

As this generation was more receptive to cultural change than those previous, they came to question the symbolic notion of home in an English context, particularly the psychic condition of 'dwelling in displacement'. This term describes the unstable Irish identity that existed as a suspended state abroad. Dwelling in displacement is a recognised condition for the Irish emigrants who remained in limbo as long-term residents. They were the 'traditional or native Irish abroad' (*Hail Mary's and Miniskirts*, June 2014). Many from the generation of 1968 who took the boat to London refused to see themselves as such as they sought the opportunities offered by London's new alternative environment. That priority broke with the peripatetic habits maintained by previous generations who perpetrated an 'Irishness' in areas like Kilburn and Crouch End.

The London Irish communities that had grown since the fifties sought no cultural stake in the rebuild of the city outside facilitating its construction. Being close knit and unreceptive to a deep engagement with the city, the London Irish in general nurtured a culture that mirrored the rituals of home. Some new arrivals in 1968 thought differently, and in their first act of generational resistance, they made a point of avoiding the established Irish enclaves. They avoided the guidelines offered by the 'embassy' of the London Irish Centre, the location of which (in Maiden Lane near Covent Garden)<sup>18</sup> prompted the English writer and jazz musician, George Melly, to comment that 'it was the maximum distance one could carry two suitcases from Euston Station after coming from Ireland' (Melly, 2004 p.9). The undertones of this comment suggest that the path of the traditional emigrant were well worn and designed to assimilate new arrivals into the established communities. The choice to not take this path would have registered as a statement of protest within the established Irish abroad.

There were social networks for the 'native' Irish in England in place since the fifties and these took the form of County Associations where Catholic-led 'socials' or dances welcomed newcomers into the established communities. Moral guidelines remained elsewhere if newcomers socialised in the circuit of commercial ballrooms, which catered for the diaspora at weekends. Some of these dancehalls held visual reminders to emphasise the in-between space the Irish found themselves in. Ron Ryan, a musician who played that circuit, remembers a large Irish hall called the Gresham on the Holloway Road where the bar held a huge board where over the course of the night 'all the names of the counties in Ireland would come up in lights' (Cowley, 2011 p.214). The English owned these spaces had their own version of the Catholic code they enforced to manage crowds for what was standardised as an Irish weekend.

By the sixties, Irish-dominated spaces remained as strong as ever in London. Comprising of a matrix of the parish church, pub, dancehall, as well as GAA grounds, these were the established nodes that processed thousands of Irish every year in one landscape transposed on another.<sup>19</sup> This type of continuum encouraged many to process their experience of home abroad as a simulacrum. Those that rejected this model of community abroad saw the social boundaries of these communities as an extension of the church state those living in displacement left behind. It was important that the Limerick Youth who saw themselves as returning ambassadors for their generation, and schooled by their alternative experience, did not recognise the

18 Note, the London Irish Centre opened in 1954. It remains an integral part of the Irish community of London. 1968 print ads for the centre show a single woman with suitcase outside its premises. The text promises that the centre 'helps newly-arrived emigrants to find their feet and lifts up those who have lost their feet' (Author, date).

19 Over decades some merging between the metropolitan English and the Irish may have marked unique points worth noting. Well established meeting points perpetrate the London experience as a continuum of home. A notable example was Ward's Pub of Piccadilly possibly originally

constructed as Victorian public toilet. From the sixties to the eighties it was a subterranean space divided into a Munster and Leinster Bar and a Connacht and Ulster Bar selling Irish beer and Irish cigarettes; an underground space frequented by Navvies who mixed with journalists and actors.

cultural compromise that existed in the dominant narrative of emigration. The cultural restrictions that maintained the traditional boundaries of home, where home exists as suspended time, were those that kept foreign culture at a distance.

In a study of emigrant letters, David Fitzpatrick states that the process of evoking home when abroad supports 'an alternative world of recollection and imagination where social activities abroad shape memories and future plans to the extent that these desires themselves create a culture' (1996 p.137-8). Home, according to Fitzpatrick's research, was both a real and imagined location. There was emotional investment in this. It encouraged the ideal of the spiritual home waiting for the returned emigrant; a romantic version of the home country nurtured abroad, a symbolic home that is 'the touchstone of both politics and religion. The thread that bound Catholicism and Nationalism together' (Fitzpatrick, 1996, p.137-8). Versions of this mainly rural vision was polished and re-imported back into the country for decades particularly by the fifties generation. It was a version that maintained a traditionalism, which suited the 'possessing classes' who managed power in Ireland.

The release valve of emigration was a significant feature that managed stability throughout the national programme of re-imagining. In a 1956 report titled *Reservation to the Majority*, Alexis Fitzgerald states that 'High emigration, granted a population excess, releases social tensions which would otherwise explode and makes possible a stability of manners and customs which would otherwise be the subject of radical change' (Fitzgerald, A., 1956 p.) This outline continued with a statement surrounding the practically for and adequate standard of living on the Island but it underlines an assumption of unquestioned traditionalism, 'Why we should so cultivate or resources that as many Irishmen was possible can live their lives in Ireland this should not be done in a manner or to the extent of imperilling the imponderable values and liberties of our traditional society' (Lee 383) This, according to Professor J.J. Lee, is 'a rationalisation of a viewpoint that was widespread among a defeatist political and professional elite, spiritual collaborators in the mass eviction process that drove more than half a million out between 1945 and 1960' (1989 p.). Lee states that these figures stand as 'a permanent commentary on the collective calibre of the possessing classes' (1989 p.).

According to an editorial in *The Leader* newspaper of 1953, 'if emigration were to be stopped tomorrow conditions favourable to social revolution might easily arise' (*Leader*, Christmas 1953).

The progressive Irish youth of the sixties of this generation were conscious of not framing their experience there as part of a 'paddy' continuum or compliant to the third-way economy attempted by the Irish State under the stewardship of its leader Eammon De Valera. Also, it can be said that these particular youth had less of a desire to return home with funds that bought them a stake in the deal of the New Ireland if it was still managed by the church state. The post-colonist third way, originally envisioned in Eammon De Valera's tenure as leader, sought to manage a modernism that was supported by the institutions of the church which assisted this programme in the capacity of a non-state. This allowed the Irish economy to function (under his rule) somewhere between agriculture and autarchy. In this, the constant stream of emigration was an important factor that kept population levels and a liberal agenda in check.

# Home is where you hang your hat True or false?

False.

Home for you is Galway, or Dublin, or Tipperary.  
Or thereabouts.

And no doubt you've often thought about upping,  
and packing, and leaving for home. Right?

Fine!

But when the fateful day arrives, the last thing  
you'll want to worry about is money. You'll need  
your money, on hand, the instant you step back  
on Irish soil.

Here's the simple answer. Open a deposit  
(savings) account with us. (We're AIB, the only  
Irish Bank group with branches in England.)

What will you get? For a start you'll get that  
old-fashioned thing called service. (We give it to all  
our customers—free.) You'll be in the hands of  
people who think the same way as you do. And who  
speak the same language. They'll carry out your  
instructions to the letter. And from time to time  
they'll credit your account with a little interest.  
So you'll end up with substantially more than  
you put in. Which is a nice arrangement from  
your point of view.

What's more, you could have a healthy  
nest-egg waiting for you when you arrive. So  
you wouldn't need to hang your hat anywhere  
but home.

Make a new friend at home—with  
Allied Irish Banks.

Write today for details of all our 447  
offices in Ireland.

AIB—8, Burlington Road—Dublin, 4.



**Allied Irish Banks**

Phoenix & Limerick Bank, Province of Bank, Royal Bank



Figure 4

Image from Archive of the Irish in Britain.