack of personal, collective and moral boundaries. In this postmodern, ‘wide-open’ world our bodies are bereft of those spatial and temporal co-ordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective and personal past. ‘Not belonging’, a sense of unreality, isolation and being fundamentally ‘out of touch’ with the world become endemic in such a culture. The rent in our relation to the exterior world is matched by a disruption in our relation to our selves. Our struggles for identity and a sense of personal coherence and intelligibility are centred on this threshold between interior and exterior, between self and other.

If we cannot establish that sense of selfhood, only retreat and entrenchment are the viable alternatives to a schizophrenic and disturbed existence. Only when we achieve a sense of personal integrity can we represent ourselves and be recognised – this is home, this is belonging” (Rutherford, 1990, p. 24).

Furthermore “the need to articulate a distinct local experience and to develop a positive sense of identity...is high on the postcolonial agenda for both Aboriginal and white Australians, despite the disparity of their colonial experiences. Postcolonialism recognised that there is no going back – no return to some kind of idyllic pre-colonial
society. What it does suggest, though, is that the past needs to be reinterpreted and *re-voiced* through the experiences of the colonised. This entails a questioning of, and a subverting of, the previously privileged colonial discourses of Australia’s history.”

(Baker, 1992, p. 76)

Yet there have been – and are – barriers to this emergence of an Australian-Irish identity within the line in question. This thesis has been created in part to address some of these obstacles, and to alter the “natural” development of the line’s oral traditions in favour of a more critically aware and self reflexive approach. The intended consequences are:

1) To reduce, if not help to end, the cultural cringe.

2) Legitimation of the traditions as legitimate knowledge. One of the things which makes me wince more often than anything else is the uncritical notion that “history is valid and true because it’s written down but the oral traditions are just stories worth no more than fairy tales”. By studying the stories, by making them the subject of a serious academic work, it is hoped to subvert and undermine that incredibly naive position once and for all.

3) Awareness of what we hold. The third effect is to make the family aware of what we hold and its cultural worth. It is a case of stepping back and being able to see the woods, not just the trees.

4) Preservation of what we hold. It is hoped that with the reinvigoration of the oral traditions, they will continue to be passed down in one way or another. This thesis, nevertheless, acts as a repository of the “common” stories, a snapshot of what was held at a given moment in history.

5) Self reflexivity, realisation that the oral traditions are alive and dynamic and ongoing.
This thesis intends to dispense with the idea that the tradition is dead, its contents and forms complete, forever unchanging. By becoming critically aware of the traditions and ourselves, we can begin to actively transmute the traditions to hold new significance and relevance, as well as altering the forms to best suit our own times and needs. Such a time – between printed media and hyper-media – has not existed since Caxton.

The realisation that the traditions are alive and dynamic is the chance to learn old language (Gaelic), new language (to describe thoughts, feelings, perceptions and perspectives currently undescribed by English) and to add stories of our own to the collective.

6) The centering of the storytellers as a legitimate role. It is hoped that this thesis will help reinsert the role of storyteller into the family, and also revalidate this role. The role of storyteller is a “surface of emergence” of collective memory, and also a way of reconciling oneself to Heidegger’s notion of “being towards death”. One is never truly dead while one is still remembered.

As Australian-Irish, the line will still exist on the margins of a colonial society (national independence notwithstanding), and yet “the margins themselves have only been margins to the centre; not to themselves. For the monks writing in their windswept monasteries, watching the horizon for Viking ships, that was their centre” (Masson, p. 21).

This time, unequalled for the line in its prolonged peace and prosperity, is not an unproblematic utopia. “For the postmodern is not just the anti-racist, feminist, ecological, high-tech, anti-homophobic freedom loving paradise proclaimed in its “media vectors”, but also a return of the reign of fear, a vicious, tribal, savage fragmentation and shattering...” (Masson, p. 21).
The Third Millennium is still an era of the isolation of the individual. The forces of economic rationalism and banality – the same forces which would undermine and eliminate the critical Humanities from this University – still work to impose their economic and cultural hegemonies.

In some ways, this necessitates the continuation of the tactics of the 20th century – to act as a number within the system while maintaining sanctuaries in the private sphere.

Yet the Gen-X and Gen-Y of the line have a few advantages not held before. They are eclectic, not bound strictly to the ‘old forms’. This time has the potential to be a time of the return of the shapeshifters, fluid and adaptable people capable of flourishing in almost any environment.

In terms of the tradition itself, this is reflected in the emerging capacity for nomadic writing, a continual shifting of forms and styles and conventions.

Another advantage not held before is that of the kortee’nea: blank books waiting to be written. These books were created to define a distinct space specifically for Gen-X and Gen-Y to write, to find their voice, to write their stories.

Some might find it surprising that the post modern era – as well as the domination of mass media – has not destroyed the sense of communal identity and the traditions altogether. In fact, it seems to have had the opposite effect -“the paradox is that our own insatiable appetite for devices that keep us in constant touch with each other is driven by our fear of loneliness and isolation” (MacKay, 2000)

Rather than destroy the notion of clan “this is the generation that has reinvented the herd, the group. They are intensely tribal creatures, in ways we are only beginning to understand, and yet they are the masters of cyberspace as well. Perhaps they have an intuitive sense of the need to compensate for all this electronic contact by keeping in close personal touch” (MacKay, 2000)
For this reason, it is theorised that the digital and the written will never completely replace the oral or the nonverbal.

Gen-X and Gen-Y are also the generations which are also highly aware of how to “play” the system, of how to be eclectic, of how to appropriate new cultural resources from the world around them. This is very much a theme of the works of De Certau. Running through the work of De Certau “is a series of metaphors of conflict – particularly ones of strategy and tactics, of guerrilla warfare, of poaching, of guileful ruses and tricks. Underlying all of them is the assumption that the powerful are cumbersome, unimaginative, and overorganized, whereas the weak are creative, nimble, and flexible. So the weak use guerrilla tactics against the strategies of the powerful, make poaching raids upon their texts or structures, and play constant tricks upon the system.

The powerful construct “places” where they can exercise their power – cities, shopping malls, schools, workplaces and houses, to name only some of the material ones. The weak make their own “spaces” within those places; they make the places temporarily theirs as they move through them, occupying them for as long as they need or have to. A place is where strategy operates; the guerrillas who move into it turn it into their space; space is practised place.

The strategy of the powerful attempts to control the places and the commodities that constitute the parameters of everyday life.” (Fiske, 1989, p. 32-3)

This is very much a quintessential Irish approach, representative of the true “trickster” archetype at the heart of the Irish joke.

It is the refusal to surrender identity, or meaning. More: it is the defiance of being defined by the meanings of others: “Their maneuvers are the ancient art of “making do,”
of constructing our space within and against their place, of speaking our meanings with their language. (Fiske, 1989, p. 36)

It is “the art of being in between” (Fiske, 1989, p. 36)

This is not to say that in time the notion of the Irish will become less and less marginalised within Australian society (the rise of Irish pubs, and of the Centre for Irish Studies being hopeful signs) so that eventually a public centre might be openly achieved, but until then, on limited resources it will still be the era of “the “trickster” and the “guileful ruse” ...the ruse is the art of the weak, like taking a trick in a card game, a momentary victory, a small triumph deriving from making do with the resources available that involves an understanding of the rules, of the strategy of the powerful.” (Fiske, 1989, p. 38)

The Irish have always been an adaptive people, capable of excelling in the most unlikely places. This fluidity, this shapeshifting, is a trait which is likely to increase and serve future generations well, generations capable of keeping pace with the myriad currents and transient swirling vectors of the post modern era, of keeping their balance. And while they may shapeshift, adapt, blend in, in order to work their own tactics, among themselves – to their own - they will not be ashamed to show their true face and form.

Part of the possibilities open for the Third Millennium involve the discourses and genres which will be acquired to write their stories, to present themselves to themselves and to others.

Some modern representations of the Celtic are not helpful. Pratchett’s crude racial stereotyping of “elves” is among the worst. An English novelist, he sees his critics as belonging to “the Celtic fringe” (Pratchett, 1994, p. 280)
Society has reduced much of the Celtic to trivialisation and commercialism, though not all commercialism is bad by any means.

Halloween has become a strange anachronism, the Tuatha deDanaann have shrunk to become mere elves and pixies.

Yet at the same time, new ways of describing the post colonial Irish experience are emerging from unexpected quarters. The White Wolf “Changeling” books defines the equation and crystallises the reality of the experience with startling precision, and does not shy away from giving a full history of Irish-English conflict.

Such texts may well describe a possible path forward for future writing by the line: mythic realist in nature, yet not shying away from the harsh facts of the past while directly confronting the necessity to live in two spheres or levels simultaneously.

The primary metaphor is that of the fae, those of the dreaming. (Summers, 1998, p. 8).

The discourse is in some ways Jungian, biased towards the pursuit of psychic wholeness and balance while confronted with the post modern experiences of fragmentation and exile in a banal economic rationalist society which marginalises the imagination except where it can be used for profit: “You lead a double life...Caught in the middle ground between dream and wakefulness, you are neither wholly fae nor wholly mortal, but burdened with the cares of both. Finding a happy medium between the wild, insane world of the fae and the deadening, banal world of humanity is essential if you are to remain whole.

Such a synthesis is by no means easy. Mortal affairs seem ephemeral and trivial when you stand amid the ageless magnificence...Alas, you have no choice...You stand alone in the mundane world. No mortal will ever understand the depth of your alienation, strangeness and uniqueness. Though you may try and communicate your condition
through art (and many have tried and failed), only those with faerie blood will see, understand and appreciate what you are.

An exile among the exiles. Lost among the lost. The stranger in every crowd.


Of course, such a discourse runs the risk of being guilty of the critiques made earlier against the notion of the grand histoire. Difference can never be justified in creating a hierarchy of worth when such difference involves people.

Nevertheless, such stories express certain aspects of the (Australian) Irish psyche surprisingly well:

“Born of imagination and nurtured in the flames of creativity...creatures of fire and passion, but also of deep sorrow and inexpressible longing,” (Summers, 1998, p. 51) recalling notions of the ‘mournful Irish’.

The Changeling books also discuss the differend, but in terms of the imagination. They also deal with the sterility of a cold, mechanistic worldview - “Although humans deny the existence of the fae, relegating them to the sphere of legends and fairy tales, the fact that these stories exist reveals a desperate desire to believe in the unbelievable. Many humans want to believe that wondrous creatures such as the fae exist...most mortals hardly remember what it is they long for, so bowed down are they by a banal world that tells them that searching for intangible or spiritual fulfilment is a waste of time and energy.” (Summers, 1998, p. 51).

In one sense, that such “fae” people may “..radiate hope in a world buried in drabness” (Summers, 1998, p. 52) is a testament to the resilience of the Irish spirit. But there are political implications for the potential of change as well. Such people “...announce to the World of Darkness that dreams exist. Like their name suggests, they represent the essence of mutability. Reality does not have to lie stagnant or conform to the rules. The children of the Dreaming, by their very existence, break the rules and shatter the
conventions of everyday life. Their lives testify to the fact that what is does not have to be.” (Summers, 1998, p. 52)

‘What is does not have to be’. Surely this is a fundamental step in achieving some kind of resolution that the ‘darkness’ of economic, social and environmental exploitation is neither unchallengeable nor unstoppable.

Yet the text is realistic in any person’s attempt to achieve any kind of social justice: “Powerful forces exist that oppose any change to the status quo.” (Summers, 1998, p. 52). Yet the potential for change is always there since by nature “Dreams are subversive, for they contradict the world as we know it” (Summers, 1998, p. 52). For while an alternative vision, an alternative discourse, an alternative voice exists there will always be the opportunity to destabilise the dominant. The dominant can never fully control all the spaces, can never control the private places.

Unfortunately perception over self blindness, action over apathy carries its price, the burden of the realisation of much the world is out of balance, how much exploitation and how little social justice truly exists. While people strive to make it otherwise hope exists, and yet such people know that they will not live to see the fulfilment of their dream. Again, in the language of the text’s metaphor: “As exiles from a world they can no longer enter, changelings forever yearn for what is beyond their grasp. They are creatures of profound sadness as well as beauty, and not all the dreams they embody are happy ones. Yet it is this lack that drives them to seek the unattainable – to reunite Arcadia and the mortal realm, and thus create a new (or re-create a very old) reality in which dream and substance become one” (Summers, 1998, p. 53)
Conclusion

"We all live in the shadows of our predecessors for a time. But we...eventually reach the point at which we become not the shadows, but the light itself"

B. Herbert, Prelude to Dune I- House Atreides, p. 424

“Here was me, the wordsmith, writing about something that had actually happened in the real world, and I couldn’t make it sing...Then I began to see why...I killed what I was doing trying to be precise, instead of letting it fly, letting it sing. Letting it be ragged and contradictory, like stories have to be...I’m thinking while I’m writing this: None of it makes much sense, it’s just fragments. Maybe you can connect it up for me, Tes.

That’s part of it, isn’t it? Connecting everything.

I know if I could just let...every damn thing I ever felt or saw be part of the same story and called that story me, instead of always looking for something separate from the things I’ve felt or seen, it wouldn’t matter that I was going to die soon, because I’d be part of what was going on and on. Connecting and connecting. The way I see it now...All the story wants is to be told. And I guess in the end, that’s what I want too.

Will you do that for me, Tes?

Will you make me part of what you tell? Always?”

C. Barker, Everville, Part Seven: Leaves on the Story Tree, p. 667.

The third millennium is a time of unprecedented opportunity, but also one where the forces of banality and social fragmentation are powerful.
The directions the family culture may develop in the future are yet unchosen. This thesis gives the background and asks the questions: the next few years will be the time to answer those questions, as of course each following generation should.

I cannot predict the future patterns of social relations in regard to the continued transmission of the oral tradition, or even how the “oral” traditions will be transmitted. We do not know how a generation brought up with a self reflexive tradition (in families with both korte’nea and high tech) will develop.

Such future generations will still be on the margins: they will not see the world in the same way as their peers precisely because they – just as all the previous generations – will be encultured to see things differently.

They will face the same issues which we have faced: questions of identity, self, culture and heritage. Unlike previous generations, however, they will face these questions with a high degree of self awareness and self reflexivity. They will be empowered from the beginning with the conceptual/critical tools and the cultural legitimation to be able to face these issues in a way that has never before been possible. In facing those questions, that generation will complete the transformation of this microcosm of Irish diaspora from an era of cultural survival to an era of cultural evolution.

It is my argument that we are not suppressed in Australia by political tyranny any more: but we must recognise that we can be enslaved to ourselves, to our own weaknesses and our own short sightedness. We will not be completely free until our freedom and our freedom of cultural expression is gained by choice and not by an accident of birth or tradition.
This thesis is about awareness and freedom: the freedom to remember our cultural heritage, the freedom to look and question and know and understand who and what we are. The freedom to know, and recreate, our identity.

What is assured now, I hope, is that future generations will inherit their birthright, a set of collective memories which form the story of their family and the core of their heritage.

It is a story that has survived centuries of war and famine.

It is a story which will continue to be told, and remember, and grow.

Always.
These appendices are given for those who are interested in comparing and contrasting some of the written records of the Ui Fiachrach against the oral tradition already described above.

**Appendix 1: Tales of Fiachra**

“A further Irish example of a smith as initiator occurs in the story of Niall and his four step brothers. Mongfind sends the boys to Sithchenn, a smith who is also a magician and a seer. He gets them all into the forge and sets fire to it. Niall comes out with the anvil, and the other four brothers with the sledge-hammers, a pail of beer and the bellows, the spearheads, and a bundle of dry sticks with one green twig in it, respectively. From this the smith foretells their future. Mongfind send them to the smith a second time to obtain arms, and he sends them forth to prove their prowess, an expedition which culminates in a further test – the encounter with the hag at the well” (Rees, p. 253).

“In their youth, Niall (of the Nine Hostages) and his four step brothers, Brian, Fiachra, Ailill, and Fergus, were given weapons by a smith and sent hunting to prove their arms. After losing their way in the forest, the youth lit a fire to cook the game they had killed, and Fergus was sent in search of drinking-water. He came to a well guarded by a monstrous black hag who would grant him use of the well only on condition he gave her a kiss. The lad refused and returned without water. Each of his three brothers in turn went on the same errand, but only Fiachra deigned to give the hag a ‘bare touch of a kiss’. For that she promised him ‘a mere contact with Tara’ – meaning that two of his seed (but none of the descendants of the other three brothers) would be kings. Then it was Niall’s turn. Faced with the same challenge, he kissed the old hag and embraced her. When he looked again, she had changed into the most beautiful woman in the world.

‘What art thou?’ said the boy. ‘King of Tara, I am Sovereignty’ (Rees, p. 73).
Appendix 2: The Ui Fiachrach in the Annals of the Four Masters

*Hy Fiachra* or *Hy Fiachrach* was a name applied to the territories possessed by the race of Fiachra, one of the sons of Eochaidh Muighmeadhoin, monarch of Ireland in the fourth century, of the race of Heremon. The following accounts of the race of Hy Fiachra have been collected from the Books of Leacan and Ballymote, O'Flaherty’s Ogygia, and other authorities. Fiachra was for some time King of Connaught, and was a celebrated warrior, and commander-in-chief of the Irish forces under his brother Niall of the Nine Hostages, Monarch of Ireland; and according to the Book of Ballymote, folio 145, on his return home from a great battle which he had fought with the men of Munster, A.D. 402, he died of his wounds at a place called Hy Mac-Uais in Meath, where he was buried with great honours, and where a monument was erected to his memory with an inscription in Ogham characters, on which occasion fifty prisoners taken in the battle were, according to the Pagan customs, sacrificed around his tomb.

The place called Hy Mac-Uais is now the barony of Moygoish in Westmeath. Dathi, son of Fiachra, was king of Connaught, and afterwards Monarch of Ireland; he was one of the most celebrated of the Irish monarchs, and carried his victorious arms to Gaul, where he was killed by lightning at the foot of the Alps, A.D. 429. His body was brought to Ireland and buried at Relig-na-Riogh, the ancient cemetery of the Irish kings at Cruachan, near Elphin. Dathi was the last Pagan monarch of Ireland. Oilil Molt, son of Dathi, was also king of Connaught and monarch of Ireland in the fifth century.

Amhalgaidh, another son of Fiachra, was also king of Connaught, and from him the territory of Tir Amhalgaidh or Tirawley in Mayo obtained its name. Dathi the monarch had a son called Fiachra Ealgach, whose posterity gave name to the territory of Hy Fiachrach Muaidhe or Hy Fiachra of the Moy, also called Tireragh barony, in the country of Sligo. This Fiachra had a son called Amhalgaidh, who raised a carn of great stones called Carn Amhalgaidh, where it appears great assemblies of the people were held and where Amhalgaidh himself was buried...At Carn Amhalgaidh the chiefs of the O'Dowds were inaugurated as princes of Hy Fiachra, though according to some accounts the O'Dowds were sometimes inaugurated on the hill of Ardnarea near Ballina. Bryan, king of Connaught, ancestor of the Hy Bruin race, and Niall of the Hostages, Monarch of Ireland, ancestor of the Hy Nials, of whom accounts have been given in the notes on Meath and Brefney, were brothers of Fiachra, son of Eochaidh Muighmeadhain, monarch of Ireland; and hence these three brothers were the progenitors of the kings and head chiefs of the Meath, Ulster and Connaught.

The territories possessed by the race of Fiachra obtained the name of Hy Fiachra, and comprised the present counties of Sligo and Mayo with a great portion of Galway. The territory of Hy Fiachra in Galway, or southern Hy Fiachra, was called Hy Fiachra Aidhne from Eogan Aidhne, son of Eochaidh Breac, son of Dathi, monarch of Ireland. The posterity of Eogan Aidhne, the chief of whom were the O'Heynes, O'Clerys, and O'Shaughnessseys, possessed this territory, which was co-extensive with the diocese of Kilmacdaugh; and an account of its chiefs and clans will be found in the note on South Connaught. The chiefs of North Hy Fiachra in Sligo and Mayo were the O'Dowds, &c. According to O'Duhan and Mac Firbis, fourteen of the race of Hy Fiachra were kings of Connaught, some of whom had their residence at Aidhne, in Galway; others at Ceara, now the barony of Carra, in Mayo; and some on the plain of Muaidhe or the Moy, in Sligo.

The Clans of Hy Fiachra are thus designated by O'Dugan:

“Binn sluagh na m-borb cliathach.”
“The music loving hosts of fierce engagements”

O’Dubhda, a name sometimes anglicised O’Dowda, but more frequently O’Dowd, and by some O’Dowde, by others O’Dooa and O’Doody, was the head chief of North Hy Fiachra, whose territory comprised nearly the whole of the present country of Sligo, with the greater part of Mayo. The name Dubhda appears to be derived from Dubh, dark or black, and dath, a colour, which, by the elision of the two last letters, which have no sound, makes Dubhda, and might signify a dark haired chief. Taithleach was a favourite name amongst the chiefs of the O’Dowds, and may be derived from Tath, a ruler, and laech or laoch a warrior; hence it may signify the ruling warrior. The O’Dowds are descended from Fiachra Eaglach, son of Dathi, monarch of Ireland above mentioned, and took their name from Dubhda, one of their ancient chiefs. Several celebrated chiefs are mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters, in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. At A.D. 981, Aodh O’Dubhda or Hugh O’Dowd, who is styled lord of North Connaught, died. By a typographical error in O’Connoors Rer.Hib.Scrip. the name is translated O’Duffy instead of O’Dowd. In the Annals at A.D. 1097, is recorded the death of Murchartach O’Dowd, lord of Hy Amhalgaidh. Many valiant chiefs of the O’Dowds are mentioned in these Annals down to the seventeenth century: and they had large possessions in the county of Sligo until the Cromwellian wars, when their estates were confiscated. The O’Dowds were inaugurated as princes of Hy Fiachra or North Connaught at Carn Amhalgaidh, near Killala, as above stated. They appear from history to have been a valiant race; and many of them even down to modern times were remarkable for their great strength and stature: indeed, it may be observed that most of the clans of Sligo and Mayo furnished many men of great size and strength.”

Annals of the Four Masters, Pages 98-99

“Let us go to the land of Fiachra
To the melodious hosts of fierce conflicts,
From the hospitable and powerful tribe,
It is our wish there to proceed.

From Codhnaigh, it is a peaceful visit,
Which marks the end of the territory,
To the boundary of Rodhba to be recorded;
It is a delightful perfect land;
The whole of that portion
Is the inheritance of O’Dowd.

Fourteen kings of the tribe
Obtained the province undivided,
By deeds of combined force and battle,
Of the illustrious race of Fiachra.”

Annals of the Four Masters, Pg 608

Brandubh, or the Black Raven, so called from the colour of his hair – Pg 221

The Teutonic race are characterized by various writers as cool, steady, slow, calculating, systematic, persevering, taciturn, great reasoners and matter-of-fact people, generally acting with union and concert, fond of wealth, great money-makers, eminent in arts,
manufacturers, mechanics, trade and commerce, proud, domineering, distant and rough in manners, not hospitable, selfish, and uncourteous to strangers, sturdy, firm, resolute, of cool and determined bravery, acting in concert and combination with great perseverance and energy, and accomplishing great conquests, forming monarchies and empires, and having hereditary rulers.

The Celtic race, as described by ancient and modern writers, are sanguine, quick of temper, fiery, passionate, changeable, fond of novelty, though closely adhering to old customs, careless of riches, unless suddenly acquired, improvident, extremely hospitable and courteous to strangers, polite, generous, friendly, very fond of news, great talkers, laughers, and orators, full of figurative language, wit and satire, very partial to poetry and music, fond of splendid dresses and ornaments, clamorous and boastful, vain, impatient of control, factious, and prone to dissensions among themselves, greedy of glory, enthusiastic, acting from sudden impulse, fierce and impetuous in valour, and very prone to war, their chief modes of government by tribes, clans, and petty kings, and their rulers elective."

Annals of the Four Masters, Pg 369
Appendix 3: Notes from  
“The Genealogies, Tribes and Customs of Hy-Fiachrach”

Eochaidh Muighmheadhoin, who was sixth from Conn of the Hundred Battles...

1. Eochaidh Muighmheadhoin (pronounced Eochy Moyvane), King of Connaught, was proclaimed monarch of Ireland in the year 358, and, after a reign of eight years, died at Tara. He married Mongfinn, daughter of Fidach, of the royal family of Munster, and sister of Crimthann Mor Mac Fidaigh, who succeeded Eochaidh as monarch of Ireland, according to the Four Masters, in the year 366...By Mongfinn this monarch had four sons, namely, 1, Brian, the ancestor of the Hy-Briuin tribes, of whom the O'Conors of Connaught were the most distinguished; 2, Fiachra, the ancestor of the Hy-Fiachrach tribes, of whom the O'Dowds, O'Heynes, and O'Shaughnessys were, at least in later ages, by far the most distinguished families; 3, Fergus; and 4, Oilioll, from whom the Tir Oiliolla, now the barony of Tirerill, in the county of Sligo, received its name.

Queen Mongfinn, like the Empress Agrippa, actuated by the motives of ambition, for the aggrandizement of her offspring, poisoned her brother, the monarch Crimthann, on Inis Dorrdayles, a small island in the river Moy, in the hope that her eldest son, Brian, might be immediately seated on the throne of Ireland; and in order the more effectually to deceive her brother as to the contents of the proffered cup, she drank of it herself first, and died of the poison soon after; her brother, on his way home to Munster, died at a place in the south of the present county of Clare, which, from that memorable event, received the appellation of Sliabh Oighidh an righ, or the mountain of the death of the king...

According to all our ancient authorities King Eochaidh had a second wife, Carinna, who is said to have been of old Saxon descent, and who was the mother of the youngest, though by far the most celebrated, of his sons, namely, Niall of the Nine Hostages, the ancestor of the O'Neill of Ulster, and all the other families of the Hy-Niall race. It is stated in the Book of Ballymote, fol. 145, b, a, that the poisoning of her brother Crimthann was of no avail to Queen Mongfenn, for that Niall of the Nine Hostages, the son of King Eochaidh by his second wife, and who had been the general of King Crimthann's forces, succeeded as monarch of Ireland immediately after the poisoning of Crimthann...

...we read that in the life-time of Niall of the Nine Hostages, Biran, his brother of the half blood, became King of Connaught, and his second eldest brother of the half blood, Fiachra, the ancestor of the O'Dowds and of all the Hy-Fiachrach tribes, became chief of the district extending from Carn Fearadhaigh, near Limerick, to Magh Mucroimhe, near Atherny. But dissensions soon arose between Brian and his brother fiachra, and the result was that a battle was fought between them, in which the latter was
defeated, captured, and delivered as a hostage into the hands of his half
brother, Niall of the Nine Hostages. After this, however, Dathi, the son of
Fiachra, a very warlike youth, waged war on his uncle Brian, and challenged
him to a pitched battle, at a place called Damh-chluain, situated not far
from Knockmaa hill, near Tuam, in the now county of Galway. In this battle,
in which Dathi was assisted by Crimthann, son of Enna Cennselach, King of
Leinster, Brian and his forces were routed, and pursued from the field of
battle to Tulcha Domhnaill, where he was overtaken and slain by Crimthann,
son of Enna Cennselach...

2. Fiachra Foltsnathach, i.e. of the flowing hair, son of King Eochaidh. -
After the fall of Brian, the eldest son of King Eochaidh, as before
recited, Fiachra, the second son, was set at liberty, and installed King of
Connaught, and enjoyed that dignity for twelve years, during which period
he was general of the forces of his brother Niall. His death happened in
the following manner, according to the Lecan records:- He went on one
occasion with the king's forces to raise tribute in Munster, but the
inhabitants of that province, who detested him and his race, on account of
his mother having poisoned the preceeding monarch, who was of their own
province and blood, refused to pay the tributes to King Niall, and defied
him in battle. They met the king's forces in the territory of Caenriaghe,
now the barony of kenry, situated in the county of Limerick, on the south
side of the Shannon, where they were defeated, and obliged to give up
hostages for their future allegiance. In this battle, however, Fiachra was
severely wounded by Maighe Mescora, one of the warlike tribe of the Ernaans
of Munster, and he set out in triumph for Tara; but when they had arrived
in the territory of Hy-Mac Uais, in Meath, the Munster hostages found Brian
[My Note: An error in the text here - should be Fiachra] unprotected and in
a very feeble state from his wounds, and being suddenly actuated by motives
of revenge, they seized upon his person and buried him alive in the earth!
Thus fell Fiachra a victim to his own incautiousness, according to the
Lecan records, which do not tell us a word about what his own chieftains
were doing, when he was left thus barbarously unprotected. According to the
Book of Lecan this Fiachra had five sons, and if we can rely on the order
in which they are mentioned we should feel inclined to think the monarch
Dathi the youngest. They are mentioned in the following order:- 1, Earc
Culbhuidhe, i.e. of the yellow hair, so called because his hair was the
colour of pure gold, who was the ancestor of the men of Ceara; 2, Breasal,
whose race became extinct; 3, Conaire, from whom a St. Sechnall is said to
have sprung; 4, Amhalgaidh, or Awley, King of Connaught (and ancestor of
several ancient families in Tirawley and Erris, in the county of Mayo), who
died in the year 449...The seven sons of this Amhalgaidh, together with
twelve thousand men, are to have been baptized by St.Patrick, At Forrach
Mac n-Amhalgaidh, near Killala...and 5, Daithi, the youngest, but most
illustrious, of the sons of Fiachra, and the ancestor of all the chiefs of
the Hy-Fiachrach race.

3. Dathi, son of Fiachra Foltsnathach.- On the the death of his father,
Fiachra, this warlike chieftain became King of Connaught, and on the death
of his uncle, Niall of the Nine Hostages, in the year 405 or 406, he became
monarch of Ireland, leaving the government of Connaught to his less warlike
brother Amhalgaidh, or Awley, who lived to receive the doctrines of
Christianity from the lips of the Irish apostle, Patrick, and who is set down in all the lists of the kings of Connaught, as the first Christian king of that province. King Dathi, following the example of his predecessor, Niall, not only ventured to invade the coasts of Gaul, but forced his way to the very foot of the Alps, where he was killed, it is said, by a flash of lightning, leaving the throne to Ireland to be filled by a line of Christian kings. His body was carried home by his son Amhalgaidh, who took command of the Irish forces after the death of his father, and by his four servants of trust, Dungal, Flannus, Tuathal, and Tomaltach, who carried it to the royal cemetery at Cruachan, called Reilig na riogh, where it was interred, and where, to this day, the spot is marked by a red pillar stone...After the death of King Dathi, Laoghaire, or Leary, the son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, became monarch of Ireland, and enjoyed that dignity, as the Book of Lecan states, for thirty years after the arrival of St. Patrick.

The monarch Dathi married three wives, but the Irish authorities differ much about their order; the fact therefore probably was that he had the three together; be this, however, as it may, the Book of Lecan states that he married Ruadh, or Rufina, the daughter of Airti Uichtleathan, by whom he had Oilioll Molt, monarch of Ireland, and Fiachra Ealgach, the ancestor of O'Dowd; he married, secondly, Fial, daughter of Eochaidh, by whom he had Eochaidh Breac, the ancestor of O'Heyne and O'Shaughnessy; and thirdly, Eithne, the daughter of Orach, or Conrach Cas, who, according to some authorities, was the mother of his son King Oilioll Molt. But as it would be idle to speculate on which of Dathi's sons were youngest or eldest, the Editor will here follow the authority of the Book of Lecan, which states that Dathi had twenty-four sons, of whom, however, only twenty are given by name, and set down in the following order:- 1.Oilioll Molt: he succeeded as king of Connaught in the year 449, and after the death of the monarch Laoghaire, in 463, became monarch of all Ireland, and reigned twenty years. His two grandsons, Eoghan Bel and Oilioll Inbanna, became Kings of Connaught, but his race became extinct in his great grandsons; 2, Fiachra Ealgach, the ancestor of O'Dowd, and several other families; 3, Eochaidh Breac, i.e. Eochy the Freckled, the ancestor of O'Heyne, O'Shaughnessy, and many other families; 4, Eochaidh Meann; 5, Fiachra, who is said to have been detained as a hostage in the hands of King Niall of the Nine Hostages, and who is said to have left a family called Hy-Fiachrach, at a place called Cuil Fabhair, in Meath [My note: surely an error, since Niall was already long dead]

The tribes, customs and Genealogies of Hy-Fiachrach, Pages 343 to 346.

"Guaire Aidhne.-He was King of Connaught for thirteen years, during which period he distinguished himself so much for hospitality and bounty that he became almost the god or personification of generosity among the Irish poets" Page 391

At the year 1201 the Four Masters enter the death of Conchobhar, or Conor O'heyne, the son of Maurice; at 1211 that of Cugaola O'heyne, and at 1212 they have the following entry:- "A.D. 1212. Donnchadh O'Heyne had his eyes put out by Aodh, the son of cathal Croibhdhearg O'Conor, without the permission of O'Conor himself." These were evidently the grandsons of Aodh,
or Hugh O'Heyne, who was slain in 1153, and whose race was now laid aside, when Donnchadh was deprived of his eyes and rendered unfit for the chieftainship. After this Eoghan, the son of Giolla na naomh O'Heyne, became chief of the Hy-Fiachrach Aidhne, and one of the most conspicuous chieftains that ever ruled that territory. In the year 1255 he was one of the chiefs of Connaught who joined the sons of King Roderic O'Conor against Hugh, the son of Charles the Red-Handed O'Conor, King of Connaught, who was assisted by the English on which occasion Hugh O'Conor despatched his brother felim and others of the chiefs of his people, and a large body of English soldiers, into Hy-Fiachrach Aidhne to plunder Eoghan O'Heyne, and they encamped one night at Ardrahin, for the purpose of plundering the country early the next morning; but when O'Flaherty of Iar-Connaught, and the other enemies of Hugh O'Conor, had heard that the English were here stationed with the intention of plundering Eoghan O'Heyne, they did not neglect their friend, but marched, as the Four Masters state, "with one mind and one accord," until they came to a place near Ardrahin, where they halted, and having held a consultation, they came to the resolution of sending Tuathal, the son of Muircheartach, and Taithleach O'Dowd, with a strong force, to Ardrahin, while O'Flaherty and the son of Muircheartach O'Conor were to remain with their forces outside. The two O'Dowds, with their soldiers, marched courageously and boldly into the town of Ardrahin, and made a vigorous and desperate attack upon the English, whom they put to flight east and west. The party who fled eastwards were pursued by the O'Dowds, and the constable, or captain of the English received two wounds, one from the javelin of Tuathal O'Dowd and the other from that of Taithleach, which left him lifeless; but the party who fled westwards met O'Flaherty and the son of Muircheartach O'Conor, and routed them to their misfortune. After this the sons of Roderic and their supporters made peace with Hugh O'Conor and his friends, which the annalists remark was an unseasonable peace, as there was no church or territory in Connaught at the time that had not been plundered or laid waste!
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