Media Consumption and Dublin Working Class Cultural Identity

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Dublin Working Class
Cultural Identity

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Des Mc Guinness. M.A. **March 1999.**

DECLARATION.

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the
programme of study leading to the reward of Doctor of Philosophy is entirely my
own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that
such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work

Signed. _Des McGummers_____ID No   93701535

Date_____9th September 1999._____

DEDICATION.

To my parents Desmond and Maura,
who were always in 'my corner' with love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT.

The central research question of this dissertation addresses the extent to which media consumption was, and continues to be, a factor in the formation of Dublin working class cultural identity That relationship is examined in terms of the consumption patterns, uses and meanings associated with and derived from the dominant forms of popular audio-visual media in two periods, particularly cinema going and television. The time-frames for this analysis is the 1920s-1950s and the 1960s to the early 1990s, respectively Within the context of this analysis the interplay between the class, gender and national identity of the Dublin working class will also be investigated I will also examine the wider economic, cultural, social and spatial factors that are significant to the formation of a Dublin working class identity

Part one undertakes a review of the relevant national and international research literature It focuses on the key issues of working class culture, identity and media consumption with particular reference to the marginalisation and exclusion experienced by the Irish working class As such the review lays the basis for the thesis's theoretical perspective, which has at its core a problematising approach to the concept of 'totality' Rather than approach the key questions of the thesis and its sub-headings with a restrictive notion of the 'cultural', an understanding of the concept of 'totality' is adopted in order to critically explore the cultural, economic and ideological dimensions of those questions in their interconnectedness as pursued in Raymond Williams's understanding of 'culture' as 'a whole way of life' Part One also outlines the manner in which the project is to be undertaken The selected methodology involves the use of original oral histories of cinema goers combined with the use of some secondary sources and television audience research The latter brings together existing television audience data with primary material gathered through ethnographic interviewing and time use diaries

Part Two and Three of this thesis critically explores the dynamic relationship between the Dublin working class audience and the two most popular audio-visual mediums of the 20th century. The research is motivated by the belief that the 'cultural' domain has been largely neglected in favour of a dominant research focus on organisational and political aspects of the labour movement A key argument underlying this thesis is that the tendency to exclude the domestic sphere and to privilege particular fractions of the working class is both limiting and fails to embrace the richness of the Dublin working class way of life

The over-riding concern is that of media consumption and its impact on the formation of working class cultural identity, but a consistent and related theme is that of artistic/cultural production in both pre and post 1960s Dublin By investigating the dialectical process that is media consumption, the on-going production and reproduction of key forms of Dublin working class cultural expression is investigated and celebrated within this thesis

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT'S THE STORY?

1.1. Introduction.

This thesis aims to discover the extent to which the experience of cinema going and television viewing has contributed and continues to contribute to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity. That key research question will be investigated in terms of the consumption patterns, uses, gratifications and meanings associated with, and derived from, cinema going (1920-1950s), and television viewing as well as other 'new media' (1960-1990s) for Dublin working class audiences Besides focusing on the two most popular media in pre and post 1960s Dublin, the dissertation will take account of wider patterns of popular culture such as the music hall, cine-variety and domestic audio-visual media consumption other than that of cinema and television

Selecting the period from 1920 is done in the knowledge that cultural change is, in the main, 'glacial', [1] and that many of the factors that have shaped the conditions and lives of working class men, women and children were in existence prior to 1920 While the turn of the century was a key period in the formation of the urban Dublin working class, the 1960s, the start of the second time-frame, was also a landmark period for the city's working class, due in part to the large-scale foreign capital and cultural penetration That process of (capitalist) modernisation transformed patterns of employment, suburbanisation and cultural consumption among the Dublin working class But the process also had its dark side in that it reinforced forms of economic and cultural dependency. Furthermore, the benefits of modernisation in the post 1960s period did not extend to all, thus maintaining and reproducing class inequality. An example of this trend is the continuing marginalisation of a considerable section of the urban working class

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[1] For Stuart Hall the conceptualisation of 'cultural time' is contrasted to that of economic or sociological time (Hall,1988.28) In a similar vein, Roy Rosenzweig in his study of working class culture in Worcester, North American between 1870-1920 makes the point that *"Cultures do not change overnight or even over fifty years But over long periods of time, we watch them slowly, and often incompletely, transforming themselves, taking on new shape and substance The birth and triumph of the movies heralds this slow, gradual, and incomplete process of change for ethnic working class culture It would be foolish to see the movies as the triggering device for this glacial process of change"* (Rosenzweig,1983.215)

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who continue to experience persistent high levels of unemployment and have gained least from educational advancement. [2]

In my view, both cinema and television contributes to the formation of a Dublin working class cultural identity In addition, audience(s) bring their own class, gender and national particularities to the reception process I concur with the view that individuals come to the cinema/television experience with previously constructed identities (Drummond & Preston, 1993) If identification is at the heart of the process of identity formation vis a vis cinema/television, then the influence of the changing relations of production and the sexual division of labour are also crucial to that process Discovering how that process occurs is a central research question of this dissertation

1.2. Concepts and Themes.

The one overarching concept that pervades this thesis is that of 'totality' It was chosen because of its potential to embrace a 'whole way of life' and the wider eco-system. The concept of totality is for postmodernists an anachronism with connotations of master plans and failed political (socialist) projects But despite arguments to the contrary, those associated with postmodernist thinking have failed to fulfil the promise of its early resistant articulations and to develop a coherent alternative to that of completing the 'Enlightenment project' In a period in which capitalism has achieved global dimensions and the eco-system is in need of global strategy to protect it for this and future generations, there is a very strong case for retaining the concept of 'totality' [3] My decision to privilege the concept of totality is supported by the belief that *"all things merge into one "* to quote Norman Maclean, the North American author of A River Runs Through It

'Historical materialism' provides a framework for understanding working class determination as a product of its material conditions, history and relationship to other classes. It also provides a framework for understanding 'class struggle' and 'class

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[2] See Strategy into the 21st Century by the National Economic and Social Council for a more extensive examination of this trend in the period between 1960 to 1995 No 66 November 1996 Dublin

[3] My understanding of 'totality' is based on (i) the concept of historical materialism as theorised by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, (ii) Georg Lukacs's understanding of the concept as developed from Karl Marx's writings (Lukacs,1971/ Marx,1976), (iii) the critical review of the concept by Martin Jay (1984), Raymond Williams (1980a) and others

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consciousness' Furthermore, it identifies a corresponding relationship between economics and the cultural/ideological domains As a mode of analysis it links production to distribution, exchange and consumption within an organic process of interrelationship While traditionally associated with the interpretation of social structures within historical change, the theoretical metaphor of 'historical materialism' is also sensitive to the role of human agency [4]

Expanding 'historical materialism' to include a feminist component ensures that the 'reproduction of life' and the sexual division of labour is given the centrality that it ought to be accorded as outlined by Cynthia Cockburn (1984) and other socialist-feminist writers and activists If the concept of 'time' is highlighted by the historical dimension of the metaphor, the inclusion of the 'geographical' takes account of the spatial, as outlined by David Harvey (1989). The inclusion of a spatial dimension means that factors such as 'community,' 'home,' 'the city,' and 'nation' can be brought into the ambit of 'historical materialism' So starting out with 'historical materialism' the concept is expanded to that of 'feminist historical geographical materialism' (FHGM)

In terms of audience research methodologies I will use a combination of oral history and selected aspects of the 'five main communication research traditions' as outlined by Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Karl Erik Rosengren (1990) Integrating audience research methodologies into a theoretical FHGM scaffolding facilitates clarification of the thesis and the investigation of the relationships that the research participants had to cinema, television and other domestic communication technologies The selected audience research methodologies fit the theoretical frame because memory, encoding and decoding, audience and audio-visual texts cannot be divorced from the capitalist forces and relations of production Neither can they be divorced from questions of gender, space and time

At the eleventh hour I decided that the concept of 'scaffold'/'theoretical framework' was too rigid and that I needed a term which had more flexible connotations Therefore I opted for the term 'trellis' My reasons for using the term are that in the construction trade a scaffolding is essential to the building process and once completed it is removed

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[4] See Appendix A for Karl Marx's extract from Preface and Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1976)

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But not so with a research thesis, which requires that one reveals one's theoretical framework. With a building the structure is predetermined Not so with a research project Therefore I decided on the metaphor of a trellis because of its flexibility and the fact that it remains in place to allow the living roses of culture to grow and partially cover it [5]

Rather than confining myself to a single lens of class analysis, I have encapsulated my analysis in terms of a national democratic revolution (NDR) conceptualisation of modern Irish history, which is divided into its 'national democratic' and 'socialist-feminist phases'. NDR embodies the Irish 'Long Revolution' after Raymond Williams's historical understanding of democratic, industrial and cultural advances in British society (Williams, 1980b) As a two phased process the NDR acknowledges that not all democratic rights can be achieved within the structures and hierarchies of patriarchal-capitalism, thus necessitating a second phase, a phase of revolutionary transformation of that system's exploitative and oppressive aspects As part of that political project the failures of 'existing socialism' will have to be openly acknowledged and rejected where necessary The abolition of the exploitative capital /labour relationship will require a vision of 'new communism' to work towards the liberation of labour and to advance the process of democracy [6] In selecting modes of interpretation that are also modes of change (e.g. Marxism and feminism), I am consciously linking the research to an agenda of (revolutionary) change [7] In doing so I take inspiration from the current within the history of cultural studies that links academic concerns to progressive political agendas (Johnson, 1986)

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[5] If the research process has required a rather elaborate theoretical trellis, then I too have had a support system throughout the project which has ranged from my academic supervisor Dr Paschal Preston, the second readers Barbara O'Connor and Farrel Corcoran, my fellow post-graduates, my friends Aine Farrell, Martin King, Ann Rossiter and Tom Stokes who gave me valuable feed back after reading the draft chapters There were others of equal, but perhaps differing importance These are the friends and acquaintances I have been in touch with during the long research process While my research is of an academic nature it is also political and in that regard it is my partner in life Noreen Byrne who I wish to acknowledge for her love and intellect

[6] See Felix Guattari and Toni Negri's Communists Like Us for its insights on rescuing 'communism' from its "own disrepute" Semiotext (e) Foreign Agents Series New York 1990

[7] In privileging the philosophies of Marxism and feminism I am also indebted to the writings of Michel Foucault's on questions of power and subjugation, Roland Barthes and Guy Dubord on sign and symbol and Pierre Bourdieu on 'cultural capital' While most inspired by the writings of the late Raymond Williams, I believe that both he and Bourdieu are weak on the concept of class struggle and in that regard I compensated with extracts from the writings of E P Thompson If there is one great weakness among all these writers it is their failure to give the question of women's oppression the attention it deserves and as a result those who follow must incorporate a feminist analysis

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In order to give the reader a sense of the territory to be examined, I will now introduce the main theoretical themes that frame the research. As with the themes introduced so far, the following themes will also be expanded upon in Chapters Two and Three, then in the remaining chapters where they are applied and integrated into the research process

(i)   Changing Employment and Socio-Economic Conditions

A profile of socio-economic change, including the corresponding patterns of male/female working class employment/unemployment, will be presented For the second period, such trends will be allied to an account of the shift in employment from the city centre/dockland areas to suburban industrial estates, and from industrial/ manufacturing to service industries

(ii)   Spatial relations and their impact

Starting with an analysis of the role of the working class within the class structure, the changing spatial relations between home, work and leisure will be examined, to discover how they contribute to a sense of working class cultural identity In tracing the gradual process of suburbanisation from inner to outer Dublin (1920s -1990s), some of the cultural consequences of such relocations on the sense of working class 'community' will be explored. The use of the term 'community' will be largely informed by Raymond Williams's writings, which clearly link the concept to that of communications (1989a & 1989b) By drawing on his and other writing I avoid divorcing the notion of community from that of social class, the workplace and the domestic sphere

(iii)   Leisure activity associated with the Dublin working class.

This section investigates the changing consumption patterns, uses, gratification's, and meanings derived from cinema going and television viewing for Dublin working class audiences and how they in turn impact on the formation of a cultural identity I will also take into account a wider array of public entertainments such as music hall, cine-variety, and domestic media communication Reference will also be made to work-based leisure pursuits, the working class audience for theatre, and the cultural activities associated with politically organised fractions of the Dublin working class In linking work and leisure I will be guided by the belief that both are indivisible and continue to play a crucial role in the reproduction of labour power, in both the domestic or non-domestic spheres

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(iv) Audio-visual consumption patterns

The period between 1920 and the 1990s has seen considerable shifts in patterns of working class cultural life One of the most significant developments has been the widespread commercialisation/commodification of culture, a development not unknown in the19th century In terms of actual 'audio-visual consumption patterns' statistical and other evidence concerning the relationship between the Dublin working class audience and cinema/television will be presented Consideration of time and money budget matters such as the frequency and costs of visits to the cinema, as well as the time spent watching and using television and the newer media will also be included Information will be gathered from original oral histories, ethnographic interviews and time use diaries

(v) Uses and Meanings of Audio-Visual Consumption

By 'uses' is meant all those needs that the cinematic/televisual experience is generally deemed to fulfil, i e , educational, entertainment, escapism, gratification and information. The category of 'meanings' will encompass issues of consciousness, ideology and hegemony as they operate in the formation of working class identity

(vi) Cultural Production

While the key research question revolves around audio-visual consumption and the construction of Dublin working class cultural identity, cultural production will also be elaborated upon The information arising from the central research question will lay the basis for a discussion on forms of Dublin working class aesthetic, cultural and media production for the late 1990s

(vii) Culture and Identity

Rather than adopting a technologically driven or 'effects' research perspective vis a vis the relationship between cultural consumption and cultural identity, it will be will argued that cultural identities are, as David Morley puts it *"actively produced though the process of cultural consumption"* [8] Furthermore that the dialectical 'process' occurs within a wider ensemble of socio-cultural relationships In Raymond Williams's

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[8] Quoted from *'Electronic Communities and Domestic Rituals Cultural Consumption and the Production of European Cultural Identities'* by David Morley in Cultural Identity and the Media edited by Jostein Gripsrud Bergen No further publication details available

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understanding, culture is *"the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life"* (Williams, 1980b 63).

The starting point on the subject of cultural identity is that since the 1960s individuals have increasingly identified themselves in terms of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and disability, thus adding to the previous major defining categories of class and national identity [9] While such identities existed prior to the 1960s, a number of interrelated factors converged in North America and Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, centering on national and class struggles providing the impulse for the assertion of these identities

The combination of national liberation and de-colonisation played a significant part in inspiring black nationalism and the fight for civil rights in North America That process had in turn, a domino effect on the growth of the new 'social movements,' which were not necessarily linked, to class and nationalist struggles Central to that development was the re-emergence of the women's movement, and following the Stonewall riots in New York, the growth of the gay and lesbian movement In Ireland the re-emergence of the women's movement north and south was an expression of such developments While it had its own character, it drew inspiration and strength from the international dimensions of the women's movement So too with the campaign for civil rights and the renewed republican/nationalist upsurge in the north of Ireland. The lessons of Montgomery, Alabama and various 'armed struggles' were adapted to the Irish situation while Irish historiography became the battleground for revisionist/non-revisionist intellectual contest. Furthermore, such transformations were bound up with the end of the post-war boom, the emergence of youth sub-cultures and oppositional lifestyles, which highlighted generational divisions

Contemporary debates on the nature of individual identity have shifted from the singular to the plural and are directly linked to postmodernist/ poststructuralist debates on the changing nature of subjectivity and the development of 'identity politics' What transpires from these debates is that cultural critics no longer single out class identity in a privileged way. And so social class takes its place alongside that of ethnic, gender, national, religious and other forms of identity It is also true to say that identities can

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[9] But in so stating I am conscious of the fact that feminists refuse to accept that gender is relegated to some secondary category

take on a collective form and that class identities are not hermetically sealed In addition gender and national identity transcend a purely class analysis and so require a separate analysis, albeit complementary, if class identity is not to be automatically privileged

As regards national identity, it can be claimed with some justification, that the period in which ('official') cultural nationalism was predominant, an Irish 'national culture' was defined by what it was not (i e English) as much as by what it was Colonialism/ imperialism was/is central to the debate on Irish cultural identities with coloniser/ colonised dialectic coloured with a sectarian hue due to the differing religious allegiances of native and planter With a thousand threads now binding Irish society to transnational capital/culture, identifying the major 'external' factor in the formation of Irish identities is more difficult to quantify Equally, defining a 'national culture' within which classes contend for hegemony has become equally challenging in an age where, for example, Sony, Columbia and CBS have become one gigantic corporate entity (Morley & Robins, 1995)

1.3. Methodology.

As part of an integrative method of research informed by the concept of totality, I rely on available Irish research/documentation (analytic and empirical) and where shortfalls exist, employ an oral history methodology to collect memories of a number of individuals with valuable recollections of cinema going between 1920 and 1960 I also draw on television audience research conducted in 1990-1993 in a number of Dublin working class households [10] The research is also inspired by cinematic representation of the cinema going experience in films such as *Amacord* (1974), *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), *The Smallest Show on Earth* (1957), and *The Woman who Married Clark Gable* (1985), as well as many hours in the cinema and in front of the television

The perspective on working class culture not only builds on relevant Irish material and Marxist-Leninist literature[11], but is informed by the work of Irish and non-Irish

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[10] Some of the initial findings of this research were reported earlier in my M A thesis (McGuinness,1993) The present research will largely focus on particular issues and findings which were not reported or fully explored in previous work

[11] I purposely use the suffix Leninist to identify an interest in a Marxism that extents beyond its academic formulations Marxism is both a mode of interpretation as well as a philosophy of revolutionary change As such the contributions/writings of leading Marxists such as Vladimir Lenin, Antonio Gramsci and Mao Zedong ought to be critically engaged

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cultural/feminist critics and (revolutionary) intellectuals In that regard the work of John Clarke, Cynthia Cockburn, James Connolly, Christine Delphy, C Desmond Greaves, Stuart Hall, David Harvey, bell hooks, Frederic Jameson, Richard Johnson, Georg Lukacs, E.P Thompson, and Raymond Williams will be drawn upon

Social class continues to be a key aspect of socio-economic and cultural life, which is central to social analysis and critical theory The starting position on social class derives from the Marxist philosophical framework of 'historical materialism' and its elaboration in Nicos Poulantzas's contention that *"classes exist only in class struggle"* (Poulantzas, 1979:14). Not only is the relationship between classes economic in character, but also cultural, historical, ideological, political, sexual, social and spatial In addition class relations have both a national/international dimension and are intimately connected to the nation state.

An either/or perspective vis a vis the structuralist or humanist interpretations of 'historical materialism' will be avoided Instead a both/and approach will be adopted This decision is influenced by Herbert Marcuse's contention that 'historical materialism', without subjectivity *"takes on the colouring of vulgar materialism"*, and E P Thompson's assertion that the 'making of' a working class *"owes as much to agency as to conditioning"* (Marcuse, 1990 3/ Thompson, 1980 8) The latter point is particularly important in distinguishing structure from agency Social classes comprise both men and women and so there is a need to wed class and gender relations That will be done by borrowing from Cynthia Cockburn's concept of a 'feminist historical materialism' which proposes that there also exists *"a sex/gender system which determines the social categories that people of different sexes fill"* [her emphasis] (Cockburn, 1983.6)

I avoid using the term 'the working class' exclusively and instead have interchanged it with 'working class people' or 'working class men and women', when not referring to the working class as a specific class formation with all its possible sub-divisions On some occasions, the Marxist terminology i e. 'proletariat' is used. While accepting that lines of class demarcation are, at times, less evident in the Ireland of the 1990s, nevertheless I see no reason to join the 'retreat' from class analysis (Meiksins Wood, 1986)

1.4. Beyond the 'Absence' of Social Class in Ireland.

In Ireland, with its history of colonialism/imperialism, the issue of class is best understood as part of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). While the national aspect of that process has tended to be dominant, since the latter end of 18th century the issue of class and gender has never been absent from the Irish political agenda. The development of the capitalist mode of production in Ireland witnessed the growth of industry and the urban working class. However, land ownership remained the key question at the heart of the NDR during the 19th century. For James Connolly, who believed that the 'Irish question' was a 'social question,' the:

> *"Whole age-long fight of the Irish people against their oppressors resolves itself in the last analysis into a fight for the mastery of the means of life, the sources of production, in Ireland"*
> *(Connolly, 1973:134)*[12]

In pursuing their own class interests within NDR, the Irish bourgeoisie [13] and petit-bourgeoisie, through their leadership of Irish nationalism and republicanism, have always been clear on the role of rural/urban working class men and women in the struggle against colonialism/imperialism. By their virtual silence on the issue, they have upheld the view that the working class should be encouraged to play its part in the national movement, but wait its turn to reap the democratic and material benefits in some never-never land.

There can be little doubt that James Connolly best articulated the interests of the Irish working class within the NDR at the turn of the 20th century and his clarity of leadership on issues of class and nationality was most sorely felt following his execution.[14] James Connolly stood head and shoulders above his male contemporaries and the vast majority of their successors in the labour movement in the way he incorporated an analysis of the position of (working class) women within the NDR. In an extract, fused with feminist sentiments, Connolly wrote that:

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[12] In a contemporary study of the interaction between questions of social class and nationalism in the Welsh context David L.Adamson states that *"nationalism constitutes an ideological construct, mobilised by classes and class alliances in the context of hegemonic struggle : it provides the ideological cement which facilitates the synthesis of class interests under the political, moral and intellectual leadership of a particular class or fraction of a class. Nationalism is assigned class implications when articulated with class struggle"* (Adamson,1991:139).

[13] I have chosen to use the term 'bourgeoisie' throughout the dissertation to emphasis a point made by Roland Barthes in Mythologies which states that *"the bourgeoisie is defined as the social class which does not want to be named "* (Barthes,1981 :138)

[14] For a contemporary study on the class character of the national question in its various articulations see James M.Blaut's The National Question (1987).

*"None so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so
well equipped to decide what is a fetter In its march towards
freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of
those women who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of the
ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its
hatred of thralldom and passion for freedom the women's army
forges ahead of the militant army of labour"*
(Connolly, 1983)

The outcome of the struggle for national independence, itself a class alliance,
represented an appeasement by the Cumann na nGaedheal Government with British
capital and the curtailment of the Irish rural/urban working class. That curtailment and
marginalisation within Irish society continues to this day as illustrated in the following
brief overview which will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters

Fianna Fail under Eamon de Valera's leadership articulated the interests of the native
bourgeoisie and the new Catholic middle class prior to the 1960s Its clearest articulation
was a fusion of economic and cultural/political nationalism, with a strong input of
Catholic social philosophy Under the cloak of cross-class populism and a series of
economic and social reforms, the party won a significant section of both rural and urban
working class to its fold But de Valera's concept of 'frugal living,' which needed no
elaboration for those living in the slums of Dublin, was never shared by all, least of all by
himself Under Sean Lemass's leadership, Fianna Fail became the great moderniser of the
Irish economy, but the 'rising tide' never rose high enough to benefit the greater part of
the working class Indeed, the mere mention of social class was invariably smothered
under a never-defined 'national interest' According to O'Toole, the terms 'class'/'social
class' merited less than six references in the course of 245 speeches (half a million
words) given by former Fianna Fail Taoiseach Charles Haughey (O'Toole, 1991.23)
Other representatives of the bourgeoisie also have blind spots when it comes to class
analysis At his second presidential inauguration speech, Bill Clinton spoke of his dream
of the 'underclass' joining the middle class without even referring to the working class
(The Irish Times 20/1/97) Not only was such a statement an insult to North American
(blue collar) workers but such an omission has resonances with Mrs Thatcher's claim
that *"There is no such thing as Society There are individual men and women and there
are families"* (cited in O'Toole, 1991 37)

The 1994 -1997 Coalition Government (Fine Gael, Labour Party and the Democratic
Left) represented, in the main, the interests of a cross-class coalition of bourgeois, petit

bourgeois and the upper fraction of the working class However, the participation of two social democratic parties in Government, and the existence of an alliance of social democracy and trade union politics since the formation of the state, raises questions as to the benefit of that alliance for the Irish working class There can be little doubt that Irish social democracy has nullified the excesses of capitalism in which the pursuit of profit reigns supreme It can also be said that trade unions have brokered beneficial deals for their members However, it is also valid to pose a question about the role parliamentary and trade union politics has played in the maintenance of capitalist relations of production Has the trade off of limiting political/trade union struggles to reforms within capitalism, been too high a price to pay for the benefits of a middle class life-style now enjoyed by the upper echelons of the working class? Can that sectional advancement be squared while one third of the population are living below the poverty line ? [15]

Since the 1960s the Irish 'national question' has frequently been the subject of sometimes-heated debate and the charge of 'revisionism' carrying much odium. It seems strange that a term, which was almost exclusively associated with the communist/ socialist movement, has not been part of the Irish left's lexicon to the same extent Claims that an Irish (bourgeois) state or parliamentary system alone can contribute to the introduction of socialism is part of a dangerous illusion derived from 'socialist revisionism' and the turning away from class struggle

All democrats defend the achievement of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and the introduction of male and later female suffrage However, two hundred years after the French Revolution and the birth of the 'Enlightenment Project,' the pyramidical power structure inherited from feudalism remains in place and is patently not in the interests of those at the lower end of that pyramid

For the Irish working class, the failure to complete the NDR has ensured its marginalisation as a social class In addition, the lack of political leadership vis a vis the completion of the NDR has resulted in confusion, and the incessant preoccupation with political intrigue and personalities that is part and parcel of contemporary bourgeois politics Meanwhile transnational corporations operating in Ireland continue to reap millions of pounds in profit while the northern and southern bourgeoisie take their share

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[15] See response of the Conference of Religious of Ireland (C O R I) to the 1997 Budget ,- Budget Response

The underdevelopment of the NDR in its bourgeois phase has lead to the lack of citizen's rights and weak local democracy. In addition, the separation of church and state did not occur, allowing religion to continue to be a source of sectarian division, mapping the colonial power structure. Indeed, the planter/Protestant, native/Catholic divide has been exploited to maintain division among the Irish people and particularly so among the Irish working classes. The merging of Irish capitalism and religion, north and south of the border, created a conservative bulwark against socialist politics and women's democratic rights. Indeed, the continuing exclusion of the working class and the denial of women's rights on either side of the border, goes to the heart of the unfinished NDR.

For James Connolly, the movement for national independence was part and parcel of the struggle for a socialist Ireland. But in forging an alliance with Irish nationalism his outlook was internationalist. Whether working in the North American labour movement, accepting the support of British workers during the 1913 Lock-Out, participating in the 1916 Rising or working on behalf of Belfast Protestant and Catholic workers, Connolly's aim was the achievement of a socialist society. The Treaty of 1922 and the imposition of partition was the culmination of a counter-revolution insofar as it institutionalised deep divisions among the Irish people, dividing the working class in a way that has continued to impede any significant social and political advance to this day. In each subsequent generation, sections of the labour/socialist movement have upheld the perspective that the defeat of colonialism/imperialism was part and parcel of the fight for socialism. But others, mostly the greater part, have not only relinquished their leadership of the nationalist movement, but turned their backs on a revolutionary analysis and practice. By relinquishing its leadership and failing to develop a comprehensive class analysis of the NDR in the 20th century, the greater part of the Irish left allowed the Irish national bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie to assume leadership. The net result is that today class struggle has come to assume a lesser significance in Irish political life, contributing to the erroneous view that class and class struggle have disappeared. [16]

Because of its own class interests in maintaining capitalist relations of production and its integral relationship with transnational capital the Irish bourgeoisie is incapable of completing the NDR. Having long relinquished its leading role in the NDR, it has assumed a conservative disposition.

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[16] For a contemporary analysis of the NDR in terms of the Irish Left see Appendix E.

Moving to the petit-bourgeoisie, it can be argued that its greater part exists on the coat tails of the Irish bourgeoisie. In supporting the ladder concept of mobility it wants change, but not revolutionary change (Poulantzas, 1979) At present petit bourgeois ideology is shot through with bourgeois sentiments and sections of it act as gatekeepers and the conduit for bourgeois ideology in many working class communities Not only does the Irish/international bourgeoisie dampen down, deny and divert class struggle, but it does so with the collusion of sections of the petit-bourgeoisie within academia, the culture industries, the main churches, non-governmental organisations, state agencies, social democratic parties and the trade union movement

In his foreword to the History of the Dublin Bakers and Others (1948) John Swift wrote that "For all our supposed dwelling in the past, very little has been written on the social history of Dublin, particularly in regard to its trades and its common people" (Swift, 1948 10) Forty years later, the Finglas-based writer Dermot Bolger writes that the history of Dublin working class suburbs has yet to be written (Bolger, 1988) This neglect is a symptom of power relations in Irish society and confirms the argument that to tell a story is to exercise power In an age when face to face storytelling has been largely superceded by electronically mediated stories, it is those without power or access to the various media whose stories are least likely to be told. According to Walter Benjamin, to tell a story is to repeat what has previously been told [17] In that regard I am at all times conscious of the men and women (the interviewees) who willingly gave me of their stories and of the larger working class community into which all of them were born.

The main motivation for this research is to contribute to a greater understanding of the interactive relationship between specific forms of cultural consumption and Dublin working class cultural identity That task is motivated by a commitment to the more long term development of a philosophy and practice of a working class cultural production rooted in a cultural studies tradition which links academic concerns to a cultural politics (Johnson, 1986). The research is inspired by a re-envisioned socialism in the context of a NDR, a project devoid of the destructive imprint of instrumental reason and patriarchal ideology. This aspiration is based on a belief that higher forms of socio-cultural

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[17] Walter Benjamin 'The Storyteller Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' in Illuminations (1992)

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organisation are created by the conscious wills of people/classes working together with a clear understanding of their total environment

1.5. Chapter Summaries.

Chapter One

Having set out the key research question on the extent to which Dublin working class cultural identity has been and continues to be formed by an engagement with popular media such as cinema and television, I explained how the dissertation will examine that relationship in terms of the consumption patterns, uses, gratification's and meanings associated with, and derived from cinema/television In a related, but secondary level, it was explained how the wider variety of cultural consumption/production practices are to be taken into account The identity-forming aspect of cultural/media consumption is investigated in terms of, or in contrast to, specific socio-economic conditions and spatial relations, which also play their part in the construction of a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity. This 'trailer chapter' includes starting positions on social class, culture, gender and the political dimensions of the Dublin working class in both a national and international context Those positions are informed by the concept of 'totality' made explicit by a 'feminist historical-geographical materialism' (FHGM) analysis Furthermore, that theoretical narrative informs my understanding of the Irish NDR within which the Dublin working class is best understood in both historical and contemporary terms In concluding the chapter, I acknowledge those who have assisted me and the way in which the research is integral to my own academic, cultural and political interests

Chapter Two

Chapter Two is presented under three separate headings The first section will review key writings on working class culture, the second will focus on specific debates on cultural identity, and the third incorporates those outcomes within a theoretical framework based on the concept of 'totality' My understanding of 'totality' is grounded in David Harvey's theoretical concept of 'historical-geographical materialism' and further developed by the incorporation of socialist-feminism (Harvey, 1989, Cockburn, 1983 and Delphy, 1984)

The work of cultural critics and revolutionary intellectuals is considered in relation to aspects of working class culture relevant to the concerns of the thesis That in turn dovetails with a review of research that has explored the significance of the cinema going experience for working class audiences in cities and cultures other than that of Dublin between the 1920s to the 1950s The reasons for sub-dividing Chapter Two into sections on working class culture and cultural identity are to clearly distinguish between the collective phenomena that is Dublin working class culture and the more individualised or fragmented, but still socially and culturally patterned, identity of the working class cinema goer and television viewer

Chapter Three

This chapter will outline the research methodologies employed within the dissertation, adapting them to the specific needs of the present research. Set against the dearth of cultural analysis on Dublin's working class 'way of life', the use of oral history is chosen for its suitability in collecting memories of those with experience of going to and working in Dublin cinemas It builds on the strong tradition of rural-based Irish folklore and several folklore/oral history projects that have been conducted in Dublin since the early 1980s That methodology is employed with the provisos outlined by oral historians and cultural critics, such as Paul Thompson (1989) and Richard Johnson et al (1982), respectively. The complementary qualitative and quantitative communication research methodologies will also be outlined While the combined theoretical concepts of 'totality' and FHGM provide an overarching framework for the thesis, viewed as interpretive research perspectives they are also integral to the methodology

Chapter Four

Chapter Four outlines the changing patterns of work, housing, and leisure activity from the turn of the 20th century up to the 1950s as experienced by the Dublin working class With the major focus on the period from the 1920s to the 1950s when cinema became the most popular form of mass entertainment internationally, the chapter will reveal how economic and social conditions contributed to a sense of a Dublin working class as a class apart That process of class formation is then examined in cultural terms vis a vis music hall attendance and engagement in other leisure activities The chapter will also explore how Irish trade unionists and socialists played a significant role in cultivating forms of non-commercial cultural expression Those counter-hegemonic cultural

processes, which drew on similar experiences in North America and other European countries during the first half of the century, offered an alternative vision to the 'culture industry' that dominated screen and stage. Examples of autonomous socialist pedagogy will also be examined.

Chapter Five.
The aim of this chapter is to investigate the relationship between cinema going and Dublin working class cultural identity, based on the writings of Dublin working class authors and detailed interviews with individuals who have had particularly close associations with cinema between the 1920s and 1950s. Rather than simply focus on the relationship between audience and that which appeared on the screen, the research will be conducted in terms of the particular use that Dublin working class audiences made of cinemas as cultural venues, the cost of entry, audience profile and frequency of visits. Then the escapist, ideological, pleasurable and utopian aspects of the cinema going experience are examined with a view to ascertaining the meanings derived from the encounter, and how the experience contributed to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity.

Chapter Six.
In following a similar format to that of Chapter Four, Chapter Six will present an overview of the changing patterns of housing, work and leisure activity from 1960 up to the early 1990s. In addition the chapter will also examine the impact of international capital and culture, as well as the process of suburbanisation with its beneficial and dislocative effects on working class communities and their cultural 'way of life'. As in Chapter Four the trade union and socialist contribution to forms of working class cultural expression and pedagogy is investigated.

Chapter Seven.
The main objective of this chapter is to examine the relationship between television viewing and cultural identity in terms of the changing uses, gratifications, consumption patterns and the meanings derived from television and other domestic media technologies by a number of working class families. Having presented the context in which television was launched in Ireland and a discussion on the representation of (Irish) working class people on television, the television audience research conducted with a

sample of working class households in north Dublin is presented. Their viewing of 'soaps,' sports and comedy programming is then analysed in terms of the dissertation's key research.

Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight will examine the choices that family members made in recording television programme items on their VCRs, their choice of rented videos and their use of computer games. In addition the chapter considers the increasing proliferation of domestic information/media technologies and speculates what impact that development might have on forms of Dublin working class media consumption The investigation pursues the central thrust of the thesis i e how media consumption contributes to the formation of a Dublin working class cultural identity

Chapter Nine

Rather than focus on Dublin working class media consumption, Chapter Nine will examine forms of artistic/cultural production that resist the hegemony of the dominant arts/cultural industries That investigation is conducted in terms of a critical examination of 'community arts' and Marxist aesthetics The aim is to identify those strands within the working class with the potential to resist international/national socio-cultural forces that maintain and perpetuate working class subordination Against that background some tentative suggestions towards a contemporary 'Bread and Roses' perspective will be presented

Chapter Ten.

The last chapter starts with a summary of the changing patterns of work, housing and leisure among the Dublin working class from the turn of the century to the 1990s Against that backdrop the results of the current audience research will be presented along with the implications for questions of cultural identity Sections three and four discuss working class representations and storytelling. A four point review ends the chapter

Chapter Two

THE BIG PICTURE:
A REVIEW OF THEORETICAL DEBATES ON
WORKING CLASS CULTURE AND IDENTITY

"In the early stages, perhaps we spoke too much about the working class, about subcultures Now nobody talks about them at all"
Stuart Hall [1]

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter contains five main themes The first contextualises the working class in terms of contending constructions of Irish and English political/cultural nationalism and the Catholic Church The second reviews debates on the questions of social class, representation, (class) consciousness, culture, ideology and hegemony The third comprises an examination of the debates on the construction of (working class) identity

Rather than confining myself to a single lens of class analysis, I have, in the fourth theme, further developed the concept of national democratic revolution (NDR) to encompass the inter-play between the processes of class, gender and nationality The fifth theme is an examination of the concept of totality, which envelops the thesis as a whole It in turn is rooted in a feminist/geographical understanding of 'historical materialism' as theorised by Cynthia Cockburn (1984) and David Harvey (1989), respectively

2.2. Culture, Cultural Nationalism and Religion.

In contextualising the Dublin working class within a socio-cultural map of Dublin in the early 1900s, the dialectical relationship between the dominant English economic, cultural, military and political power and that of counter hegemonic political/cultural nationalist movements is primary Dublin in 1901 was, according to C S Andrews, a British city in terms of its *"way of life, its standards of value, its customs"* , and by the late 1890s had, in the words of Kevin Rockett, *"become part of the British commercial*

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[1] From "Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalisation An Interview with Stuart Hall by Kuan-Hsing Chen" (1996) in <u>Stuart Hall Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies</u> Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen Routledge, London

entertainment circuit, a process that was later to include cinema" (Andrews, 1979 9/ Rockett, 1990 22) However, while that relationship predominated, it was inextricably linked to questions of social class, gender, culture and religion

Irish cultural nationalism, which had been invariably *"conflated with political nationalism"* (Hutchinson, 1987 8), drew its inspiration from a predominantly rural orientated English and German Romanticism, and its distancing from the urban was *"accentuated in the Irish case by the colonial encounter"* and by the low level of industrialisation (Lloyd, 1993 96) Besides, neither unionist nor nationalist constituencies seemed, as F S Lyons expressed it, *"to have a place for the urban proletariat"* (Lyons, 1982 78) Therefore, not only was the urban working class marginalised within the project of Irish nationalism, so too was the urban within the agenda of cultural nationalism

During the first decade of the twentieth century the relationship between Irish nationalism and cultural nationalism became increasingly interdependent, with questions of national identity dominating cultural/literary debates Revolutionary nationalist organisations such as Inghinidhe na hEireann (the Daughters of Erin) had as one of their objectives the rejection of *"low English literature, the singing of English songs, the attending of vulgar entertainments at theatres and music halls "* (cited in Luddy, 1995 300) Articulating a less strident, more contradictory, position vis a vis the competing cultural attractions of Irish and English popular culture in the early part of this century, Dominic Behan recalls how his father, a Dublin working class republican, had *"different faces one which sang the work of G H Elliot, the music-hall coloured coon, and the other which was staunchly devoted to patriotic airs"* (Behan, 1963.15)

While proclaiming the values of Irish cultural nationalism, James Connolly was one of the few Irish political leaders to address questions of culture from a working class perspective In that regard he warned that the *"neglect of vital living issues"* in the promotion of cultural activities of a national character *"may only succeed in stereotyping our historical studies into a worship of the past"* (Connolly, 1948 22) In order to counteract that tendency Connolly linked the struggles of the urban and rural working class to the question of national subjugation (Connolly, 1973 124) In doing so, he sought to avoid divisively antagonistic rural/urban differentiations and predicted that

"the Socialist state of the future will put an end to that antagonism by bringing the advantages of the city to the toiler in the country" (Connolly, 1987 267) The intertwining of both class and national struggles had been paramount for Connolly and since his day the *"oneness"*, to borrow a term used by George Gilmore, of the struggle against national and class oppression, has had both its advocates and detractors among Irish communists, socialists and social-democrats [2]

As for women's marginalisation, it can be said that neither nationalist, unionist nor labour movements addressed the issue satisfactorily and none took seriously the question of patriarchal oppression While the early 20th century suffragette movement insisted that the question of women's oppression/emancipation could no longer be left off the socio-political agenda of labour and nationalist movements, the imposition of two confessional states ensured that the progress of Irish feminism was stymied Despite the ongoing endeavours of women such as Hannah Sheehy Skeffington, it was not until the remobilisation of the Irish women's movement during the 1970s that further significant advances could be made across a wide variety of fronts affecting the lives of all Irish women [3]

Having become the dominant oppositional cultural discourse prior to the coming into being of the newly independent southern state, it was virtually inevitable, given the policy of 'economic nationalism,' that cultural nationalism would become the 'official' cultural policy of the new state For those committed to pursuing the process of decolonisation, 'official' cultural nationalism became the ideal in the development of the arts, education, language, radio broadcasting, sports etc The extent of this commitment can be ascertained by the writings of Daniel Corkery, Aodh De Blacham, Joseph Hanly, Douglas Hyde and D P Moran For example in The National Ideal (1931) Joseph Hanly advocated an integrated concept of nationality inspired by the writings of P H Pearse and Terence Mac Swiney As part of his wide ranging analysis of the positive aspects of Irish nationality, Hanly also set his mind against foreign games, music, dancing, food and clothing, which he believed contributed *to "our permanent national enslavement"* (Hanly, 1931 275)

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[2] From "Ireland and its People" by Noel Browne in the Sunday Independent 24/4/1988
[3] See Irish Women's Studies Reader (1993) edited by Ailbhe Smyth, Attic Press, Dublin

While it is now common to dismiss the writings of early twentieth century nationalist writers as having been anti-modernist and exclusivist of cultures other than that of Gaelic Ireland, there is evidence to the contrary in their writings For example, Aodh de Blacam in Studies (March 1924) argued that

> "In literature, as in life, nationality came from synthesis, and every
> influx that came into Ireland must leave its mark on the national
> literature, so that the poetry of Belfast was as much an expression of
> the life of Ireland as the Gaelic songs of Kerry, while the Dublin of
> Grattan was as precious to them as Keating's Isle of Destiny" [4]

According to Declan Kiberd there is a suggestion in Douglas Hyde's writings on de-anglicisation that he foresaw the critique of 'mass culture' common to F R Leavis and Theodor Adorno (Kiberd, 1995 144-145) But in drawing attention to the inclusivist cultural leanings and the problematising of 'mass-culture' by certain Irish middle class intellectuals and writers, it must also be pointed out that such inclusivity did not, in the main, take account of working class and women's cultural experiences Despite the significant role that the Dublin working class had played in the Rising and the war of independence, their role was to be marginal within both the Free State and subsequently in the Republic [5] In articulating that process of marginalisation the historian Mary Daly has written how

> "The Fianna Fail party was committed to the preservation of rural
> lifestyle and decentralisation of industry, and while the position of
> Cumann na nGaedhal was less explicit, their belief that Ireland's
> true destiny lay in agriculture tended to exclude the city and
> particularly its working class from a key role" (Daly,1984 323-324)

In the opinion of Peadar O'Donnell those who could have provided a radical political leadership with a strong working class perspective in the post-1916 period were preoccupied with building the trade union movement [6] Although not dismissing that major undertaking, the implications were, according to O'Donnell, that they let *"the Republic go by default"* and having *"deserted the Republic"* the Labour Party lost support in Dublin (cited in Mac Eoin, 1980 23)

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[4] Cited in Church and State A Forum of Irish Secular Opinion No 19

[5] See Stein Ugelvik Larsen and Oliver Snoddy's "1916 - A Workingmen's Revolution?" for an account of the mainly proletarian composition of those who participated in the Rising Social Studies No 4 August 1973

[6] The rate and extent of unionisation was singularly impressive In 1914 there were 11,000 workers in unions affiliated to the Irish Trade Union Congress, in 1920 the figure had risen to 250,000 and in 1921 to 300,000(Mitchell 1974 137) Membership of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union alone rose from 5,000 in 1916 to 100,000 in 1919 (Nevin, 1973 167)

In broadening what constituted the traditional understanding of an Irish national culture beyond that of literature and the visual arts F S Lyons sought *"evidence* of [cultural] *diversity in all the manifold circumstances of Irish life from the furniture of men's kitchens to the furniture of their minds"* (Lyons, 1982 4) In a similar vein, Sean O'Faolain wrote that 'culture' encompassed *"an all-inclusive way of life, which often takes centuries to construct"* and ought not be viewed *"as a bonus stuck like a stamp on the envelope of life"* (O'Faolain,1984 47) Based on debates within the Irish and international revolutionary movements during and prior to the 1960s, Eoin O'Murchu widened understanding of the concept of 'culture' to include the

> *"response of a people to the environment they live in. As such, the culture of a people includes every aspect of their lives- the way they work, eat, cohabit, play- and is not confined to the artistic means which different civilisations have developed"*(O'Murchu, 1971 1) 7

In one of two meanings ascribed to the term 'culture', Edward W Said employs the concept in the Arnoldian sense, stating how culture becomes associated with the nation and/or state But in becoming *"a source of identity"* such an understanding of culture is *"almost always"* associated with *"some degree of xenophobia"* (Said, 1993 xiii-xiv) According to Said, the return to earlier culture and tradition is accompanied by

> *"rigorous codes of intellectual and moral behavior that are opposed to the permissiveness associated with such relatively liberal philosophies as multiculturalism and hybridity"* (Said,1993 xiv)

Against that background the challenge for Said is to avoid an understanding of 'culture' *"antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations- but as an extraordinarily varied field of endeavour"* (Said,1993 xv)

Said's analysis has a particular resonance in the case of Ireland where cultural nationalists, in common with those in similar European movements, looked to the past to discover *"a source of identity"* and in doing so married a version of a revived culture to a sense of nation, thereby constructing a new sense of national identity However, that process of revival also exhibited the hallmarks of *"rigorous codes of intellectual and moral behaviour"* which in Ireland found its clearest expression in a fusion between conservative Irish Catholicism and exclusivist currents within cultural nationalism (Said,

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7 Such a dual formulation of the concept of 'culture' echoes that of Raymond Williams's anthropological understanding of 'culture' In a 1958 article entitled "Culture is Ordinary", Williams insisted that *"We use the word culture in these two senses to mean a whole way of like- the common meanings, to mean the arts and learning- the special processes of discovery and creative effort Some writers reserve the word for one or other of these sense, I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction"* (Williams,1989c 4)

1993 xii-xv) For Said, the nationalist impulse is Janus-faced, i e both potentially progressive and regressive

While the Catholic Church hierarchy had an ambiguous relationship to British colonialism/imperialism, its response to English popular culture was more unequivocal For example, a campaign in 1911 against *"pernicious"* literature, initiated by Limerick priest Fr Gleeson, reached its height in 1912 with the establishment of a network of a hundred Vigilance Committees headquartered in Dublin The objections of the campaigners mainly *"centered on the reporting of divorce proceedings"* in popular English Sunday newspapers (Cullen, 1989 249-250)

The religious-cultural significance of the Catholic Church for working class Dubliners was captured by John Swift, General Secretary of the Bakers and Amalgamated Food Workers Union, when he stated that in 1910 *"besides singing and that kind of thing"* the only cultural activities in working class Dublin was provided by the Catholic Church *"mass on Sunday, Benediction at evenings"* [8] While in hindsight such a claim may appear to be an exaggeration, widespread participation in church sacraments and other religious activities such as confraternities, sodalities, pilgrimages, May and Corpus Christi processions, by Dublin working class people, cannot be underestimated Not only did the Catholic Church provide education, medical services and care for the elderly, it was also involved in a wide range of charitable activities

However, the Irish Catholic Church hierarchy also had a powerful ideological influence, which frequently ran counter to the interests of the working class For example, the Catholic Church's support for 'corporatism' and opposition to socialism, best articulated in Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum -'The Worker's Charter' (1891), was regularly propounded in sermons throughout Dublin Indeed, it was in response to a series of Lenten sermons directed against socialism by Fr Kane, S J of Gardiner Street Church in 1910 that James Connolly wrote Labour, Nationality and Religion (Connolly, 1973b)

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[8] Thomas Street Folklore Survey June 1985,June 1986 Thomas Street Heritage Project conducted under the auspices of the Liberties Association/ANCO Jervis Street MS 2159 Department of Folklore, UCD This understanding is echoed in other studies of the period For example in "Recreation in Rochdale 1900-1940" Paul Wild of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies states that *"The churches and chapels in the decade up to World War 1 were at their zenith as centres for leisure"* (Weld,1980 141)

In celebrating all that was Irish, many of those associated with cultural nationalism sought an embargo on specific aspects of English popular culture and had the support of the Catholic Church Nevertheless, the quotation from Dominic Behan cited above articulates an ease of identification with aspects of English popular culture among sections of working class Dubliners While sharing in a cross class cultural nationalism, Stephan Behan also shared a common class experience with his British/English working class counterparts

There can be little doubt that English music hall stars such as Marie Lloyd, whose origins were London working class, were greeted with open arms by the working class patrons of the Dublin music hall audience who could easily identify with their humourous characterisations of a working class way of life (Waters & Murtagh, 1975) At a later date, Dominic's brother Brendan, expressed a similar identification with English working class culture, in the semi- autobiographical Borstal Boy (1970) where he stated that

> *"I had the same rearing as most of them, Dublin, Liverpool,*
> *Manchester, Glasgow, London All our mothers had done the pawn-*
> *pledging on Monday, releasing on Saturday We all knew the chip*
> *shop and the picture house and the fourpenny rush of a Saturday*
> *afternoon, and the summer swimming in the canal and being chased*
> *along the railways by the cops"* (Behan, 1970 241-242)

Such are the sets of relationships which go to the heart of the Irish working class experience in the early part of the 20th century and which, when reduced in number, belittle the working class story As the years progressed some of those elements faded in significance, some remained constant and new ones emerged

2.3. Theorising Working Class Culture.

> *"Parnell came down the road, he said to the cheering man 'Ireland*
> *shall get her freedom and you still break stone'"*
> W B Yeats (1990 359)

Confronted with the task of reviewing existing written material on 'Irish working class culture', it is clear that little has been written on the subject and even less on the relationship between working class Dubliners and popular culture There is not a single published text from the Irish cultural/media studies tradition which has focused exclusively on the relationship between the Dublin working class and popular culture

However, references to Dublin working class representations in cinema and television do appear in several published works Building on available research I will engage in a dialogue with those who have already addressed the subject

Given the increasing importance of media representation in enhancing or demeaning collective cultural identities, it is worthwhile spending some time evaluating what has been written on cinematic and televisual representations of the Dublin working class [9] While Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons and John Hill's seminal text Cinema and Ireland (1987) focuses on the history of film production alongside an analysis of violence, romanticism and realism in Irish cinema, no references to the cinema audience appears in the text Nevertheless the authors do include some background information and critical evaluation of films which contain representations of working class Dubliners These include Rooney (1958), The Quare Fellow (1962), Paddy (1969) an adaptation of Lee Dunne's novel Goodbye to the Hill (1969), Down the Corner (1978), Our Boys (1981), Pigs (1984) The Woman Who Married Clark Gable (1985) as well as documentaries which offer insights into Dublin working class life such as Our Country (1948) and The Rocky Road to Dublin (1968) According to Kevin Rockett, Down the Corner was "the first film to represent the lives of working-class Dubliners" and which "foregrounded work for the first time as a central activity in the lives of working-class people" (Rockett, 1987 131) [10]

In an aptly entitled article "Concrete Jungle", Liam Wylie examines film representations of Dublin and its urban culture as well as picking up on the urban/rural theme evident in the writings of Luke Gibbons(1996) and Martin McLoone (1984) Based on his analysis of The Courier (1987), Joyriders (1988), The Commitments (1991), The Bargain Shop (1992), The Snapper (1993) and Into the West (1991), Wylie makes the point that to date Ireland's urban-based films have tended to concentrate on the world of 'the working and non-working classes' to the neglect of other social classes In reference to Johnny Gogan's The Bargain Shop (1992) Wyhe states that "Crime, poverty, or bad housing are not just 'products' of urban conditions They are inherent in a capitalist

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[9] Writing from a North American point of view Stanley Aronowitz has argued that "Class representations are largely constructed by mass-mediated culture, especially since the working class community, like the urban-based mass-production that created it, passed into history" (Aronowitz,1992 194)

[10] For a debate on the contrasting interpretation on the film's portrayal of the working class see Mike Kelly (Irish Socialist No 182 January 1978) and Kevin Rockett (1978) Rockett also makes further references to the relationship between the Dublin working class and cinema in subsequent publications (1990,1991)

society" and as such are not *"natural, spatial or physical phenomena caused by particular locations or environments"* (Wylie, 1994 16) Subsequent cinematic portrayals of aspects of a Dublin working class way of life include *Whitefriar Street Serenade* (1990), *The Snapper* (1993) and *The General* (1998)

As for representations of Irish/Dublin working class culture on television, the following publications include such references Luke Gibbons's (1996) critique of working class representations in *Tolka Row*, Martin McLoone's (1984) insights vis a vis *Tolka Row* and *Strumpet City*, Helena Sheehan's (1987) numerous references to the representations of working class, and Barbara O'Connor's (1990) ethnographic research on *Dallas* and *Glenroe*, which involved working class respondents, and Eoin Devereux's (1998) analysis of RTE's coverage of poverty

Reasons for the dearth of research on forms of Irish popular culture such as cinema and television vary According to Desmond Bell *"historical and literary preoccupations have squeezed out the possibility of such a development occurring"* (Bell, 1991a 88) Still the most sustained research on the Irish working class has been conducted from a labour history perspective [11] In addition to these major labour history studies, many pamphlets have been published on topics such as histories of labour leaders and industrial disputes Examples include the twenty 'historical reprints' published by the Cork Workers' Club, which cover the writings of leading English and Irish communists/socialists of the early 20th Century The Irish Labour History Society through its publications, <u>Saothar Journal of the Irish Labour History Society</u> and <u>Labour History News</u> has become a valuable source and contact point for both labour activists and academics alike since its establishment in 1973 It combines an understanding of labour history that extends beyond the history of trade unions to include the study of 'working class culture' in its brief But having said that, its primary concern has been labour history per se

It is in response to that dominant focus that Jim Wickham, in issue No 6 of <u>Saothar,</u> argued for a broader and deeper understanding of working class culture within the

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[11] For a comprehensive "historiography of Irish labour" see Emmet O'Connor's 'Essay in Historiography' in <u>Labour History Review The Society of the Study of Labour History</u> University of Sheffield Vol 60 Part 1 1995

journal (Saothair, 1980) Commenting on Charles McCarthy's <u>The Decade of Upheaval</u> (1973) Wickham makes the point that

> *"Working class culture is apparently not worth serious examination*
> *so that the history of the working class can simply become the*
> *history of labour organisations"*
> (Wickham, 1980 81)

and later in the same article argues that

> *"traditions and subcultures must be studied seriously and not*
> *plucked out of thin air and used to explain everything else,*
> *questions of class struggle and class domination and the location of*
> *Ireland within the international capitalist system must be at the*
> *centre of the analysis"* (Wickham,1980 81)

By refusing to isolate the cultural aspects of working class life from the material conditions of class relations, Wickham brings to the fore a cultural materialist perspective Furthermore, by positioning class struggle and domination within the context of the 'international capitalist system', he links the Irish bourgeoisie to those who own and control the world's transnational corporations, thus by implication raising politically strategic and tactical questions for the Irish working class

As part of his review of the six part documentary for RTE television entitled *Workers' Lives The Workers World from the 1920s to the 1990s* by Gerry Gregg and Deirdre Dowling, Desmond Bell (1991b) reveals how the series resisted the tendency within labour history to focus almost exclusively on organisational matters According to Bell the weaknesses of much *"traditional"* labour history is that it focuses on the 'point of production' to the neglect of the *"complex roles of working class women as both waged and unwaged workers"* and of the link between *"wage struggles and wider political struggles involving working people, whether these be about environment, housing, education or sexuality"* (Bell, 1991b 91) Bell commended the celebratory representation of *"working class life and experience"* and argued that the programmes represented

> *"an important antidote to the pathologisation of working class*
> *culture which often results from the social problem focus of much*
> *television presentation of working people and their communities"*
> (Bell, 1991b 91)

However, while making these points and stressing the pioneering way in which the series *"examine[d] the links between the spheres of employment, domestic life and politics"* (Bell, 1991b 91-93) Bell also argues that the

> *"film treatment is workerist Political discussion rarely figures in a*
> *portrayal of working class life which has a strangely old-fashioned*
> *syndicalist feel about it We hear no discussion about sex or religion*
> *as elements of working class experience The voice of the young*
> *worker is strangely absent as is that of the unemployed"*
> (Bell, 1991b 92)

Whether the Irish Labour History Society's brief should be extended to include aspects of popular culture is debatable But there can be little doubt that studies of working class culture, from a cultural studies perspective, can usefully complement the existing research on Irish labour history Furthermore, a more extensive engagement with feminist theory would definitely contribute towards counteracting the privileging of male labour power, as well as recognising the central role of domestic labour within capitalist relations of re/production

As for the 'literary preoccupation' referred to by Desmond Bell, it can safely be said that while the writings of Sean O'Casey, Robert Tressell (Robert Noonan)[12] Brendan Behan, Dominic Behan, Dermot Bolger and Roddy Doyle have been given due recognition by Irish literary academics/critics, the same cannot be said for other authors of fictional writings with Dublin working class backgrounds, such as Lee Dunne, Mannix Flynn, Brendan O'Carroll, Lar Redmond, and Terry Waters, who have to a large extent remained marginal in terms of literary studies [13] Their combined writings along with working class auto/biographies, local histories, memoirs and reminiscences, such as those written by Paddy Crosby, Gabriel Byrne, Greg Dalton, John J Dunne, Des Geraghty, Mairin Johnston, Bill Kelly, Eamonn Mac Thomais, Bernard Neary, and Patrick Touher, provide valuable insights into Dublin working class culture and their writings will be drawn upon within this dissertation 14 The virtual absence of working class women authors from the above list of writers must be acknowledged While it confirms the invisibility of women and more particularly of working class women, it is

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[12] In Brendan Behan's <u>Borstal Boy</u> (1970) Behan refers to <u>The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists</u> (1979) by Dublin-born Robert Tressell as *"our book at home"* and how as a house-painter he recalled his workmates *"using the names out of it for nicknames"* Such was the book's popularity that in the painting trade it was known as the *"painter's bible"* (Behan,1970 301-302) While it is now established that Robert Tressell ('real' name Brian Noonan) was born in Wexford Street, Dublin, conflicting accounts exist as to his family name and origins Noonan contracted tuberculosis and died in 1911, a year after he completed his novel He was forty years of age (Mitchell,1969)

[13] According to W J Mc Cormack one of the main weaknesses of 'Irish literary history' is its *"prolonged refusal to acknowledge the bourgeois character of its material"* (Mc Cormack,1986)

[14] These texts take on an even more important significance when one considers a point made by Maurice Golding (1987) where he states that *"Ireland is a country where history is autobiographical and autobiography historical"* p 9

not as if the stories do not exist. When published, they have tended to be in anthologies and the collections from women's creative writing groups such as those attached to Klear (Kilbarrack) and Parents Alone Resource Centre (P.A.R.C.) (Coolock).

Just as F.S. Lyons and Sean O'Faoilain drew on Matthew Arnold's and T.S Eliot's understanding of the concept of 'culture,' those committed to developing an Irish cultural/media studies tradition at several academic centres, both in the north and south of Ireland, have also looked overseas for theoretical guidance and inspiration. As a graduate of one such course (i.e. Communication Studies, Dublin City University) I have come to know the writings of authors who have specialised in cultural/media studies from England, Wales, France, Australia, North and South America, as well as becoming familiar with virtually all the existing publications by Irish writers involved in cultural and media studies.

Of particular value vis a vis the study of Irish working class culture, are a number of writings which emerged from both labour and adult education circles in Britain during the 1940s and 1950s. Among the publications which materialised from these developments were those written by Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, which Stuart Hall singles out as the *"originating texts"* of English Cultural Studies, first published between 1957 and 1963, (Hall,1984:16). Those publications focused, at least partially, on the changing nature of working class culture in Britain at the time. For example, Hoggart's Uses of Literacy (1971) portrayed the 'traditional' working class life of his native Hull before and after the impact of a mainly North American 'mass culture'. Uses of Literacy was also considered a 'founding' text of the Birmingham University based Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) where Hoggart was the first director (Clarke et al, 1980.7). Unlike the work of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart's Uses of Literacy (1971), was not informed by a Marxist analysis of capitalist relations of production. However, Hoggart provides rich insights into aspects of working class life frequently absent from Marxists writings. Having identified the role of employment, education, family, housing etc. in the construction of a working class way of life, Hoggart goes on to consider factors such as cultural change, hobbies, speech and clothing/fashion. Having made the distinction between the 'majority' and the 'earnest minority' he advised the latter to avoid focusing exclusively on *"immediate political and economic objectives"* because the *"pass will be*

sold, culturally, behind their backs" (Hoggart, 1971 318-323) Hoggart also highlighted what he sees as the mistaken views of middle-class Marxists, and in doing so claims that they frequently part-pitied, part-patronised working class people *"beyond any semblance of reality"* (Hoggart, 1971 16) In doing so he drew attention to the fact that most major studies of the working class had been undertaken by those from a 'middle class' background

Analyses of working class culture was one, albeit significant, feature of the CCCS's research (Hall, 1984a) Richard Johnson, former director of the CCCS, provides elements of a theory of working class culture, which he centres on the concepts of 'consciousness,' 'culture,' and 'ideology', (Johnson, 1980) Given the significant influence of Karl Marx's writings on the theoretical development of the concepts of 'class', 'consciousness', 'culture' and 'ideology' in the initial development of cultural studies, that contribution will now be briefly reviewed Rather than attempt to trace the debate stemming from Marx's collected works, one key extract from Marx's writings will be elaborated upon and problematised from a contemporary vantage point

According to Marx (1976), the *"guiding principles"* of his work were captured in that much quoted extract where he stated that men [and women] enter into production in order to procure the necessities of life, and that along with the technology of production involved in that process and those who operate it ('forces of production'), a 'mode of production' is constituted, be it slavery, feudalism, capitalism or socialism (Marx, 1976 3) [15] For Marx those 'relations of production' which people enter into are the basis of his class analysis and the foundation of subsequent Marxist writings on social class Those 'relations' are also the basis of class identity Furthermore, together they constitute the *"real foundation on which there arises a legal and political super-structure and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond"*, which is the core of the dialectical base/superstructure relationship (Marx, 1976 3) Elsewhere in the same text Marx argued against isolating the process of production from that of distribution, exchange and consumption, thereby articulating his concept of totality which Georg Lukacs reasserted and developed in History and Class Consciousness (1971) The concept of 'totality' has been further debated in a contemporary context by a number of influential writers prominent in the British cultural studies tradition, such as

Raymond Williams (1980a) and E P (Edward Palmer) Thompson (1978), and by the North American writer Martin Jay (1984)

By way of a thumbnail class analysis of the *"ruled second-class"* Dublin Catholics in 1901, C S Andrews presents a picture of working class life which links questions of employment, education, housing, leisure, sport, politics, health and religion in what amounts to a totality (Andrews, 1979 12-13) [16] It is by working towards such a sense of social totality, albeit with qualifications, and theorising it in terms of its use in both the writings of Karl Marx (1976) and Georg Lukacs (1971), that the present thesis aims to address the relationship between specific forms of Dublin working class cultural consumption and that of cultural identity For Georg Lukacs the essential aspect of totality was the

> *"all-pervasive supremacy of the whole over the parts* [which was]
> *the essence of the method which Marx took over from Hegel and*
> *brilliantly transformed into the foundations of a wholly new science"*
> [my insert] (Lukacs, 1971 27)

Lukacs's concept of totality opened up new revolutionary possibilities following its publication in 1923, insofar as it countered the 'scientism' (positivism) and 'economism' of the Second International In his in-depth historical analysis of the concept of 'totality', Martin Jay (1984) traces its conceptualisation as a discourse prior to, and in the context of, 'Western Marxism'. As for poststructuralists, Jay argues that their *"common denominator would have to be their unremitting hostility towards totality"* (Jay, 1984 515) [17] Along similar lines Frederic Jameson makes the point that 'totalisation' is for postmodernists *"one of the most sordid residual vices to be eradicated from the populist health and fitness of the new era"* (Jameson, 1992·330) [18] Jay also quotes Andreas Huyssen as stating that the *"very idea of a wholistic (sic) modernity and of a*

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[15] See Appendix A for the extract from Karl Marx's writings

[16] For the full extract see Appendix B C S Andrew's categorisation is in tune with that of Sir Horace Plunkett who wrote that due to the existence of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy Ireland had been divided into *"two races, two creeds two spheres of economic interest and pursuit socially separate classes"* (cited in Humphries, 1966 41)

[17] For Jean-Francois Lyotard there is no equivocation His call in The Postmodern Condition A Report on Knowledge is *"Let us wage a war on totality"* (Lyotard,1979 82)

[18] It is worth noting that as part of a discussion of 'totality' Frederic Jameson draws a clear distinction between its use and that of the concept of totalisation Based on a relevant reading of Jean Paul Sartre Jameson states that *"if the word totality sometimes seems to suggest that some privileged bird's eye-view of the whole is available which is also the Truth, then the project of totalisation implies exactly the opposite and takes as its premise the impossibility for individual and biological human subjects to conceive of such a position, let alone adopt or achieve it"* (Jameson,1992 332) However in his own approach to the concept of postmodernism he admits to adopting a totalising approach, which he then states *"often means little more that the making of connections between various phenomena"* (Jameson, 1992 403)

totalising view of history has become anathema in the 1970s" [his emphasis] (cited in
Jay, 1984·512) His claim was made in response to Jurgen Habermas's attempts to
revive the concept in terms of 'communicative action' For Huyssen, the reasons the
concept has become an *"anathema"* are as follows

> *"critical deconstruction of enlightenment the decentreing of*
> *traditional identity, the fight for women and gays for a legitimate*
> *social and sexual identity outside the parameters of male,*
> *heterosexual vision, the search for alternatives in our relationship*
> *with nature, including the nature of our bodies"*
> (cited in Jay, 1984 512)

Writing on the same subject, Terry Eagleton makes the point that undermining
homogenising and essentialist concepts of totality, which exclude *"a range of crucial*
political struggles" has become an *"urgent political task"* (Eagleton, 1995 381)
Eagleton's difficulty is with specific formulations of 'totality', and having expressed his
concern goes on to state that

> *"when it is clear that what we confront is indeed in some sense a*
> *'total system', and is sometimes recognised as such by its own*
> *rulers, then elements of the left begin to speak of plurality,*
> *multiplicity, schizoid circuits, microstrategies and the rest"*
> (Eagleton,1995 381)

Other critical thinkers continue to defend the concept of totality and in doing so breathe
new life into it McKenzie Wark argues that *"bad totality does not give us license to*
abandon imagining the whole and speculating on its future tendencies" (Wark,
1994 xi) Another is Frederic Jameson, the leading North American cultural critic
Jameson largely holds with the Lukacean interpretation of totality insofar as his
understanding of the concept parallels that of the concept of 'mode of production'
Jameson adopts the concept in a way that values both structure and agency Avoiding a
productionist interpretation and refusing to see it as a 'total system', Jameson traces the
dialectical relationship between a third, post-monopoly, 'late stage' of capitalism and its
cultural superstructure - postmodernism Allowing for no misunderstanding of this new
relationship between the economic and the 'cultural' domains, Jameson informs the
reader that

> *"this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal*
> *and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American*
> *military and economic domination throughout the world in this*
> *sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood,*
> *torture, death, and terror"* (Jameson, 1992 5) [19]

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[19] Such a contention echoes Walter Benjamin claim in ' Theses on the Philosophy of History' that *"There is no*
document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (Benjamin 1992 248)

As part of his conclusions, Jameson presents a way of mapping a totality that links the local to the global and reclaims the possibility of a revolutionary politics This mapping process is highly significant for an understanding of the global dimensions of 'late capitalism', as theorised by Ernest Mandel (1987), and his conceptualisation of a *"process of proletarianisation on a global scale"* (Jameson, 1992 417) However, while the concepts of 'totality'/'totalisation' are central to Jameson's analysis, it is with his concept of 'cognitive mapping' that he finally offers a way of positioning the individual in the contemporary *"totality of class relations on a global (or should I say multinational) scale"* (Jameson, 1992 415) Building on Kevin Lynch's conception of the urban experience and Louis Althusser's understanding of ideology as *"the imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence"*, Jameson's use of 'cognitive mapping' becomes a *"a code word for 'class-consciousness'"* (Jameson, 1992 415-418) Emphasising the importance of such a mapping process, Jameson states that the *"incapacity to map spatially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially for urban experience"* He then goes on to say that *"an aesthetic of cognitive mapping"* is *"an integral part of any socialist political project"* (Jameson, 1992 416-418)

But in discussing any aspect of the *"socialist political project"*, one cannot avoid acknowledging the contemporary state of 'disarray' associated with that project It is now patently obvious that the working class has yet to achieve the historical role envisaged for it by Marx Furthermore, to suggest that 'Stalinism' can somehow be *"define[ed] out of socialism"* as Peter Fuller puts it, is not tenable (Fuller, 1982 241) 'Stalinism' was one of several approaches to Marxism, and its particular failures is not sufficient grounds for the abandonment of the communist/socialist project

If Marx identified a dynamic interrelationship between the processes of production and consumption in terms of a totality (Marx, 1973·90-93), Marxism is less theoretically developed in terms of a theory of 'consumption' However, Marx considered the process of consumption in active rather than passive terms, as is the current thinking on the topic In Grundrisse (1973) Marx argued that a product *"becomes, a product only through consumption"* and that *"consumption creates the need for new production"* (Marx, 1973 91) Furthermore, in an insightful and enduring statement on the topic, Marx stated that

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> *"In spite of all 'pious' speeches he (the capitalist) searches for means to spur them (the workers) on to consumption, to give his wares new charms, to inspire them with new needs by constant chatter etc. It is precisely this side of the relation of capital and labour which is an essential civilising moment, and on which the historic justification, but also the contemporary power of capital rests"* (cited in Meszaros.1995: 580).

So when combined with his writings on 'use-values' and 'wants' the elements of a Marxist theory consumption does exist in his writings. The theoretical aspects of the relationship between consumption and identity will be addressed later in this chapter.

Having shown that the relations of production, distribution, exchange and consumption at the heart of capitalist commodity production were in fact social relations between people, Marx named the process that obscures those relationships as the 'fetishisation of commodities'. (Marx, 1970) According to Marx, the countervailing process of de-fetishisation laid bare the relationship between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour power. A current example of the 'fetishisation of commodities' phenomenon is the advertisement for Bulmer's Cider, 'Nothing added but Time''. The suggestion is that no artificial additives are included in cider production, but at the same time, it overlooks the fact that labour power has been expended in the production and distribution of the product.

Based on Marx's concept of the 'relations of production', V.I.Lenin went on to define social classes in a way that highlighted the subordination of the working class within capitalism. According to Lenin social classes were:

> *"large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy"*
> (cited in Yermakova & Ratnikov, 1986:71).

Building on both the 'theory and practice' of Marx and Lenin, Georg Lukacs linked the concepts of 'totality', 'fetishisation' (or in his terminology 'reification'), and 'class consciousness' in a way that resisted the prevalent economistic/positivist tendency within the Second International during the 1920s. That tendency advocated that revolutionary

change would come about primarily on the basis of an economic crisis For Lukacs the concepts of 'totality' and 'reification' are intimately connected He believed that as part of its developing class consciousness the working class must first come to see relations of commodity production as relations between people That realisation would bring about an awareness of the totality of the capitalist mode of production Luckacs also insisted on the need for an 'inputted consciousness' emanating from a communist/ socialist party, stressing the importance of organisation for those pursuing the socialist project Lukacs argued that economic crises had the potential to reveal or de-fetishise the nature of capitalist relations to the working class But he also believed that the transformation of those relations must be brought about consciously According to Lukacs

"For a class to be ripe for hegemony means that its interests and consciousness enable it to organise the whole of society in accordance with those interests" (Lukacs, 1971 52)

In other words, for a social class to gain hegemony ('moral and intellectual leadership') it has to do so in the arenas of culture, ideology and politics as well as in the struggle between capital and labour It was Antonio Gramsci, with whom the concept of 'hegemony' is most closely associated, who stated that *"every relationship of 'hegemony' is necessarily an educational relationship"*, thereby highlighting the importance of independent centres of learning and culture for the working class (Gramsci, 1996 350) Such a cultural/educational tradition, albeit marginal, can be traced within the history of the Dublin working class and will be briefly elaborated upon in Chapters Four and Six.

In continuing to counter a purely economistic interpretation of social class, various Marxists and sociologists have extended the concept of social class to include ideological and political factors within the frame (Poulantzas, 1982) Rather than upholding a 'fixed' understanding of the 'base/superstructure' metaphor, Raymond Williams (1987) directs attention to the part of the extract where Marx states that *"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness"* (Marx, 1976 3) Williams also acknowledged the significant influence of the concepts of 'totality', 'intention', and 'hegemony' as counter measures to mechanistic renderings of the metaphor (Williams, 1980a 31-49) And in <u>Marxism and Literature</u> (1987) he argued that *"It is not 'the base' and 'the superstructure' that need to be studied, but the specific and indissoluble*

real processes" (Williams, 1987 82) It is in the context of making such an argument that Williams further problematises the 'base/superstructure' metaphor and in doing so inserts the question of culture within the frame Social interaction or relationship is central to Raymond Williams's understanding of both class and culture For example, he states that the *"crucial distinction"* between bourgeois and working class culture is that *"between alternative ideas on the nature of social relationship"*, thereby focusing attention on the totality of the relationships (Williams, 1961 312) E P Thompson also expressed dissatisfaction with the 'base/superstructure' formulation and, like Williams, drew attention to the dialectical social being/social consciousness aspect of the extract from Marx's writing (Thompson, 1978,1980)[20] Both Williams and Thompson were reacting against what they perceived to be a crude economic determinism that had taken hold in communist organisations/parties affiliated with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Indeed Marx himself demonstrated in many of his political writings that he was not in favour of a mechanical or simplistic economic determinist model as is so often suggested by contemporary theorists in their dismissal of Marxism

In favouring the humanist rather than the structuralist tradition within Marxism, E P Thompson stresses the role of 'agency', 'consciousness', and 'experience', in discussing the relationship of class to the productive relations In a postscript to <u>The Making of the English Working Class</u> he argued that

> *"Class is a social and cultural formation (often finding institutional expression) which cannot be defined abstractly, or in isolation, but only in terms of relationship with other classes, and, ultimately, the definition can only be made in the medium of <u>time</u> - that is, action and reaction, change and conflict When we speak of <u>a</u> class we are thinking of a very loosely defined body of people who share the same congeries of interests, social experiences, traditions and value-system, who have a <u>disposition</u> to <u>behave</u> as a class, to define themselves in their actions and in their consciousness in relation to other groups of people in class ways But class is not a thing, it is a happening"* (His emphasis) (Thompson, 1980 939)

Marx's extract from <u>Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</u> also highlighted the essence of 'historical materialism' which is in effect the application of 'dialectical materialism' to the study of history and society [21] According to Marx, when

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[20] See Appendix A for the relevant extract

[21] According to Frederick Engels the term 'historical materialism' *"designate[d] that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange in the consequent division of society into classes, and in the struggles of these classes against one another"* (Engels,1975 23-24)

productive forces come into contradiction with the relations of production they can, in certain circumstances, become a fetter on the development of such forces, thereby leading to a crisis Such a crisis may in certain circumstances create the conditions for a fundamental transformation of the relations of production, e g socialism But rather than that transformation occurring inevitably, as was proclaimed by some leading Marxists, others within the Marxist tradition such as Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukacs gave greater emphasis to the question of 'consciousness' in the struggle for socialism

The source and nature of such 'consciousness' was a topic of many debates within Marxism V I Lenin, in a discussion on the role of theory and organisation in the development of 'political consciousness' wrote

> *"Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of the relationships between all classes and strata, the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes"* (Lenin, 1967 78-79)

Lenin's thoughts on this subject were heavily influenced by the German revolutionary Karl Kautsky and the implications of widespread Czarist repression against the Russian people In that regard Lenin appears to have differed from Marx, who believed that the working class would become their own emancipators Marx's Wages Labour and Capital (1978), Wages, Price and Profit (1969), and Lenin's On Strikes (1970) addressed both the value and limitations of economic struggles in the development of working class consciousness For Lenin such struggles were bound up with the effects rather than the causes of the labour/capital contradiction So, extending the focus beyond the economic class struggle to include the political and ideological, Lenin rejected both 'economism' and 'trade union politics' as having little in common with socialism.[22] Furthermore, on the question of *'inputted consciousness'* he stated that

> *"To concentrate all secret functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not mean that the latter will 'do the thinking for all' and that the rank and file will not take an active part in the movement"*
> (cited in Meszaros,1995 394)

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[22] James Connolly made a similar distinction when he rejected 'gas and water socialism' in favour of a political programme that could bring about a transformation in capitalists relations of production

In addition Lenin insisted that *"all distinctions between workers and intellectuals, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, must be effaced"* (cited in Meszaros, 1995 394) As for the present era, Istvan Meszaros argues for a fundamental rethink on the issue of 'inputted consciousness' (Meszaros, 1995 394-6) Sheila Rowbotham (1980), the English socialist-feminist, has also argued for a fundamental re-evaluation In expanding her discussion to address its relevance for feminism, she questions the source of consciousness, which Lenin linked to science and bourgeois intellectuals who joined the revolutionary party According to Rowbotham, Lenin differed from Marx on the question of consciousness She supports that contention with a quote from E P Thompson stating that, in focusing on consciousness, Marx missed out on the dimension of 'culture' (Rowbotham, 1980) This neglect became a key concern of those associated with the early developments of English Cultural Studies.

But if the relations of production are prioritised within Marxism, what of the reproduction of life? In a letter to Joseph Bloch five years before his death in 1895, Frederick Engels reacts against what he regarded as an over-emphasis on the determining role of the 'economic' by stating that *"the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of life"*, thus linking work and, by implication, family and home in a materialist analysis (cited in Harvey, 1976 197-198) The value of linking the determining roles of 'production' and 'reproduction of life' is that it elevates 'reproduction of life' alongside that of 'production', overcoming the false dichotomy between workplace and homeplace [23] It also opens the door to an investigation into domestic labour and its role in the oppression of women and the maintenance of capitalism

While acknowledging the significance of Engels' statement it must also be mentioned that the issues associated with the *"the reproduction of life"* were, and continue to be, largely ignored within labour, socialist and communist movements As with virtually all such statements there are exceptions The Russian revolutionary Alexander Kollontai (1872-1952) stood out for her endeavour to link sexual and class relations, and to envision new equal and loving relationships between women and men [24]

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[23] See Eli Zaretsky's Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life (1976) for an excellent analysis of the public/private divide and a socialist-feminist vision on its overcoming

[24] See Alexander Kollontai Selected Writings Allisson and Busby, London 1977

One of the greatest weaknesses of communist/socialist movements has been their failure to understand the importance of domestic labour in the exploitation of women and to recognise and oppose patriarchy as a system of oppression That failure is compounded by the marginalisation of (socialist) feminists within movements with predominantly male leadership, who have, by and large, tended to ignore such issues It frequently appears as if the very process of capitalist production has, over time, wedded its male workers, its tool makers and tool users, to a vision of the world as factory whose walls muffle the cries of women's labour in child birth and hide the endless hours of unpaid domestic labour carried out by women in the home and the community

Not until the re-emergence of the women's movement in the 1960s did socialist-feminists succeed in having the question of women's oppression placed on the wider political agenda, and developing an understanding of, and a strategy to oppose, patriarchal capitalism As part of such a strategy French feminist Christine Delphy has developed a concept of 'domestic mode of production' (Delphy, 1984) This concept reveals how the process of domestic labour is intimately tied into the process of consumption, thereby linking women working in the home to the capitalist market on both the production and consumption fronts Besides raising the possibility of a class analysis of the 'domestic mode of production', Delphy makes the case that patriarchy predates, and in certain socialist cases, postdates capitalism, and therefore autonomous women's movements are essential to eradicate this ongoing form of oppression In a broadly similar way, Cynthia Cockburn draws on Marxist philosophy and, rather than rejecting it for its inadequacies, proposes a 'feminist historical materialist' analysis According to Cockburn such an analysis incorporates a *"sex/gender system which determines the social categories that people of different sexes fill"* (Cockburn, 1983 6-7) In pursing a similar line of thinking John Clarke and Chas Critcher make the point that the *"sexual division of leisure clearly reflects the sexual division of labour"* (Clarke & Critcher, 1985 224)

Richard Johnson, formerly of the CCCS, has highlighted how concerns of social class and gender transcend the academic sphere in which the research is conducted, and are fused with wider political aspirations In addition he argues that feminism opened up *"past knowledges, academic and 'radical', for their masculine partisanship, gender-blindness and neglect of women"* (Johnson, 1986 277) The publications of Rosalind

Coward, Dorothy Hobson, Angela Mc Robbie and Chris Weedon alone, are testament to research conducted by women associated with the CCCS However, according to Charlotte Brunsdon, women researchers had to contend with a 'boyzone' at the CCCS, which in effect meant challenging and going beyond the *"domain of the public, the state and the male working class"* in order to pursue topics which were of more immediate interest and relevance to women (Brunsdon, 1996 280)

Having explored aspects of class and gender identity in terms of production/ reproduction the frame of reference will be broadened to include an investigation into contemporary 'identity politics' and in doing so highlight the process of consumption within that examination

2.4. Class and the Formation of Cultural Identity.

Recent academic debates on the nature of individual identity have shifted from the singular to plural, and can be traced from Enlightenment via Meadian symbolic interactionism to postmodernist conceptions of identity (Hall, 1992 275) In recognition of the contemporary plurality of identities, Stuart Hall argues that

> *"People no longer identify their social interests exclusively in class*
> *terms class cannot serve as a discursive device or mobilising*
> *category through which all the diverse social interests and identities*
> *can be reconciled and represented"*
> (Hall, 1992 280)

If social class is best understood in relational terms, so too is individual identity Not only has an identity the features common to itself, but it requires an/other beyond or outside itself in the (historical) process of its formation Identification is at the very heart of identity formation and is integral to the process of media consumption As with class relationships the dialectic pertains However, one of the most problematic aspects of the debate surrounding personal/collective identity is that some advocates focus solely on those aspects of the process which affirm and exclude In so doing they highlight the twin dangers of essentialism and exclusivity, which is so evident in the cultural contradictions which can emerge in multi ethnic/racial societies

New cultural identities include those derived from or associated with disability, ethnicity, generation, lone parenthood, and geographic place Their proliferation have in turn resulted in the much debated 'politics of identity'(Bondi, 1993, Brunt, 1990) In her analysis of contemporary identity politics, Liz Bondi singles out conflicting perspectives emerging from humanist and anti-humanist intellectual traditions, respectively For Rosalind Brunt, who Bondi links to a humanist perspective, 'identity politics' is

> *"politics whose starting point is about recognising the degree to*
> *which political activity and effort involves a continuous process of*
> *making and remaking ourselves- and ourselves in relation to*
> *others"* (cited in Bondi,1993 84)

Elsewhere in the same article Brunt takes as another starting point in the 'politics of identity' the

> *" 'issue of 'representation' both how our identities are represented*
> *in and through the culture and assigned particular categories, and*
> *also who and what politically represents us, speaks and acts on our*
> *behalf"* (Brunt, 1990 152)

Such an insight has particular relevance when considering the extent of working class exclusion and under-representation in the Irish media According to Bourne, Brunt's emphasis on the process of 'making and remaking' represents a retreat from emancipatory political activity towards the personal Thus she focuses on *"who am I"* rather than *"what is to be done"* (cited in Bondi,1993 84) It can be argued that 'identity politics' are centered on the individual and represent a departure from collective solidarities But it can also be argued that they arise from a variety of common experiences and therefore are not 'individual' In addition, collective action may lead to the formation of new collective cultural identities Brunt's 'and/both' approach to identity formation rejects the view that engagement with identity politics necessarily means an abandonment of social class and loss of faith in the historical role of the working class (Brunt, 1990 150) One might also ask why the need to separate and privilege class identity from those of gender, nationality or ethnicity ?

In a discussion of 'Identity Politics and the [British] Left', Eric Hobsbawm argues that 'identity politics' arose as a *"consequence of the extraordinarily rapid and profound upheavals and transformations of human society in the third quarter of this century"* (Hobsbawm, 1996 40-42) He then goes on to state that collective identities are defined against others, that one tends to dominate, that they are changeable by nature and have a

particular social context (Hobsbawm, 1996:40-42). For Hobsbawm, the significance of 'identity politics' for the Left is that during the 1970s a *"proletarian identity politics"* emerged from the British labour movement which was *"narrowed down to nothing but a pressure-group or a sectional movement of industrial workers"*. This development resulted in the isolation and internal division of the working class (Hobsbawm, 1996:43). Against that background Hobsbawm argues that while identity politics is for *"members of a specific group"* the *"political project of the Left is universal: it is for all human beings"* (Hobsbawm, 1996:43). Hobsbawm's analysis reveals the consequences of the type of trade union and parliamentary politics pursued by the trade union movement and the British Labour Party respectively (Hobsbawm, 1996:41). However, Hobsbawm fails to fully address the fact that many women and ethnic minorities felt underrepresented by such organisations, which may well have provoked their interest in 'identity politics'. Furthermore, if the *"political project of the Left"* is to become *"universal"* it obviously requires new alliances which truly respect the component parts of that alliance. That requires an all-embracing socialist-feminist strategy to combat both exploitation exploitation and patriarchal oppression.

Todd Gitlin adopts a similarly critical position to 'identity politics' in his analysis of contemporary North America. Gitlin believes that the 'cant of identity' has come to overshadow concerns of a universal citizenship or the common good. According to Gitlin such a development arises from 'cultural wars' which have assumed the role previously played by the Cold War i.e., to divide and to heighten difference (Gitlin, 1995). Gitlin is correct to articulate the dangers of growing cultural/ethnic separateness in North America, and to advocate bridge building. However, by not fully critiquing the American Left's failure to tackle sexism and racism in the workplace and 'community', he weakens the very process of rebuilding an American left (Gitlin, 1995).

The shift, from an emphasis on production to that of consumption within the capitalist mode of production, has given rise to a wide ranging debate on the relationship of consumption to identity formation, desire and need. Currently the ideology of consumerism has, in the words of Robert Bococks, *"served to legitimate capitalism in the eyes of millions of ordinary people"* (Bocock, 1993:2). Indeed, there can be little doubt that since the 1960s considerations of the process of consumption have gone

beyond the purely economic 'point of consumption', to address its function in the process of identity formation and maintenance

If the role of advertising within contemporary capitalism involves the sale of dreams and desires, Hans Magnus Enzensberger makes the point that with a specific form of consumption, there is *"the promise that want will disappear"* In addition, he states that even though there is no possibility of *"fulfilment"* in this form of consumption, the *"anticipation of a utopian situation"* pertains (Enzensberger, 1979 114) The notion of the utopian in both media representations and the process of commodity/media consumption will be returned to in later chapters

It was the rise of consumer spending among the British working class during the 1950s that prompted sociologists such as Ferdynand Zwieg (1961) and J H Goldthorpe (1971) to investigate whether or not a process of 'embourgeoisement', was occurring among 'affluent' British workers While finding little evidence of 'embourgeoisement', the research did identify a greater degree of home-centredness in terms of leisure pursuits The research also identified a decline in a working class politically inspired solidarity

As for the impact of consumerism on the Irish working class, the former General Secretary of the Irish Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union, Matt Merrigan, has made the case that

> *"Consumerism and a greater diffusion of personal property, particularly in home ownership, and a turn away from the collectivism of the past towards the social alienation of suburbia and the delusion of the 'yuppie' fringe of the working class, has tended to destabilise the working class in ideological terms"* (Merrigan, 1989 24)

Commenting on this debate in 1963, Raymond Williams wrote

> *"The great majority of English working class people want only the middle-class material standard and for the rest want to go on being themselves One should not be too quick to call this vulgar materialism It is wholly reasonable to want the means of life in such abundance as is possible This is the materialism of material provision, to which were are all, quite rightly, attentive The working people, who have felt themselves long deprived of such means in any adequacy, intend to get them and to keep them if they can"* (Williams, 1961 311)

In <u>Late Capitalism</u> (1987) Ernest Mandel singles out a number of features of consumption/consumerism which pertain to the working class, and are best contextualised in terms of the growth of the services sector In this regard he identifies an increase in the consumption of commodities other than food, the rise of the working class family as a unit of consumption, and a greater incorporation of the recreational sphere into the process of capitalist production (Mandel, 1987 390-395) As part of these developments Mandel affirms the *"genuine extension of the needs (living standards) of the wage-earner, which represents a raising of his level of culture and civilisation"*, and adds that rejections of capitalist 'consumer society' *"can only mean rejection of those forms of consumption and of production which continue to restrict man's development, making it narrow and one-sided"* (Mandel, 1987 394-395) Such a distinction is important in that it differentiates the enhancing aspects of both production and consumption from those that demean and stultify [25] For Mandel, developments in the consumer side of capitalism have, in the course of the 20th century, occurred against the rise in the commodification/commercialisation of cultural activities associated with the working class These contrast sharply with self created working class cultural practices of the past (Mandel, 1987 393)

It is with regard to consumption, rather than production, that the contribution of Pierre Bourdieu (1986) is best understood Indeed his writings on the link between taste and social class are a major contribution to the development of a theory of consumption within contemporary capitalist societies. According to Bourdieu, the individual's 'cultural capital' (which is derived from his/her lived experience, and is reproduced within the education system), determines personal choice/taste in the consumption of cultural commodities Therefore, the very act and choices of consumption are an indicator of class or 'class habitus', a term Bourdieu employs instead of the Marxist concept of 'class consciousness'(Eder,1993 3) [26] While singling out the importance of Bourdieu's research, his critics argue that his analysis *"allows little room for the chance of radical social change"* and his neglect of social divisions other than those of social class (Moores, 1993 123)

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[25] In subsequent chapters I will describe this distinction by contrasting the 'Bread and Roses' tradition with that of the parallel metaphor 'Bread and Circus'

[26] For a theoretical application of Pierre Bourdieu's linkage of 'cultural hierarchy and social class' in the Irish context see Brian O'Neill's "*The Arts Show* Audience Cultural Confidence and Middlebrow Arts Consumption" in <u>Media Audiences in Ireland</u> edited by Mary J Kelly and Barbara O'Connor(1997) Bourdieu links cultural capital to that of economic and symbolic capital

Faced with the challenge of developing a political response to consumerism and the politics of consumption, the Irish left has, by and large, failed to address its cultural, economic and political implications There is an interesting anomaly at the heart of Matt Merrigan's quote on the negative impact of consumerism As a socialist and trade union leader, he was part of a movement which struggled to improve the pay and conditions of Irish workers, and yet, because of that, many were given the opportunity to own their own homes and to purchase consumer items which represented an improvement in their quality of life Perhaps the traditional socialist/trade union focus on the 'point of production', rather than on the totality of relations of production, has left that movement so ill equipped to develop a political response to consumerism and the relative prosperity enjoyed by many working class families in the late 1990s Furthermore, by its virtually exclusive focus on the 'point of production', the labour movement has increasingly become a sectional interest group whose leadership is in 'partnership' with representatives of an Irish bourgeoisie and state As for the consumption of cultural commodities and services, the Irish left has been slow to develop a language for reading the signs and symbols that saturate contemporary society By neglecting the domain of 'culture', it has failed to address one of the most significant conduits of meaning in contemporary society As a result, little has been written on the relationship of working class audiences to forms of popular culture such as music hall, cinema and television from an Irish socialist-feminist point of view

What emerges from the foregoing theoretical analyses of 'the working class' is that throughout the 19th and 20th century emphases have shifted, never standing still in the course of history Theories of social categorisation that fitted in the past are no longer adequate today According to John Fiske, social class is but one among a *"multiplicity of axes of social difference"*, and it can no longer

> *"occupy a place of theoretical centrality but must take its place*
> *along side other axes around which social identities and social*
> *systems are organised It is still important, but it has been joined by*
> *race/ethnicity and gender as perhaps the core aspects of social*
> *difference But even this core is not certain, for other axes, such as*
> *age, marital status, religion, region, locality are all important and,*
> *in any instance, any of them may join the core, or dislodge one of*
> *the core axes from its centrality"* (Fiske, 1993 7-8) [27]

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[27] Janet Staiger (1992) also highlights the significance of different 'subject positions' in media reception studies

Within the discourse of British and North American cultural/media studies, questions of social class receded as a topic of interest for a cluster of reasons as outlined below·

(i)   the restructuring of international capital to the detriment of sections of the British and North American working class under Thatcher and Reagan stewardship;

(ii)   related trade union defeats,

(iii)   the view propounded by Herbert Marcuse in <u>One Dimensional Man</u> (1968), that the working class of 'western' societies had become so integrated into capitalism that it no longer fulfils the revolutionary role bestowed upon 'classical' or 'orthodox' Marxism,

(iv)   the virtual collapse of 'communist' parties in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe;

(v)   the decline of interest in Marxism among academics as against the rise of postmodernism/post-structuralism,

(vi)   the virtual autonomy of culture/ ideology from material conditions in contemporary academic writings,

(viii) the challenging of the privileged position of class identity with those of identities centred on gender, sexual orientation etc,

(iix)   the widespread acceptance of Michel Foucault's writings within academia

(ix)   the pervasiveness of a petit-bourgeois ethos within academia and the virtual absence of working class intellectuals with a history of class struggle behind them such as Raymond Williams and E P Thompson

However, while the virtual death of class identity was asserted and assumed by the majority of cultural studies theorists, it was done without the support of any thorough empirical research One of the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist mode of production is that the productive process is social in character, while ownership/control remains in the hands of the few So despite contemporary transformations in productive forces of transnational capitalism, there is few grounds for writing off the working class It is also difficult to refute the potential of the working class in playing its part in both challenging and transforming the existing social relations of capitalism When asked during an 1992 interview whether the working class remained the agent of revolutionary change, Istvan Meszaros, vis a vis Marcuse's thinking on the subject, stated that neither the *"intellectuals and the outcasts   had the power to implement change"* (Meszaros, 1995 984) While not denying the role intellectuals might play in *"defining strategies"*, he stated that

> *" the only force which can introduce this change and make it work is*
> *society's producers, who have the repressed energies and potent-*
> *ialities through which all those problems and contradictions can*
> *be solved The only agency which can rectify this situation, which can*
> *assert itself, and find fulfilment in the process of asserting itself, is the*
> *working class"* (Meszaros, 1995·984)

However, on the basis of Fiske's analysis alone, a traditional class analysis will no longer suffice, and so a frame which fully accommodates 'social difference' is required That

challenge will now be addressed by borrowing from Raymond William's (1980b) understanding of the 'long revolution' and applying it to the Irish context

2.5. Ireland's 'Long Revolution'.

Raymond Williams's analysis of culture in The Long Revolution (1980b) was contextualised in terms of integrated democratic, industrial and cultural advancement and transformations When applied to the Irish context the democratic aspect of this process, which stipulates that *"people should govern themselves, make their own decisions, without concession of this right to any particular group, nationality or class"*, assumes both a national, class and gender character (Williams, 1980b 10) Given that conjunction it is my belief that the Irish 'long revolution' is best understood in terms of a 'national democratic revolution' (NDR)

Probably the clearest and most succinct contemporary understanding of the NDR from a working class perspective, was presented by the late Joe Slovo of the South African Communist Party (SACP), an organisation with close ties to the African National Congress (ANC) Slovo's analysis was written in the period prior to the ANC electoral success and the election of Nelson Mandela as president of South Africa in 1994 The essentials of Slovo's analysis of the NDR are that in its struggle for socialism the South African working class must first play its part in completing the 'national democratic' phase of the NDR That task is achieved by their participation within a 'national liberation alliance' which unites them alongside *"most of the other classes within the nationally-dominated majority, including the black petit-bourgeoisie and significant strata of the emergent black bourgeoisie"* (Slovo p 4) According to Slovo, the NDR

> *"Contains elements of both national and social emancipation, it is not the classic bourgeois-democratic revolution nor is it yet the socialist revolution This is so because of the unique relationship between capitalist exploitation and national domination in South Africa"* (Slovo p 7) [28]

Slovo believed the working class must avoid playing down its own interests, as well as rejecting a 'workerist' position For Slovo, 'workerism' is a political tendency which *"insists on a perspective of an immediate struggle for socialism"* (Slovo, p 1)

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[28] No publication date available See The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution by Joe Slovo An Umsebenzi Discussion Pamphlet Publish by the South African Communist Party

In his biography of Liam Mellows, C Desmond Greaves presents three contending principles which have been enunciated by those who both support and oppose Irish national sovereignty and 'democratic advance' (Greaves,1971) The first set of principles, dating from the period of the United Irishmen, is as follows

> (i) *The unity of the Irish People, irrespective of religious belief, around the demands of the most numerous exploited classes For the greater part of the nineteenth century these were the peasants and landless men, later the proletariat*
> (ii) *Mutual solidarity with the forces of democracy in Britain- at first the radicals, then the Chartists, finally the socialists*
> (iii) *Orientation towards those countries which stood in the van of political progress- for the most of the period France and the United States, later Soviet Union*

The opposing principles of 'imperial domination' are

> (i) *The maintenance of an economic garrison class in Ireland able to attract the support of a proportion of the population*
> (ii) *The encouragement among the British people of chauvinism directed against both Irish national aspirations and the persons of Irish immigrants in Britain*
> (iii) *The systematic isolation of Ireland from international contact and exchange, especially from countries undergoing progressive developments* (Greaves, 1971 8)

Greaves's analysis of *"The Irish Revolution"* is in line with James Connolly's formulation of 'reconquest', an analysis which Greaves sums up as *"the total process of replacing imperialist property relations by those of Irish democracy"* and which goes to the heart of what constitutes the Irish 'national democratic revolution' (Greaves, 1971 7) The significance of Greaves's political analysis and Slovo's conceptualisation of the NDR is that both define class and national questions in democratic terms In addition, both raise the possibility of class alliances in opposition to 'imperial domination' or, to put in contemporary parlance, international neo-liberal capitalism Greaves's and Slovo's analyses present political visions which are unifying, internationalist, non-sectarian and progressive, albeit open to negotiation But if Williams's, Greaves's and Slovo's analyses combine anti-colonialism/ imperialism and anti-racism, based on their immediate writing they omit any reference to women's oppression in their analyses With the growth of the women's movement and the emergence of 'identity politics', restricting the NDR to its class components alone is exclusivist

An interesting representation of the interplay between nationality, gender and social class within the Irish context is the film *Ann Devlin* (1984) directed by Pat Murphy In Murphy's cinematic representation, which revolves around the Robert Emmet led rebellion of 1803, it can be argued that Ann Devlin (whose role is central to the film) and the Belfast Protestant weaver James Hope, represented the early articulation of gender and social class emancipation, respectively In applying a NDR interpretation to Ann Devlin the democratic questions of gender and social class are seen as crucial to an understanding of Irish society in the years following the 1798 Rebellion [29]

In pursuing a NDR conceptualisation, I am conscious that political analysis is best conducted as a collective project As Georg Lukacs put it in the context of 'totality', *"The individual can never become the measure of all things"* (cited in Meszaros, 1995 309) For those involved in the complex task of formulating an oppositional strategy based on a NDR analysis, the writings of Marx (and Engels) remain a veritable treasure trove irrespective of any attempts to bury their writings as some obsolete 'grand narrative' However, such 'texts' must, as Anthony Wilden puts it, be *"re-read and re-incorporated into the critical discourse of each succeeding generation"* (Wilden, 1984 xxi) Such a 're-reading' and imaginative incorporation must also contain a critical understanding on the interplay between social class, nationality and gender With those provisos, I will continue

2.6. Developing a Theoretical and Methodological Research Framework.

David Harvey (1989) argues that it takes *"a properly dynamic conception of both theory and historical materialism"* to comprehend specific shifts in the cultural, economic, political, temporal and spatial domains that have occurred across several continents since the late 1970s He then goes on to single out what for him are the four

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[29] My understanding of the concept of the 'national democratic revolution' have also been influenced by the political analysis of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) and the Mexican Zapatista Army of National Liberation, whose Internet web site has information on the concept

"areas of greatest development" in relation to *"both theory and historical materialism"* (Harvey, 1989 355) [30]

As a radical geographer with an ability to accept and disregard aspects of Marxism, Harvey builds on Marx's description of capital circulation in <u>Grundrisse</u> as being the *'annihilation of space by time'* (Marx, 1973 524) He is also probably aware of, although perhaps reluctant to quote, Joseph Stalin's linking of geography to historical materialism (cited in Franklin, 1973) Not only is Harvey overhauling the concept of historical materialism, he is bold enough to suggest that *"A renewal of historical-geographical materialism can indeed promote adherence to a new version of the Enlightenment project"* (Harvey, 1989 359) While personally open to critiques of the 'Enlightenment project', I still tend to agree with Harvey's and Marshall Berman's (1991) contention that Marx was embedded in the tradition of the Enlightenment So too is the Irish revolutionary tradition which commences with the United Irish Movement But in supporting a *"a new version of the Enlightenment project"* it can never be forgotten that the 'Enlightenment project' has been associated with colonialism, famine, genocide, cruelty, empire, eurocentrism and patriarchal oppression, and so 'new versions' must be gingerly constructed with inbuilt safeguards

Having introduced Harvey's inclusive concept of 'historical-geographic materialism' with its feminist reworking in Chapter One, I will now elaborate upon it and assess its suitability as a theoretical tool for the present thesis Starting out from Marx's coupling of the base/superstructure to the totality of the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, I find Harvey's concept of 'historical-dialectical materialism' both challenging and practical in that it counteracts much of the idealism/obscurantism of contemporary postmodern cultural analysis By the inclusion *of "difference and 'otherness"*, Harvey links class politics to that of race, gender and religion in a way that suggests an overcoming of divisiveness and perhaps a lifting of an unnecessary burden thrust upon or embraced by those associated with 'class politics'

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[30] See Appendix C for David Harvey's exposition of these four points These ought to be read before proceeding

As for the *"production of images and discourse"*, Harvey sees their role as crucial to the *"reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order"* which he links directly to *"aesthetic and cultural practices"* Such an inclusion makes his theoretical framework even more suitable to the current research Harvey's virtually exclusive focus on art and artifacts can, according to Peter Jackson, be broadened to take account of Raymond Williams's understanding of culture as 'a whole way of life' (Jackson, 1993 208)

In fusing his understanding of 'time and space' with the concept of 'historical materialism', David Harvey takes account of the *"geopolitics of capitalism"*, thereby providing a critical analysis of spatial relations, the workings of transnational corporations and the operation of transnational media and cultural industries Since his explorations on 'space-time compression' in The Conditions of Postmodernity (1989) David Harvey has returned to examine the *"shifting relations between space and place"*, and to question the reasons why the *"elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather that less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication"* (Harvey,1993 4) Having discussed the generic and metaphorical aspects of the term 'place', Harvey makes the point that it is or can be both a basis of *"progressive political mobilisation and reactionary exclusionary politics"* (Harvey, 1993 4) Such insights can inform a nuanced understanding of the spatial-cultural aspect of Dublin city life and [working class] 'community' as the potential site of *"progressive political mobilisation"* (Harvey, 1993 4)

Explaining the social construction of place under capitalism, Harvey links capital accumulation/export to 'difference'/ 'others' and reveals how both are produced in space through the simple logic of uneven capital investment and a proliferating geographical division of labour [31] Having stated that *"The history of capitalism is punctured by intense phases of spatial reorganisation"*, he goes on to list the reasons why, since the early 1970s, *"place has become more rather that less important"* Those reasons are as follows

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[31] See Dermot Bolger's play *High Germany* staged on platform 4 of a Hamburg train station as an example of the working class component of the Irish diaspora Dermot Bolger A Dublin Quartet (1992)

(ı) With capital restructuring secure areas cease to be so

An example of this phenomenon in the Irish context is that which transpired in the dockland area of Dublin following the introduction of containerisation during the late 1960s and 1970s The re-location of companies to suburban industrial estates resulted in the loss of secure employment for those of the locality, and a general deterioration of resources and amenities for the working class community

(ıı) With a greater mobility of capital profitable locations become more attractive

Probably the best example of this scenario in the Irish case is the changing fortunes of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) ı e the contrast between the IDA's successes in the 1960s and early 1970s in attracting overseas investment Then having lost out to more 'attractive' national investment locations during the 1980s a resurgence, largely based on inward investment in the new information technologies, occurred from the mid 1990s (O'Hearn,1998)

(ııı) The attraction of a *"particular mix of physical and social infrastructure"* to multinational capital

In the Irish case this relationship can be seen in the way that cultural, heritage and tourist developments have been fostered to differentiate Ireland as an investment location and as a holiday destination (Harvey, 1993 7-8) [32]

Harvey's conceptualisation of 'historical-geographic materialism' can also be integrated with Anthony Wilden's perspective on 'land', 'labour', and 'capital' According to Wilden, *"land (photosynthesis) stands for our life-support system, the biosphere, and capital can be produced only by the creative capacity of human beings"* (Wilden, 1984 xxxıv-xxxv) By linking history (time) to that of geography (space) Harvey/ Cockburn(1983) open up the possibility of incorporating natural heritage into a socialist-feminist methodology that is ecologically informed

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[32] See Luke Gibbon's "Coming out of Hibernation ? The Myth of Modernisation in Culture" in Transformations in Irish Culture(1996) Critical Conditions Field Day Essays Cork University Press in association with Field Day Cork

2.7. Conclusions.

In this chapter I have reviewed a series of writings on working class culture and the processes involved in the formation of individual/collective identities I have done so in terms of relations to production, reproduction of life, cultural consumption, spatial relations, cultural nationalism, nationality and religion Besides stressing the relational aspect of class, culture, ideology and identity, I have implied that such relationships are best understood in terms of relationships of power Having highlighted the marginalisation of Dublin working class culture within the project of cultural nationalism, the impact of the religious, cultural and ideological aspects of the Catholic Church on the Dublin working class was revealed Having traced an increasingly broader, more democratic conception of the term 'culture', the contribution of cultural studies, fictional writing, labour history and Marxism to an understanding of working class culture was critically examined

Having made the point that Marx's extract from "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (1976A)[33] was essential to an understanding of what has become known as the 'base/superstructure' model, I highlighted its relation to Marx's concept of 'totality' Reading the extract in terms of 'historical materialism', it was argued that the metaphor provided the basis of Marx's understanding of 'social class', 'class struggle', 'class consciousness' and totality

While privileging the role of 'production' and 'reproduction of life' in the formation of both working class men and women's cultural identities, I sought to ground a cultural materialist analysis within a 'totality' The concept of totality opens a path to an understanding of economic, cultural, ecological, social and political interconnectedness, as is so richly developed in the writings of Raymond Williams and others mentioned in the course of this chapter. As a conceptual framework it can accommodate the multiple narratives of the Dublin working class experience, ranging from the economic to the spiritual, from the cultural to the sexual Not only does it present the researcher with the challenge of capturing the 'sensibility' of a Dublin working class 'whole way of life', but points the way for 'wo/men' to be fulfilled, to develop their full human potential That process of recovery is best pursued in the context of the NDR, which, if applied, has the

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[33] See Appendix A

potential to uproot the condition that gave rise to the much vaunted de-centered,

fragmented subject that is frequently favoured in postmodernist, post-structuralist

thinking By refusing to believe that any concept of totality will ever fully equate with

the actualities of social relationships, and by employing a FHGM mode of analysis, the

dangers of the concept producing fixed or rigid interpretations is lessened

Now that the big picture has been presented, the writer will move into the foyer to meet

the media audience, so to speak, and elaborate on the methodology to be employed in

investigating how the interactive relationship between media audience and

cinema/television contributes to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity

Chapter Three

TOWARDS TOTALITY:
AN INCLUSIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1. Introduction.

The task of researching any aspect of Dublin working class culture is challenging, especially given the paucity of written material on the subject Indeed that very lack is a confirmation of the marginalisation of the (Dublin) working class within Irish society In building on that which exists and compensating for the lack, care must be taken in choosing the most appropriate methodologies If Chapter Two represented the 'big picture' in terms of theoretical writings on working class culture and identity, what is now required at the foyer level are methodologies which can most effectively tease out how the encounter with cinema/television contributes to the formation of Dublin working class cultural identity

A number of quantitative and qualitative methodologies are available to the would-be researcher investigating consumption patterns, uses, gratifications and meanings derived from film, television and other domestic media technologies Based on personal experience I believe that a combination of methodologies i e oral history, audience measurement, ethnographic interviewing and time-use diaries are most suitable in meeting the needs of the present research

Oral history is a particularly useful method of recording the memories of cinema-goers, particularly when many years have elapsed since the experience has occurred Cinema patrons from the pre 1960s era have only a memory of the experience and no tangible consumer product after paying their money at the box office Oral history is, therefore, an ideal methodology. Furthermore, the focus on memory dovetails with questions of cultural identity, as the process of remembering the past is *"crucial to our sense of identity"* (Lowenthal, 1988 194/197) and *"our sense of self"* (Thompson, 1989.159) According to David Lusted oral history has particular relevance to working class culture.

> *"For working class communities oral history becomes crucial*
> *in a popular memory which must bear witness through stories of*
> *communal traditions and practices And, within that popular*

> *memory, sentiment is the affective agency which works to bind listeners into a common community and class memory"* (Lusted,1988:186-187).

In Chapter One reference was made to the organic link between my MA and the current research project. As part of an on-going analysis of the role of media consumption in the construction of cultural identity among Dublin working class audiences, data from my earlier research will be re-visited Chapter Seven, with the main focus on material which has hitherto not been reported upon.[1]

This chapter opens with a critical elaboration of oral history in order to reveal its suitability as a research methodology in retrospective cinema audience research. This will be done in terms of the scope of Irish urban-based oral history work, rooted in the tradition of Irish folklore dating back the 1920s. My understanding of ethnographic interviewing, audience measurement and time-use diaries in the context of contemporary television research will also be presented. In sub-sections 4 and 5, the stages involved in pursuing my thesis will be outlined. Throughout the chapter I aim to remain true to the spirit of totality as outlined in Chapter Two.

3.2. Oral History: A Methodology for Collecting Memories.

Paul Thompson (1989) lists the range of oral history's subject matter as covering economic, labour, women, family, subculture and black histories. He also refers to its use in urban and rural social history, as well the history of immigration and colonialism (Thompson, 1989). Of particular significance to the present research is a collection of twenty-six interviews conducted by Margaret O'Brien and Allen Eyeless with individuals who attended and/or worked in the cinemas of south London between the 1920s and 1960s (O'Brien & Eyles,1993).[2] They include reminiscences of children's Saturday morning screenings, the war years, cinema architecture, favourite movies and genres as well as the experience of those who worked in cinemas. The potential of oral history in 'bringing to life' and recording memories of

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[1] Chapter Seven contains a critical examination of the families viewing of television 'soaps', sports and comedy programming. The chapter includes a retrospective interpretation of the key findings of phase one of my research, i.e. my MA research project. In Chapter Eight the examination is further extended to include programme material deemed worthy of video recording by family members and their choice of rented videos. Chapter Eight will also investigate the use of computer games by the ten families.

participation in popular culture is highlighted by one of the interviewees. Len English, a school boy panel member of the Mass Observation project during the 1940s and 50s in Britain, recalled the project's pioneering role in

> *"trying to get at what real people did and thought and felt.*
> *Cinema was the centre of this- it was everywhere, in the back*
> *streets and everywhere else. It was the pop culture in those*
> *days"* (cited in O'Brien & Eyles, 1993:38).

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), some of whose writing on 'culture' were addressed in (2.3), also investigated the relationship between popular memory and oral history. That research was mainly undertaken by the Popular Memory Group (PMG) which met during 1979-80 as an integral part of the CCCS. The PMG's research went beyond academic history writing to take account of autobiography and community based *"amateur"* history associated with the British-based History Workshop movement.

Rooted in the Cultural Studies tradition and wider theoretical debates, the PMG investigated the exhortatory potential of history and its usefulness in understanding aspects of contemporary Britain. But recovering the past of the British Labour Party or the struggles of the *"male, white sectors of the working class"* in terms of a *"socialist popular memory"* was not sufficient for the PMG. What was required was an inclusion of women and ethnic histories in a *"newly constructed enterprise"* otherwise nostalgia would *"merely reproduce conservatism"*
(Johnson et al, 1982:214-215).

In defining popular memory as *"as an object of study"* and *"a dimension of political practice"*, the PMG distinguished between private and public memory (Johnson et al, 1982:209). As part of that 'practice' they argued that each and every way in which *"a sense of the past is constructed"* must be taken into account. (Johnson et al, 1982:210) Private memory had its own set of representations which include *"letters, diaries, photograph albums and collections of things with past associations"* (Johnson et al, 1982:210). As for public memory they listed education, museums etc as forms of public representations adding that *"of all the parts of the historical apparatus the electronic media are perhaps the most compelling and ubiquitous"*.

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[2] The closest parallel to this work in the Irish context is Stephanie Mc Bride and Roddy Flynn's Here's Looking at You: Ireland Goes to the Pictures Wolfhound Press. Dublin 1996.

On that point, they write that both working class people and women have been *"robbed of access to the means of publicity"* (Johnson et al, 1982:209). Besides considering memory as a *"past-present relation",* they also took account of its hegemonic nature, i.e. dominant and subordinate forms of memory (Johnson et al, 1982:211).

For those who favoured an *"active process of the political engagement" as* opposed to the *"preservative approach"* of professional historians, the PMG suggested that:

> *"an active mutual incitement to rethink experiences and understandings, to struggle to see the world differently, to go beyond existing social relations, to see that, under other arrangements, personal problems might become collective solutions".* [their emphasis] (Johnson et al, 1982: 243).

In a critique of Paul Thompson's oral history methodology, the PMG make the point that Thompson reduces the relationship between the past and the present to a question of *"unreliability of memory",* and a 'passive' memory that is unearthed by means of *"appropriate questioning"* (Johnson et al, 1982:241). In cautioning against treating individuals as untapped resources, members of the PMG also warn against exploitative methods of research which benefit neither interviewee nor interviewer. Furthermore, they argue that oral history, like all history, is *"influenced by discourses and experiences in the present"* (Johnson et al, 1982:243).

According to the PMG, group memory is a *"profoundly complicated construction and a very active process"* where past events are *"worked and reworked"* (Johnson et al, 1982:243). Along similar lines Margaret O'Brian and Allen Eyles (1993) state that *"Recording memories-that is telling stories about the past from the vantage point of the present- is always to some extent an imaginative reconstruction"* (O'Brien & Eyles, 1993:7).

The importance of memory and remembrance as a form of political practice was also of interest to Herbert Marcuse, whose approach to the subject, according to Martin Jay, hinged on Georg Lukacs's concept of reification (as discussed in Chapter Two). If for Marcuse *"All reification is a forgetting",* then remembrance could become a form of de-reification of (capitalist) relations of production (Jay, 1988:34). By linking memory to the process of reification, Marcuse opened up the act of recollection to a

forward-looking notion of de-reification, that can also be an expression of class-consciousness. In paraphrasing Marcuse, Jay makes the point that remembrance must:

> *"always retain its demystifying critical impulse bearing sober witness to the sufferings of the past, even as it offers up images of <u>utopian fulfilment</u> as models for the future"* [my emphasis] (Jay,1988:41).

So, bearing the foregoing insights in mind I will now proceed with a brief review of some Dublin-based folklore/oral history projects. I do so in the belief that folklore/oral history which focuses on the Dublin working class can contribute to a collective sense of class history and consciousness. While Ireland possesses a rich folklore and a strong tradition of folklore gathering, it was not until the late 1970s that members of the Department of Irish Folklore in University College Dublin turned their attention to urban Dublin and established the Urban Folklore Project (1980-81). The project included a series of recorded interviews, which ranged across geographical area and occupation in both the city and county of Dublin.[3] According to Kevin C.Kearns, the author of several oral histories of Dublin since the 1980s, the Urban Folklore Project was responsible for focusing attention *"on the validity of, and urgent need for, the study of urban oral history and urbanlore"* (Kearns,1989:67). Kearns also highlights the weaknesses of the project, which for him were partly due to *"constraints of time and funding"* (Kearns, 1989:67). The previous neglect of urban Dublin by Irish folklorists is also acknowledged by the project's director Seamas O'Cathain who states that in Dublin *"ordinary people have been largely written out of history- not to mention women"* (cited in Kearns,1989:67). This general omission is also mentioned by Kearns who states that the Gilbert Collection (housed in the Pearse Street Library) revealed:

> *"a paucity of information about the city's working classes and common people, and virtually no oral historical documentations"* (Kearns, 1989:67).

Kearns's <u>Stoneybatter: Dublin's Inner-Urban Village</u> (1989) provides a valuable contribution towards an understanding of Dublin's inner city and represents a pioneering text on the potential of oral history in recording Dublin working class cultures as a 'whole way of life'. In earlier and subsequent publications, Kearns addresses the subject of Dublin's craft workers, street culture, tenement life and

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[3] An account of the Urban Folklore Project (1980-81) is contained in Manuscript 2000 of the Department of Folklore Archive in University College Dublin.

public houses. There is no doubt that Kearns's publications provide rich insights into Dublin working class culture. He has performed a valuable task in facilitating mainly working class Dubliners to tell their stories of struggle against hardship, of laughter and anecdote in the face of good times and bad times. The lives of working class Dubliners come alive in the pages of his publications.

However, aspects of his methodology are open to criticism. For example, Kearns's use of terms such as *"probing"* and *"extraction"* bring to mind the Popular Memory Group's critique of Paul Thompson's notion of *"appropriate questioning"* vis a vis 'passive' memory. Kearns writes that *"Probing the mind and heart of a respondent is similar to an archaeologist meticulously uncovering a precious dig site"* (Kearns, 1989:68). In Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History (1994) he describes Dublin as *"a fertile ground for the extraction of oral urban lore"* (Kearns.1994: 22). As for his political interpretations, Kearns seems to accept an analysis of the 1930s Dublin whereby class distinctions caused *"no jealousy or resentment"* and where communism was rejected by the *"devoutly religious tenement population"* (Kearns, 1994:43). This analysis is supported by quotations from a member of the Irish Christian Front, an Archdeacon and a Garda. The member was Paddy Belton, a Fine Gael T.D., leading anti-communist crusader, and employer with a reputation for paying low wages. On one particular house building project Belton is reputed to have paid below the union rate, despite protests from the Irish Transport and General Worker Union (O'Riordan,1979:30-31), (Klaus,1994). By choosing to quote these sources, Kearns expresses a rather one-sided view of the effect poverty and slum housing conditions had on working class people.

Kearn's contention of *"no jealousy or resentment"* in the tenements of Dublin also ignores the fact that by 1932 at least twelve organisations had *"been suppressed after an all-out drive against left-wing influences"* (Plunkett, 1980:134). Furthermore, Kearns's suggestion that *"God had no more devoted children than the tenement poor of Dublin"* is dangerously patronising and reeks of a 'we were poor, but we were happy' sentiment which has been rejected by various Dublin working class people themselves (Kearns, 1994:43). For those who did express such sentiments it was perhaps, as Mairin Johnston puts it, *"just nature's way of suppressing the horrors of the past so that survival is possible"* (Johnston,1993:26).

Suppressing the 'horrors of the past' also involved a forgetting, a shutting out of painful memories. An example of such amnesia is the way in which personal/collective experiences of tuberculosis in Dublin slums prior to its virtual eradication was blocked out and seldom referred to by those who suffered from it or had family members who died from the disease.[4]

Probably the most sustained urban-based folklore project has been the North Inner City Folklore Project (NICFP).[5] The NICFP was established by the Alliance for Work Forum in October 1989 to gather the folklore of the Sheriff Street area, considered by the Forum to be under threat of 'redevelopment' following the establishment of the Custom House Docks Development Authority. With no formal training in either folklore or oral history methodologies, members of the project conducted 300 interviews with individuals from the working class communities located between the River Liffey and the Royal Canal. Selected extracts from these interviews subsequently appeared in seven NICFP publications. While the former importance of the docklands to the people of the area is addressed in the interviews, so too is the period after containerisation, the decline in employment opportunities and the implications of the flight of capital. Besides the inclusion of recollections of women and men working at home and in a range of occupations, the published extracts also reflect the changed economic base of the north inner city and new patterns of work. In NICFP publications the key role of domestic labour, the changing relations between men and women, along with the differences between the lives of older women and their daughters today are highlighted. In fact whole new agendas centred on topics such as welfare dependency, drugs and prison life are articulated by some of the younger interviewees who have no memory of an economically vibrant docklands or regular paid employment. Young women spoke of the need for the fathers of their children to be more involved in parenting, of lone parenthood and the need for both men and women to be informed about family planning.

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[4] See Elaine Crowley's Cowslips and Chainies: A Memoir of Dublin in the 1930s(1996) for an account of one family's experience of the hidden torment of tuberculosis. Tuberculosis was eventually tackled by an innovative medical programme initiated by Dr. Noel Browne, the Minister of Health in the 1948 Coalition Government.

[5] For a review of the North Inner City Folklore Project (NICFP) and its publications see 'Getting to the Heart of the Matter: The North Inner City Folklore Project' by Des Mc Guinness in Saothar 20, Journal of the Irish Labour History Society, 1995. The process of gathering folklore in the north inner city of Dublin continues and at the time of writing (June, 1998) is being conducted by Terry Fagan of the NICFP.

Rather than simply confining their work to preservation and archival work, the NICFP have developed a way of 'doing folklore' which is imbued with a philosophy that resists the exclusion experienced by many of those living in the north inner city In reading extracts from the project it transpires that the spatial relationships between home, work and leisure form/ed an interconnecting matrix within which the residents live/d their lives Those recollections and Jimmy Wren's <u>An Crinan Dublin A History of 13 North Inner City Streets</u> (which is also published by the NICFP), raises the importance of history and place in the construction of north inner class working class identity It is that understanding of place which Doreen Massey singles out for specific mention in her writings According to Massey the identity of places are

> *"bound up with the histories which are told of them, how those histories are told, and which history turns out to be dominant"*
> (Massey, 1995 186)

The relationship between memory and social class is yet another route towards understanding working class cultural identity In his studies of working class communities in Australia, Ian Watson uses a *"life history method"* which he bases on a combination of oral history and sociological traditions to develop an understanding of *"class memory"* This he argues is an alternative approach to grasping the nature of class identity (Watson, 1994 26-27) According to Watson *"class memory"* combines two aspects of class identity Firstly, it refers to that *"conscious positioning, in memory, of the self within a network of class relations"*, and secondly to the *"individual's memories of their labour power, of its nurturing, expenditure and withering"* whether commodified or expended in domestic labour (Watson, 1994 26-27) Such an approach is in line with the thinking which informs this thesis, i e the refusal to separate the public and private spheres by upholding a dividing line between 'production' and the 'reproduction of life'

Margaret O'Brien and Allen Eyles's (1993) oral history of individuals who attended and/or worked in the cinemas of south London between the 1920s and 1960s illuminates the range of information that can arise from the methodology of oral history (O'Brien & Eyles, 1993) What comes across most clearly in those interviews is the broad dimensions of the cinema going experience and its potential impact on human behaviour For example, one interviewee stated that *"there is more to cinema-going than seeing films There is going out at night, the sense of relaxation*

combined with a sense of fun" Another interviewee, the radio and television

personality Denis Norden, described how *"My generation learned how to be human*

beings from films", how to smoke, to dress etc (cited in O'Brien &Eyles,

1993 12/147) And Daisy Moore remembered how

> *"they came round and sprayed you with big spray to kill off all*
> *insects and fleas It was like what we use to kill the flies- it as a*
> *round thing with a plunger and a man used to come up and down*
> *the aisles"* (cited in O'Brien & Eyles, 1993 52/86)

Yet another interviewee referred to a more amorous biting encounter when

mentioning *"The big deal if you came up in a love bite Monday morning- a status*

cinema symbol" (cited in O'Brien & Eyles, 1993 52/86) O'Brien and Eyles also

included memories of those who worked in South London cinemas and their accounts

of cinema patrons For example, one staff member singled out the importance of

acknowledging the patronage of working class cinema-goers, a form of recognition

normally reserved for members of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie

> *"People had the same seats every week and sometimes it would*
> *pass from father to son, the same seat in the cinema You were*
> *expected to know them by name and greet them A big thing*
> *because in this kind of depressed area, to be greeted by your*
> *name, you were somebody - you might have a very menial job in*
> *a factory or something like that, but when you came into the*
> *cinema it was 'Hello, Mr Brown, you'll enjoy it tonight"*
> (cited in O'Brien &Eyles, 1993 106)

The same staff member also described his response to patrons leaving the cinema

after seeing a *"three-hanky movie"*

> *"They walk right past you- because they were still the dream-*
> *you didn't disturb it It's community, it's that group experience*
> *It multiplies itself if you are there with a whole cinema full of*
> *people"* (cited in O'Brien & Eyles,1993 106)

While projectionists were at one remove from the cinema-going audience, other

cinema staff members had open access to both foyer and auditorium. As such they

were in an ideal position to observe audience activity and so possessed insights which

are of value to cinema audience researchers Based on that fact alone I decided to

interview a (former) projectionist and a cinema 'sales girl' for this research project as

will be seen in the following chapter

3.3. Television Audience Research.

In the range of television audience research methodologies, audience measurement is clearly at the quantitative end of that scale while the five main traditions in communication research outlined by Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Karl Erik Rosengren (1990) tend by and large to gravitate towards the qualitative. According to Jensen and Rosengren those 'traditions' are as follows:

(i)   Effects Research;
(ii)   Uses and Gratifications research;
(iii) Literary Criticism;
(iv)   Cultural Studies;
(v)   Reception Analysis.

These traditions date from the 1940s and in exploring the complex relationship between audience and audio-visual text take account of, in various degrees, the socio-cultural rootedness of the media ensemble. Based on a broad understanding of these traditions the present research is situated in the slipstream of two divergent positions identified by David Morley in 'audience studies' since the mid-1940s period. According to Morley those divergence positions can be understood in terms of:

> *"a series of oscillations between perspectives which have
> stressed the power of the text (or message) over its audiences
> and perspectives which have stressed the barriers 'protecting'
> the audience from the potential effects of the message"*
> (Morley, 1989:16).

In the evolution of communication research the particular relationship of working class audiences to the media has been addressed by Stanley Aronowitz (1981), John Fiske and John Hartley(1985), Stuart Hall (1984a), Greg Philo (1990), Anthony Piepe (1975), David Morley (1986), the Glasgow Media Group and others. Rather than present a summary of these writings a selective approach is adopted.

Anthony Piepe's Television and the Working Class (1975) set out to analyse the relationship between the British working class and its patterns of viewing in the context of changes in Britain's class structure. Besides building on Joseph Klapper's understanding of mass communication effects as being *"indirect and [are] experienced through a complex of mediating influences"* (cited in Peipe.1975:1-4), he argued that audience research had not kept pace with work on class structure. His research identified a strengthening of the convergence between manual and white collar lifestyle and that it had expanded into cultural choice and behaviour. He also found that social patterns, especially in new housing estates,

closely resembled those of the middle class and that privatisation marked the transition between the different lifestyles (Piepe 1975 159) In that regard his findings differed from those of J H Goldthorpe (1971) whose research questioned the incorrectly named 'embourgeoisement' thesis [6] In one of his concluding remarks, Piepe stated that

> *"the political function of television has generally been to*
> *promulgate and reinforce conservative social values in a number*
> *of forms including industrial relations, race, political protest*
> *and so on"* (Piepe 1975 166)

In a subsequent publication, Piepe, along with Sammy Crouch and Miles Emerson explored the relationship of middle class, lower middle class and 'council tenants' to the mass media In the case of the middle class, their

> *"relative autonomy and self determination   contributes*
> *to a selective, differentiated symbolic environment in which*
> *there is a more cognitive and reflective use of mass media"*
> (Piepe et al 1979 165)

In contrast they believe that the relationship 'council tenants' had to television could be summed up

> *" in the word passivity, a heavy and non-selective use of*
> *television and radio, and escape from involvement in communal*
> *or national issues is expressed in their idiosyncratic taste for*
> *news, and their concentration upon alternative meanings and*
> *symbols which displace and transform the media as a possible*
> *representative of authority into a something benign, and yet total*
> *and enclosing"*(Piepe et al 1979 165)

This response was, they believed, due to their

> *"lack of autonomy and self determination, and their experience*
> *of authority as something external to them at work and in the*
> *community contributes to their pattern of media use"*
> (Piepe et al 1979 165)

In between both these social categories they placed the lower middle class and 'manual home buyers' who, they believe

> *"are subject to similar authority patterns as council tenants at*
> *work, but who nevertheless have achieved a degree of autonomy*
> *and self determination as home owners"* (Piepe et al 1979 166)

For David Morley one of the main the challenges in media research is to link

> *"differential interpretations [of media texts] back to the socio-*
> *economic structure of society, showing how members of different*
> *groups and classes, sharing different 'cultural codes', will*
> *interpret a given message differently, not just at the personal,*
> *idiosyncratic level, but in a way 'systematically related to their*
> *socio-economic position'"* [my insert] (cited in Staiger,1992 72)

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[6] As the transition is not from the working class to the bourgeoisie, the term 'em(petit)bourgeoisement thesis' is the more correct term

In meeting that challenge Morley problematises fixed notions of social class and the way in which audiences' world view is read off their social class position, a tendency associated with Anthony Piepe's research. In doing so he draws on Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau's concept of 'subject position' which questions simple causal relationships between a subject's socio-economic determinants and modes of interpretation (cited in Morley,1986). [7] While Morley's work represented a significant advance in terms of understanding the class dimension of media audiences his work now appears to be part of drift away from an inclusion of social class as a key factor in the process of media interpretation. An example of this trend is the work of Janet Staiger (1992) on media interpretation which although characterised in terms of 'historical materialism' virtually edits out the concept of social class. It is as if a legacy of over emphasis on social class requires that it be expunged to make room for other non class-based forms of (cultural) identity, rather than been juxtaposed.

In addition concerns have been expressed about at the shift in emphasis from 'effects' to 'reception' within media research. For example, having singled out the major contribution David Morley has made to media research, Greg Philo (Glasgow Media Group) goes on to state that:

> *"We must not remove from the debate the question of which interests have the most power to influence and direct the flow of information and whether such control actually makes any difference to the way in which key relationships in our society are explained and understood"* (Philo.1990:188-189). [8]

Both RTE and the advertising industry have a vested interest in knowing the behaviour of the Irish television audience and in that regard 'audience measurement' research converges with the interests of Irish consumer capitalism. Besides the quantitative and market-led research conducted by Irish TAM Ltd in conjunction with RTE, both quantitative and qualitative audience research has been commissioned by RTE. That has been conducted by communication researchers as well as the staff and postgraduate students from Irish colleges and universities.

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[7] It was in response to differing 'subject positioning' in regard to television viewing that David Morley applied specific insights from David Forgac's analysis of Ernest Laclau and Chanteal Mouffe's Hegemony and Social Strategy to his own audiences research (cited in Morley,1986:41).

[8] However, in an article entitled "Changing Paradigms in Audience Research" David Morley (1989) concludes with a call for a return to the sociological study of communication in the face of *"varieties of postmodern relativism"* and other trends in audience research.

The audience for television has changed since the launch of RTE and the audience research methods have gradually become more sophisticated Of equal importance is the discourse of television audience research itself and the questions that often go unanswered These include whether a television audience can be known, whether the working class audience has become a contemporary 'other', why no research projects have centred on 'the bourgeois audience for television', whether audience research is ever really in the viewer's interest A specific question with regard to this thesis is whether Irish based audience research has contributed to altering the continuation of negative portrayal of Irish working class people as reported by Irish media researchers such as Helena Sheehan (1987)

According to John Hartley, for those who work in television the

> "TV audience is ubiquitous, unknowable, omnipotent,
> mysterious, capricious, benign and cruel It needs constant
> propitiation, endless offerings which it may or may not deign to
> accept" (Hartley, 1992 97)

Then with an amusing turn of phrase, but with a content that is apparently quite serious and so worth quoting at length, Hartley, a researcher of media and popular culture himself, goes on to state that

> "monastic sects have arisen which are dedicated to the
> contemplation of this mighty but elusive being, erecting a
> fantastic edifice of writing, knowledges, methodologies and
> metaphors to encompass its myriad manifestations These
> learned but unworldly clerics are withdrawn from the contagion
> of everyday life behind the walls of secluded university
> campuses They are divided into various orders, like the
> medieval counter the Dominicans, Franciscans or black
> Benedictines, and like them there's intense rivalry between and
> within the sects of psychologists, social scientists, political
> economists and culturalists, not to mention ratings agencies,
> public opinion pollsters, market researchers and media analysts
> Charges of heresy are common Each sect claims privileged
> knowledge of and access to the only thing that unites them their
> belief in the existence of something than can never be observed
> directly, their faith in a being which is never present but ever-
> present, pervasive but perverse" (Hartley, 1992 97)

Throughout this dissertation the question of power relations are considered central to an understanding of the development of working class cultural formation and identity In Mary J Kelly and Barbara O'Connor's introduction to a collection of essays on Irish media audiences [9] they distinguish three dimensions of media power which the contributors to the collection address These were:

> "the relative power of audiences in their everyday engagement
> with media, the power of the media producers in selecting and

> *defining content, and the role of powerful groups in influencing*
> *media definitions of events and indeed in defining media*
> *institutions themselves"* (Kelly & O'Connor, 1997 5)

The importance of qualifying the notion of audience power with the prefix 'relative' is important given the sometimes exaggerated claims emanating from the 'reception analysis' perspectives on the nature of 'audience power' For example, Todd Gitlin is concerned that forms of 'resistance', such as the *"life-threatening political work against fascism"*, being attributed to audience responses to media and popular culture This, he believes, belittles the importance of *"democratic politics"* which he refuses to equate to 'culture' per se Culture for him is not wholly political, but *"streaked with politics"* (Gitlin,1996 336-337)

References to viewer 'resistance' and what Richard Dyer described as 'utopian sensibility' (1985) are invariably short change for the actual strategy and tactics of changing exclusivist power structures and the development of clear political 'theory of transition' to guide the way 'beyond capital' (Meszaros, 1995)

Kelly and O'Connor (1997) also refer to *"powerful groups influencing media definitions of events and indeed in defining media institutions themselves"* Furthermore, they make the important point that all media audience researchers

> *"Would situate both the production of media texts and audience*
> *response within a broader societal context which is permeated*
> *by power relations"* (Kelly and O'Connor, 1997 6)

So any notion of 'media power' existing in a vacuum and functioning independently of the power structures that pertain in contemporary patriarchal-capitalist society is misleading I would hold with the view that the leading transnational corporations are the most *"powerful groups"* in today's world and believe that many of such organisations have dwarfed the power of nation states Their concentrated ownership of media and the cultural industries mean that they possess inordinate power to shape people's consciousness on the way in which the world is perceived at the cusp of the 21th century (Morley and Robins,1995) That same international corporate power is also exploitative of working class people around the world and is the key bulwark in the continuation of patriarchal relations of oppression

What Kelly and O'Connor describe as the selective and defining power of media producers is increasingly in the hands of an Irish petit bourgeoisie. It is they, in the main, who construct the dominant discourse of Irish broadcasting, while the bourgeoisie recede into the background While that ethos tends to be the norm, representations of working men, women

and children are, by and large, those who are engaged in criminal activities or are deemed as the 'poor'. The message is clear: live out your life behind a series of real and symbolic 'keep out' signs which are maintained by an Irish bourgeoisie with the collusion of petit bourgeois gatekeepers. Irrespective of how well intentioned middle class professionals are in their dealings with working class people, unless their practice is one of working in solidarity to take the power, it effectively perpetuates exploitation/oppression.

Against that background I embarked on a television audience research with ten families from the predominantly working class suburb of Coolock [10] in north Dublin. I did so in order to explore specific aspects of their relationship to television. In the process of choosing the ten families, a number of variables were decided upon so that they would be broadly representative of the Coolock area. These included: engagement in waged or unwaged labour; employed/unemployed; employed locally or not; shift or non-shift worker; rented or purchased accommodation; marital status; levels of education, literacy; geographical areas within Coolock; age; union/ management participation; video ownership; telephone; party political affiliations. The selection process was also based on discussions with residents of the area as well as those working professionally in the areas of education, the library service, literacy, lone parenthood and assisting the unemployment to find work. It was through such individuals that introductions to the ten families were made. None of the family members were previously known to me, except in one case where I had previously met one of the parents socially on one occasion. Several introductions were made to families who did not participate in the project. The reasons included lack of interest, the arrival of a new baby and a sudden death in the family. It was also decided not to include a family whose father had stood as an independent candidate in an earlier local election. The final choice of the ten families is listed in Appendix F.[11]

Due to the fact that television viewing mainly occurs in a domestic/private context and as such is closely related to the personal lives of individuals, fictional names for the participants were used. While the process of quantifying time use and programme/ channel preferences was relatively straight forward, selecting and editing interview

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10 Coolock is a mainly working class suburb in north Dublin. It is approximately six miles from the city centre and is bordered by the Airport dual carriageway and the Malahide Road. It has a population of approximately 25,000 people and its focal point is the Northside Shopping Centre.

11 Additional information on the selection process is presented in my MA (McGuinness, 1993).

extracts was more problematic given the wide range of responses to interview questions For that reason the guiding principle was to select the most representative interview extracts, which best articulated the dominant trends and which were not taken out of context Extracts that expressed interesting and/or divergent points of view were also included That practice has been maintained in the present research

Phase one of my own research concluded that Irish television programme makers have had difficulties in coming to grips with the Dublin working class experience and that its portrayal was under and inadequately represented on Irish television It also suggested that knowledge of the preferences, sensibilities and opinions of that section of the national audience was essential if that neglect was to be counteracted While some excellent research has been conducted on media representations of Dublin working class culture, there remains a dearth of analysis on the Dublin working class audience for cinema and television [12]

In the process of investigating how the encounter between Dublin working class audiences and the big and small screens contributes to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity, I will be drawing on the research methodologies mentioned earlier in the chapter In undertaking that task I am conscious that the relationship to the media is but one of many contributing to the construction of cultural identity

3.4. Research Stages.

While it might be advantageous to the reader to have a record of ordered, methodical stages through which the current research was conducted, the truth is different in that the project has been more akin to a personal voyage of discovery Having 'worked with' the ten families who participated in phase one, I was confronted with the challenge of linking the world of academic research to the wider socio-cultural life of working class Dubliners in a way that captured the diversity and richness of that cultural identity I wanted to do so in a way which recognised that class identity, however problematic, also comprises multiple identities within its fold

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[12]The publication of <u>Media Audiences in Ireland</u> (1997) by Mary J Kelly and Barbara O'Connor has significantly altered the balance in that regard

Having completed the M.A. research, I realised that the issue of working class identity formation vis a vis television viewing was a far more complex research question than previously considered. As part of that realisation I came to believe that in order to understand working class cultural identity, a theoretical narrative which took account of the economic (production/ reproduction), gender, historical and spatial dimensions of the Dublin working class was required. By focusing almost exclusively on cultural consumption in the M.A., I had neglected, by and large, to take into account questions of cultural production or cultural 'self-activity,' which I now believe to be a crucial part of a working class 'way of life'. I also had to extend my theoretical narrative to include the memory collecting methodology of oral history so that I could investigate how the processes of working class cultural consumption in the past related to cultural identity. Combined, those aspects had to be integrated into what was becoming a cumbersome theoretical trellis. But having a tidy theoretical framework or model that cossets and diminishes the working class experience is the poorer option.

In thinking through the need to have a mode of interpretation that could adequately encompass the many dimensions of working class life, I finally decided on a 'feminist historical-geographical materialist' analysis (FHGM). My hope in operating with such a multi-storey theoretical narrative is that I will avoid the pitfalls associated with determinant/determined models of interpretation that can arise from a traditional class-against-class analyses, and with communication research methodologies that cut off the actors from the totality of their socio-economic and cultural context.

Now to the research stages themselves. The preparatory stage, as in most post-graduate research projects, involved a critical reading of the relevant texts and developing a preliminary list of interview themes/topics.[13] Given the continuity of the research, that was partly predetermined. As a result I was in a position to start interviewing those with a knowledge of Dublin music halls and experience of cinema going, guided by the knowledge acquired in phase one of the research. Establishing contacts with the interviewees developed on several fronts. For example, a decision to interview Peter Cowap, who from the 1940s screened and shot films in the North Wall area of Dublin, arose from a previous meeting during my participation in the

North Inner City Folklore Project (NICFP) 1989-1990 Since leaving the project I had maintained contact with Peter [14] So too with Tom Byrne, a former B & I docker whom I had interviewed for the NICFP Simply chatting to Paddy Duffy and Maureen Flavin in Collectors Corner, a second-hand book and music shop on Capel Street, I discovered their interest in cinema going back prior to the 1960s So they in turn agreed to be interviewed As with most research the chance factor comes into play For example, on a visit to the Gilbert Collection in Pearse Street library to gather references on Dublin music hall and early cinema audiences, resulted in my being introduced to Matthew Murtagh by one of the library staff Matthew, who is co-author (and the principal researcher) of Infinite Variety Dan Lowrey's Music Hall 1979-97 was extremely helpful and while I have continued to be in touch with him no formal interview took place One of our conversations occurred on the pavement of Aston Quay (15/9/94) and while seemingly lacking in academic gravitas was very valuable

With the help of Dr Bairbre O'Fhloinn of the Folklore Department (University College Dublin), I consulted the manuscripts of the Urban (Dublin) Folklore Project and discovered several extracts on cinema going in Dublin, which I have incorporated within Chapter Five Based on the experience of my visit, the archive was less fruitful than I had previously imagined I also perused the Irish Labour History Society (ILHS) archive with the assistance of Jennifer Hunter Francis Devine, a stalwart of the ILHS, was very encouraging in his help and advice Jack Gannon, Francis's work colleague at SIPTU's Education and Training Department, was also generous of his time Jack lent me books and explained aspects of workers education in Dublin I have drawn on his information in both Chapters Four and Six

In December 1994 I attended the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union's (SIPTU) Broadcasting Branch's retired members Christmas party, on foot of an invitation from the Branch's then clerical secretary, Frances O'Brien, whom I met when I visited SIPTU's offices in Parnell Square At the party I met retired cinema usher Herbie Donnelly (formerly of the Savoy Cinema) and Mick McEvoy (former ITGWU Branch Secretary), both of whom provided me with further insights into the

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[13] See Appendix D for cinema Interview Schedule

Dublin cinema business Frances O'Brien also suggested I contact Alan Collinge, who had worked in Dublin cinemas from the age of fourteen to eighty and who, like his father before him was a projectionist. Extracts of the interview with Alan are included in Chapter Five

Other contacts were made at Connolly Books, the bookshop of the Communist Party of Ireland. These members of the staff/party (particularly Eugene McCartan) were always forthcoming with suggestions of whom I might talk to and relevant literature on Dublin working class culture

Interviewing individuals is to all intents a process which requires common sense in that it involves a relationship of interest and respect While ideally a quiet room with only the interviewer and interviewee present is preferable, that is not always possible For example, when my first 'formal' interview began with Paddy Duffy and Maureen Flavin it was 8 p m in the relatively quiet bar of the Artane Beaumont Family Recreation Centre, but by closing time it had become very noisy and what had been recorded was, to say the least, difficult to interpret when played back¹ But having said that, during subsequent visits to their book/music shop, points were clarified and further discussed within general day to day banter Given that memory is not *"unilinear"* as John Berger puts it, but *"works radially, that is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event"*, I would now support the view that the one off formal interview is limited and that follow up contacts and in some cases making interview drafts available to interviewees for further clarification is preferable (Berger,1980 60) Much of this follow up research was conducted by telephone

While it was my intention, prior to commencing my research, to focus almost exclusively on the relationship between the working class cinema audience and that which appears on the cinema screen However, I discovered shortly after I started investigating the available relevant documentation and conducting my first interviews, that that would not be possible This was mainly due to the fact that most writings I consulted did not focus on the theme of cinema audiences Then there were the

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[14] As a small tribute to Peter, who died during the summer of 1997, I wrote "In Memory of the Movie Man", which was published in <u>Inner City News</u> (October,1997)

practical difficulties of expecting people to recall details of films they had seen many years previously Therefore I decided to expand my research focus and take in the cinema going experience as a whole and to investigate its impact on the formation of cultural identity In making that decision I was encouraged by David Morley's argument that *"there is more to the matter that the question of the film text, and that it is necessary to consider the context of viewing as much as the object of viewing"*, and that focusing on the 'film text' alone is 'inadequate' (Morley,1989 26) In supporting that contention Morley quotes Andrew Buchanan who includes the following factors in his 'context of viewing'

> *"the queue, the entrance stalls, the foyer, cash desk, stairs, corridor, entering the cinema, the gangway, the seats, the music, the lights fading, darkness, the screen which begins to glow as the silk curtains are opening"* (cited in Morley,1989 26)

In revisiting the research material which I did not report on in my M A , I found that with the new theoretical trellis the material I had gathered was open to different interpretations In that regard I have found most television audience research lacking in a comprehension of a working class 'whole way of life' In addition, I cannot accept the taken-for-grantedness of the subordinate position of the working class within the social hierarchy that is capitalist society That refusal, I hope, helps to explain my orientation towards modes of interpretation that are also modes of (revolutionary) transformation, e g Marxism and feminism

3.5. Conclusions.

In this chapter I have investigated the various ways in which the past is constructed, the reliability of memory, mediation and selection, inclusion and exclusion While focusing on the fact that the work of folklorists/oral historians is centred on remembering, the process of forgetting and silences is also be taken into account In problematising oral history as a methodology for collecting memories of cinema going, I also drew attention to my understanding of the cinema going experience as one involving more than the audience-cinema text encounter I then presented a brief account of my methodological approach in working with a contemporary audience for television and the newer educational/ entertainment home-based technologies Before commencing the substantive chapters I will now make my intentions more accessible to the reader by going through the central elements of the thesis step by

step In making the link between the lived experiences of everyday life and cultural identity for working class Dubliners, I start with the reality that is 'Dublin working class culture' in its broadest sense That is my foundation I am then faced with the challenge as to how, within that culture, the link occurs between the lived culture of every day life and personal/collective identity, values and belief systems This is where the 'Foyer Level' comes into play This is the level that the modes of interpreting (cultural) meanings derived from communication/research are brought to bear on the material I have gathered from the project participants and secondary sources Refusing to stay within the auditorium of communication/media research, I go to a third overarching level which positions the Dublin working class within the context of the Irish national democratic revolution(NDR), which I have described as Ireland's version of the 'long revolution' This (great) refusal is politically motivated by a decision not to reduce working class culture to its purely cultural aspects alone In avoiding that limiting tendency, I have relied on a mode of interpretation that I have abbreviated to FHGM At all times I have attempted to comprehend the actuality of a Dublin working class 'whole way of life' rather than trying to reduce its actuality to fit a restrictive pre-determined ideological or discursive mould

In selecting modes of interpretation which are also *modes of change* (Marxism and feminism) I wish to associate the research with an agenda of change By 'agenda of change' I mean a process which starts by re-envisioning a way in which capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression can be brought to an end within the context of an unfolding national democratic revolution Such are my aspirations and in a time where the right to 'tell one's story' is proclaimed, that is part of my story

Chapter Four

WORK, HOUSING AND LEISURE :
PART ONE (1900-1960).

4.1. Introduction.

In the Dublin of 1913, divided as it was along lines of labour and capital as never
before or since, the popular working class demand for an eight-hour day with the time
and space for cultural/recreational activity was expressed. This was evidenced by the
following chant sung by pupils of Saint Gabriel's National School:

> *Eight hours play,*
> *Eight hours sleep,*
> *And eight bob a day,*
> *I want to join, I want to join*
> *Jim Larkin's Union*
> (cited in O'Riordan, 1979:194).

In this chapter the interrelated worlds of work, housing, home life, music hall, leisure
inside/outside the home, and trade union related cultural activity are explored to
highlight their significance in the formation of Dublin working class cultural identity.
The analysis is pursued in terms of FHGM and guided by an understanding of Irish
history in terms of a NDR. Taken together, Chapters Four and Five explore and
contrast different socio-economic and cultural factors contributing to the formation of
Dublin working class cultural identity. The time frame of this and the following
chapter is 1920 to 1960. In this and subsequent chapters I will be mindful of a point
made by David Harvey, that the *"exploration of contradictions always lies at the
heart of original thinking"* (Harvey, 1989:345).

4.2. Class Politics and the Labour Movement.

In a publication presenting the employers' case in the 1913 Lock-Out, the English
journalist Arnold Wright listed the main industries in Dublin city at the time of the
industrial conflict as follows: brewing; distilling; non-alcoholic beverages; poplin;
soap; bottle making; patent manure making; boot and show manufacture; cardboard
box construction; match making; engineering; shipbuilding; biscuit baking; shipping
and railway (Wright, 1914:15-27). It is within these industries and manufacturing
enterprises that the Dublin working class had its proletarian identity confirmed and
that its men and women expended their 'labour power'. According to the 1911

Census, of the 90,000 adult males in Dublin at the time, only 10,000 were apprenticed to a trade, while the total number of 'unskilled' male workers amounted to 24,908. [1] Despite the range of employment possibilities, the lack of manufacturing industry resulted in a large section of the working population belonging to no particular trade or craft. While most trade and craft members of the Dublin proletariat had been unionised by 1900, the majority of those not in that category remained non-unionised until the formation of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in 1909.[2]

As for working class women, the total number employed in 1913 was 21,387 in trades such as dress makers, milliners, seamstresses, shirtmakers, tailoresses, and charwomen. On average, working class women earned wages half those of 'unskilled' men. [3] Because of the lack of manufacturing industry, Wright argued that it was *"inevitable"* that wages for *"a very large class of the population should be low"* due to the *"enormous surplus of absolutely unskilled labour"*[my emphasis] (Wright, 1914:36-37). Wright also argued that 'Labour' must take a *"pretty full"* share for the *"economic deterioration of Dublin"*, a view that reveals the author's political bias. Singling out the *"old trade associations"*, Wright claimed that it was they who *"drove out of existence some of the most promising of the city's industries"*. Wright also stated that while it was *"impossible to withhold sympathy from classes so depressed as these slum-dwellers of Dublin...a sort of malaise overtakes them, which renders them subject to every passing evil influence"*, thus pointing an incriminating finger at the influence of 'Larkinism', the Irish embodiment of socialism (Wright, 1914:34/37).

In opposition to such conditions and hostile attitudes the founders of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) set out in 1909 to raise the standard of living of workers, doing so in a singularly impressive manner throughout the country.

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[1] See Divided City Curriculum Development Unit. 1978. Pp 56/59.

[2] Despite an anti-recruiting campaign 12,561 Dubliners joined the British army between the years 1899 and 1913 (inclusive). This represented 87% of the number for Glasgow and exceeded those recruited in Edinburgh by 1,700 and compared favourably to the number recruited in Belfast (O'Brian,1982:245).

[3] For an account of one Dublin working class families' involvement in street trading see Don Bennett's oral history of the Reilly family (1984). Additional information on this form of work is contained in Lisa Kilbride's Dealers, Hawkers and Hucksters, Women Street Traders Resistance to the1926 Street Trading Act Unpublished MA University College Dublin. 1995.

From 1911 the Irish Women Workers Union (IWWU) set about organising women in factories, laundries, nursing, rosary bead makers and others Writing of the union's launch, Delia Larkin recorded how after a piano recital and some singing Countess Markievicz gave a speech in which she linked economic issues to the question of suffrage claiming that such advances would *"make men of you all"* (cited in Luddy, 1995 231) Hannah Sheehy Skeffington at the same meeting echoed similar sentiments Following her contribution, Jim Larkin linked the demand for good housing and clothing to that of leisure (Luddy, 1995 231) During the 1920s the number of women members of trade unions in the south was between 15-20,000 In the 1930s-40s the figure rose from 20,000 to 30,000, and by 1950 it had reached 55,000 (Daly, 1984 73-74) Besides campaigning on the standard trade union issues of wages and conditions, the IWWU also won the right of *"all factory workers to have a regular recognised tea break"* during the early 1940s (Daly, 1978 74) In the mid 1940s, after a fourteen week strike by IWWU laundry workers, a fortnight's paid holiday was won, an achievement that would eventually be enjoyed by all workers in paid employment (Daly, 1978 74)

In many respects the 1913 Dublin Lock-Out was the springboard for the 1916 Rising Based on a class analysis of those who participated in the Rising, Stein Ugelvig Larsen and Oliver Snoddy conclude that it was undertaken by *"workers in alliance with small farmers, many middle- and a few upper middle-class people"* (Larsen and Oliver Snoddy, 1973 383) While the democratic demands of the working class and women featured in that phase of the NDR, the victors were clearly the Irish bourgeoisie, as represented by the Cumann na nGaedheal government The Dublin working class had played a key role in the struggle for the Irish nation, but a hegemonic alliance of bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie social classes ensured their marginalisation in the new state Furthermore, a partitioned state strengthened Catholic Church hegemony, which adversely effected the development of a broad, inclusive, non-sectarian Irishness Both northern and southern confessional states became one of the main bulwarks in the oppression of Irish women

Political gains, which might have been achieved in the post-1916 period, were squandered by a labour leadership which had largely usurped socialism in favour of social democracy and conceded its leading role in the struggle for national

independence to petit bourgeois nationalists. Confirming the failure of the majority of the immediate post-Connolly generation of labour leaders to take the lead in the NDR, Colm Power states that by:

> *"failing to offer a single candidate in the 1918 General Election,*
> *the Irish Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress ensured*
> *that Labour was excluded from the councils of the nation and*
> *that the leadership of Ireland's fight for independence was in the*
> *hands of the petit bourgeoisie"* (Power, 1979:2).

Economic developments within the southern Irish State can be broadly identified in terms of several phases. Cumann na nGaedheal, the first governing party of the new state, adopted a policy of free trade with Britain combined with a reliance on agriculture. With the change of government in 1932, Fianna Fail embarked on a policy of economic nationalism, which found expression in measures such as the Economic War, the Manufactures Acts 1932 and 1934, and the imposition of import tariffs. [4] While the 1948-51 Coalition Government is associated with Keynesian state planning, during Fianna Fail's third period in office the conditions for an export strategy based on an 'industrialisation by invitation' was established. This economic strategy bore fruit in the 1958-73 period (Kennedy et al, 1988).

Running concurrently, but with an earlier start, James Plunkett has identified three stages in the development of Irish trade unionism. Firstly, the stage associated with legal and industrial recognition. Secondly, the stage in which the union/employer relationship dominated. And thirdly, the stage which currently prevails with unions forming an *"economic trio"* along with the employers organisations and government (Plunkett, 1980:141).

In establishing and consolidating its base among the Dublin working class during the 1930s, Fianna Fail under Eamon De Valera built on its republican support in the city. According Garret Fitzgerald (the former Fine Gael Taoiseach) the resulting party loyalty remained in place up to and including the 1980s:

> *"the newly employed industrial workers and also other workers,*
> *both urban and rural, who benefited in the 1930s from Fianna*
> *Fail's housing drive and its introduction of unemployment*
> *assistance* [introduced in 1934] *became, and remained*
> *thereafter, loyal Fianna Fail voters"* [my insert]
> (The Irish Times 6/8/1994).

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[4] In the period between the 1920s and the 1950s economic nationalism can be twinned to an 'official' cultural nationalism.

Besides providing homes for former occupants of Dublin tenements, Fianna Fail's housing drive from the 1930s also provided much needed employment for those in the building trades But if those in employment had to struggle for higher pay and better working conditions, others faced unemployment In response to high levels of unemployment in Dublin the Irish National Unemployment Movement was formed in 1926 by workers angered by the Cumann na nGaelheal Minister Patrick McGilligan's decision to deny 'dole' to those without the *"necessary unemployment stamps"* [5] Between 1930 and 1936 unemployment rose from 25,000 to 133,000 and in 1937 alone 30,000 emigrated (Swift, 1991 86) Recalling her struggle to 'make ends meet' during the 1930s, Brendan Behan's mother Kathleen stated that "If there is a heaven, it must be for working women" (Behan, 1984 97) [6]

During the early 1950s, the Unemployed Men's Association held frequent sit-downs on O'Connell Street until it was discredited by a combination of conservative interests and sections of the Catholic Church who used 'red scare' tactics directed against Irish Workers' League involvement in the association In 1957 the Unemployment Protest Committee (UPC) was formed and in April that year unemployed building worker Jack Murphy was elected to Dail Eireann in Dublin South Central However, Catholic Church inspired anti-communist influences became a major factor in his decision to resign his seat and his subsequent emigration to Canada (O'Connor, 1992 169/170-172) Interestingly, Sam Nolan, a committed communist, had been one of the prospective candidates selected by the UPC, but due to the anti-communist sentiments in the country at the time Sam decided that his candidature would damage the movement and so withdrew his name for election [7]

Besides income from wages, unemployment payments and union funds, many Dublin working people sought financial assistance or assistance in kind from charitable and self help organisations In addition, working class Dubliners also relied on pawnbrokers and moneylenders (Kearns,1994) In addition, there were charitable organisations with Catholic, Protestant and secular associations, such as the Saint

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[5] Communist Party of Ireland Outline History New Books Publications Dublin

[6] From Brian Behan's Mother of all the Behans (1984)

[7] Communist Party of Ireland Outline History New Books Publications Dublin

Vincent de Paul, Belvedere Newsboys' Club, The Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers Society (Lindsay, 1990) and the Mendicity Association, respectively (Prunty, 1998) After fifty years in existence the Liberties based Bayno closed in September 1959 *"with attendances of 7,820, 520 children between the ages of three and fifteen years"* (Johnston, 1985 94) [8] For many working class Dubliners these charitable services represented the last stop before a life of destitution

Still, charitable services did little to address the fundamental causes of poverty So too with most self-help projects An example of such organisations was The Dublin Workman's Club and its associated Total Abstinence Loan Fund, which was commonly known as the York Street Goose Club due to its Christmas raffle The club was established in 1872 and besides a library and a band, it organised outings and picnics One of its main aims was to prevent usury, i e a dependency on moneylenders and pawnbrokers Later the social aspect of the club ceased and the loan fund became its sole activity In 1997 the club still had between 700-800 members [9] In another part of the city the Westland Row Burial Society was established to alleviate the cost of burials for working class families Later the society became the Loan Fund whose main function was to give out the 'Diddley' at Christmas (MacThomais, 1988 5) [10] According to Martin Maguire, the City and County of Dublin Conservative Workingmen's Club had as one of its functions an informal *"mutual aid and benefit society"* in the years between 1883-1935 (Maguire, 1994 71)

An example of a self-help organisation which went beyond solely responding to the effects of poverty and attempted to tackle its causes, was the Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-operative Society It was founded in 1946 One of the most innovative examples of self-help activity organised in Dublin's working class communities, it ran two shops in Inchicore and Ballyfermot until they were forced to shut down due to an alliance of commercial interests and the local Catholic parish priest The latter

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[8] According to Mairin Johnston, 'silent films' featuring Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton etc were shown at the Bayno Based on interview material

[9] Based on a telephone conversation with Niall Mooney of the Workmens Club, Harrington Street

[10] The term 'Diddley' was used to describe payouts, particularly at Christmas

justified their attacks on the co-op because of the involvement of Irish Workers League (Swift, 1991:159-160). [11]

The extent of unemployment and its resulting poverty drove many young working class men into petty crime. Some found themselves detained in Industrial Schools or Mountjoy Prison after facing a legal system that was blind to the class nature of 'crime'. These 'houses of correction', to use Michel Foucault's term, were crucial to the subordination of the entire working class in that they sent a clear message of what awaited those who did not comply to bourgeois convention and regulations (Foucault,1977). For young women who committed the 'crime' of becoming pregnant outside marriage there were custodial centres such as the Magdalen asylums, which in retrospect expose patriarchal prejudice and the abuse of inmates by members of religious orders who ran such centres. [12]

Despite the suffering caused to working class families the combination of unemployment and emigration was welcomed by some of those in power. For example, in the columns of the Irish Banking Review (1958), emigration was referred to as a *"useful safety valve"*, and in an article in The Leader (Christmas, 1953), it was stated that *"if emigration were to be stopped tomorrow, conditions favourable to social revolution might easily arise"* (cited in Lee, 1989:378/374).

Socialist/communist politics in Dublin centred on what Richard Hoggart (1971) described in the British context as the 'earnest minority'. But as Hoggart states, that minority has influence beyond their numbers, not least through word of mouth and a series of radical/socialist newspapers. [13] In the case of Dublin that minority can be traced back to at least the 1790s when, according to the historian Kevin Whelan, a *"host of popular societies existed"* in which :

> *"ideals of fraternity and sociablity were blended with*
> *occupational solidarity and territoriality, but they also had a*
> *covert, and times overt, political agenda"* (Whelan, 1996:77).

[11] See Joe Deasy's article on the Inchicore-Ballyfermot Co-operative Society in Communist Party of Ireland: Outline History Dublin.

[12] Based on information in Saothar 20. Journal of the Irish Labour History Society. For an account of life in Portlaoighse Prison see I Did Penal Servitude by D83222 Metropolitan Publishing Co. Ltd. Dublin 1946.

[13] See Virginia E.Glandon's Arthur Griffith and the Advanced-Nationalist Press in Ireland, 1900-1922 for section on the labour press between 1900-1916. Published by Peter Lang, New York, Berne and Frankfurt am Main. 1985.

Having won 22 seats in the June 1927 election the Labour Party (LP) seemed, in retrospect, poised to provide clear political leadership, at least on class issues But its decision not to contest the 1918 election had damaged the party's political standing However, as John Horgan points out, there is a danger of over-emphasising the impact of that decision in the political evolution of the LP While acknowledging the resistance of the Catholic Church to the LP, Horgan adds, *"if religion was a factor, it was in alliance with other factors, such as under-development, isolation and emigration"* (Horgan, 1986 166) Futhermore, by the end of the 1920s both the LP and the trade union movement were weakened by a combination of widespread unemployment, the effects of partition, the scars of the civil war, political exclusion and internal contradictions The most notable internal contradiction occurred in 1924 when James Larkin and William O'Brien adopted opposing positions which resulted in Larkin and his associates forming the Workers Union of Ireland and O'Brien the National Labour Party According to Emmet Larkin (Larkin's biographer), on the one hand *"Larkin was convinced that trade unions were revolutionary instruments to be used on every occasion to hasten the social revolution"*, while on the other hand O'Brien took the view that trade unions were effective instruments of social change within the existing structure of society (Larkin, 1989 272) Such a distinction is significant and it is on the basis of that divide that William O'Brien became the father of present trade union politics (as opposed to Connolly and Larkin) While a key figure in the Irish labour movement, O'Brien's approach represented a virtual co-option within what amounted to a corporatist arrangement, that is a partnership between the trade union movement, the employers and the state The trade union movement would be confined to playing a brokering role within the structure of capitalism and with only vague, ill-defined aspirations towards 'socialism' to be expressed at times of labour commemorations

4.3. Working Class Housing in Dublin (1900-1960).

The issue of housing is bound up with the social and political history of the Dublin working class According to a biography of Patrick Geddes, the Scottish planner associated with the highly praised housing development in the Marino area of Dublin during the 1920s, both he and James Larkin had agreed *"that 'housing' is fundamental to the problems of labour, since the house is the central and*

fundamental fact of real wages" (Bannon, 1985 220) Appalled by the conditions [14]

he encountered in the slums of Dublin as a pediatrician during the 1920s, Dr Robert

Collis adopted a genuine humanitarian stance in the writing of a play entitled

Marrowbone Lane Collis described the city in 1925 in the following terms

> *"Here in Dublin lived two societies, one of which did not know*
> *how the other lived - did not know that 90,000 people lived in*
> *one-roomed tenements and 10,000 in dwellings condemned as*
> *medically unfit for human habitation"* (Collis,1943)

The blight of tuberculosis, which Collis also highlighted, [15] continued to take its toll,

until a combination of new medication and a medical scheme initiated by Dr Noel

Browne during his period as Minister of Health in the 1948-51 Coalition Government

led to its virtual eradication (Browne, 1986) [16]

According to Dominic Behan, slum clearance in Dublin was tackled by the Fianna Fail

government *"like a terrier to a rat"* (Behan, 1963 141) Prior to the 1960s, local

authority housing estates were primarily built to accommodate people from the city

centre of Dublin These estates were built in Marino during the 1920s, Crumlin and

Cabra in the 1940s, Artane and Ballyfermot in the 1950s

While the new suburban housing estates represented a vast improvement on living

conditions in the city centre, the process of re-location did not occur without

difficulties being experienced by those who made the move Comparing life in

Crumlin to her previous home-place in the north inner city, Kathleen Behan described

to her son Brian how in Russell Street she could get groceries put *"in the book till*

next week" and avail of second hand shops In contrast, Crumlin did not have such

facilities, and furthermore she had to walk to Dolphin's Barn to connect with the

"long, expensive tram ride into the city" as no bus service to Crumlin existed at the

time [17] In the lives of working class Dubliners such spatial dis-locations represented a

breaking up and reforming of kinship and socio-economic networks which had, in

some cases, taken generations to develop Irrespective of the welcome improvement

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[14] For details on housing conditions in Dublin in first decades of the century see Daly 1984, Johnston 1985, Wright 1914

[15] Dr Collis The Bell June 1944 Vol VIII No 3 P 216

[16] Film-makers also played their role in this anti-TB campaign Bob Monks, who worked with the National Film Institute, recalls the screening of a film on tuberculosis eradication in both schools and public halls during the post war years Based on telephone interview material with Bob Monks

[17] Brian Behan, *Mother of all the Behans* (1984 97)

in living conditions, such shifts in the living environment of thousands of working class Dubliners were a crucial factor in weakening their sense of class collectivity.

4.4   Dublin Music Halls.

At the turn of twentieth century, Dublin possessed two main music halls, the Empire Palace and the Tivoli Theatre of Varieties, which according to Joseph V O'Brien, were the *"real mecca for the masses"* (O'Brien, 1982:47). Following the first film screenings at the Star of Erin Theatre of Varieties (forerunner of the Empire Palace) on 17 April 1896, film shows became a regular feature on the bills of Dublin music hall and variety entertainment (Watters & Murtagh, 1975:165).

British music-hall, which had originally grown out of taverns, represented for Raymond Williams a direct line from the *"chaos of 18th century theatre"* to the *"mass of material now on television and in the cinemas"* (Williams, 1980b: 291). Besides representing the *"transition from folk culture to mass culture"*, the British music hall, according to Andy Medhurst, marked *"the first instance of the transformation of hitherto unregulated patterns of recreation into the profitable commodity of leisure"* (Medhurst, 1986:185,169).

That chronology has parallels with Dublin where music halls had their origins in public houses and were also the birthplace of cinema, or more precisely film screenings (Waters & Murtagh, 1975:165). But while developments in Dublin working class culture had parallels with those in Britain in terms of the changing forms of leisure activity, a different configuration existed in Ireland due to the colonial/ imperialist relationship. As Stephen Watt put it, *"Colonialism led to Dublin's status as a cultural satellite of the London stage"* (Watt, 1991:45).

According to Williams, the suburban British working class found *"their most authoritative voice"* in musical hall performers such as Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd (Williams, 1980b: 291). Both celebrities performed in Dublin for six nights during June 1894 to great acclaim (Watters & Murtagh, 1975:147). Gareth Stedman Jones includes Leno and Lloyd in a list of music hall performers who came from poor London working class backgrounds and from the mid 1880s sang about *"the*

occupations, food, drink, holidays, romances, marriages and misfortunes of the back streets" in a *"fatalistic"* manner (Stedman Jones, 1982 115)

Joseph V O'Brien describes how at the turn of the century aspects of a *"higher culture impinged little on the mass of ordinary working class citizens"*, and that one of the few public places of leisure for working class Dubliners, besides public houses, were the city's two music halls (O'Brien 1982 60/45) In general O'Brien records that the city had insufficient *"indoor and outdoor amusement for its people"* as against other European cities He supports that claim by quoting the City Coroner who had a Public Health Inquiry in 1900 argued that public houses were *"the one meeting place for the poor"* (O'Brien 1982 45)

The extent to which music hall idiom had become part of Dublin popular culture in the closing years of the nineteenth century can be gauged by the fact that few political events passed without being captured in popular rhyme, which, according to C Desmond Greaves, were usually inspired by *"music-hall ditties"* that *"jostled"* with both traditional airs and street songs (Greaves, 1980 16) The tradition of street ballad singers in Dublin is probably best represented in the life of Michael Moran, alias 'Zozimus' (1794 -1846), the blind 'rhymer and reciter'

Dublin music halls grew out of the tradition of variety entertainment in the city's public houses and hotels, where stages were erected with a number of wooden planks placed over barrels to raise the entertainers above the heads of their audience (Giltinan, 1941) During the nineteenth century some Dublin public houses had *"served as the poor man's music hall"*, with singing comedians being the most popular entertainers (Krause, 1967 241-242)

At the turn of the century the cheapest seats in Dublin music halls cost *"little more than the cost of a pint of porter or packet of cigarettes"*, ensuring that access was within the means of most Dublin working class adults in paid employment (O'Brien, 1982 47) Translated into money terms, access to the gallery cost 4d in the Empire Palace, while similar seats in The Tivoli cost 2d These prices pertained from the turn of the century to the First World War [18] According to Eugene Watters and Matthew

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[18] Based on interview material with Matthew Murtagh

Murtagh, authors of a history of the Empire Palace, besides the *"top hats and the solid money - members of society"*, students from Trinity College, and soldiers from the Dublin garrison, the social composition of the audience on the opening night of 22 December 1879 also included

> *"dockers, draymen, railwaymen, clerks, shopboys-Dubliners of all kinds- some few with their wives or sweethearts, all spruced up for the night and looking forward to a drink, a song and a bit of amusement"* (Watters & Murtagh, 1975 22)

Matthew Murtagh, based on conversations with Charlie Jones, Manager of the Tivoli between 1901 and 1924, recalls that men from Dublin coal yards with partially blackened faces attended the 'early doors' (6 45 p m) As for the second show, the rush to gain entry frequently ended up in fisticuffs, despite Jones's attempts to organise an orderly queue among the men.[19] Murtagh also confirmed that few working class women attended Dublin music halls, particularly the Tivoli (and its predecessor which was called the Lyric prior to 1901), as it was a popular haunt for soldiers of the Dublin garrison and as such was also a venue frequented by Dublin prostitutes [20]

In her investigation of the influence of music-hall songs on James Joyce's writings Cheri Herr writes that for those working class Dubliners who could afford to visit music halls it was an

> *"escape from the pressures of the working environment and the prospect of a life of unremitting hard labour"*
> (Herr, 1986 195-196)

Communality was also expressed in the manner in which the audience sang along during the choruses. According to Herr, working class members of the audience openly expressed both approval and disapproval of the show Furthermore

> *"If at their daily tasks these men and women were serfs, in the halls they were lords, often returning to the weak artiste the contempt they suffered on the job"*
> (Herr, 1986 196)

The resentment of working class members of the audience was frequently vented on the what Herr describes as the *"social system"* or the *"well-to-do"* by way of jeers

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[19] In Kevin C Kearns (1994) oral histories of Dublin tenement life, brawls and fisticuffs take on a sporting and entertainment aspect That 'tradition', so to speak, is captured in the Rag Man's Ball popularised by Frank Harte <u>Dublin Street Songs</u> Topic Records Ltd London 1989

[20] Based on interview material with Matthew Murtagh

and jibes directed at the Chairman (Herr, 1986:197-198). [21] The process of restructuring, refurbishing and renaming of the Star of Erin to the Empire Palace in 1897 was partly an attempt to curtail such forms of expressions. Under its new assistant manager, H.E.Moss, a toning down of the *"free-and-easy rowdyism of sing-songs"* by those who frequented the cheaper seats in the hall was encouraged (Watters & Murtagh, 1975:171-172). [22] That was achieved by relocating the predominantly working class section of the audience from the body of the hall to the gallery just below the ceiling. That effectively ended the intimacy between the working class audience and actors on the stage. Not only was that section of the audience restricted by a subtle dampening of spirits and a physical relocation, but according to Matthew Murtagh, a metal screen was erected at the balcony's edge to prevent orange pips and peels etc. been thrown at the 'well-to-dos' below, the preferred clientele cultivated by the new owners. [23]

In addressing the hegemonic role of music hall in terms of the Dublin working class, Herr traces the *"apparent gradual elimination of social criticism"* in music hall performances which she allies to the *"increased exploitation of the worker"* (Herr, 1986:204). She also states that:

> *"The English exported music hall stars to increase profits; Irish entrepreneurs hired them to make money; the ideological practices implicit in the music hall songs emanated from the economic situation of an industrialised foreign country"* (Herr, 1986:204).

Part of the reason Herr gives for the *"apparent gradual elimination of social criticism"* is that Dan Lowery, the Star of Erin's proprietor, needed to develop a program of entertainment with a cross class appeal as the number and disposable income of the Dublin working class audience alone could not maintain his enterprise on a profitable basis.

If Dublin music hall entertainment had to be adapted to the tastes of a cross-class audience, it still did not meet with the approval of all. For example, opposition to

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[21] A lighthearted re-enactment of music hall banter was later to be popularised in the BBC television series *The Good Old Days*. According to Matthew Murtagh the position of chairman was discontinued in Dublin around the turn of the century. Based on interview material with Matthew Murtagh.

[22] In The Making of the English Working Class (1980) E.P. Thompson makes the point that *"Those who have wished to emphasise the sober constitutional ancestry of the working class movement have sometimes minimized its more robust and rowdy features"*. p 63.

[23] Based on interview material with Matthew Murtagh.

certain portrayals of Irish culture in music hall entertainment was frequently voiced by sections of the Irish Ireland movement In the columns of The Leader (1/9/1900), music halls were referred to as *"regular night-schools for Anglicisation"* According to Matthew Murtagh, members of the Gaelic League heckled music hall performances for their perceived 'stage Irishery' Furthermore, irrespective of his liking for music-hall entertainment, Peader Kearney (author of the Irish national anthem) is reputed to have water hosed members of the Empire Palace orchestra for playing the British national anthem [24] C S ('Todd') Andrews participated in a similar protest at the Theatre Royal, which he claims put an end to the playing of the British national anthem in Dublin theatres (Andrews,1979 129) While on the one hand such protests can be dismissed as the articulation of a conservative anti-cosmopolitanism shot through with cultural/political nationalist ideology, on the other hand they can be understood in the context of a NDR which was anti-imperialist in character and had socialist and gender dimensions Rather than dismissing such protests as expressions of Catholic nationalism, perhaps it is more appropriate to consider the responses to such performances in more specific terms That such cultural events were sites of hegemonic struggle is difficult to refute given the heightened convergence of art, culture and politics at the turn of the 20th century As such it might be worth considering the possibility that Dublin working class music hall goers distinguished between positive portrayals of working class life and the combination of negative portrayals and the jingoistic aspects of British culture as performed on the stages of Dublin music halls

4.5.   Leisure Among Working Class Dubliners.

Working class Dubliners have always made use of the city's natural environment in their pursuit of leisure They have hiked, played, fished, swam and walked on the Dublin mountains, parks, canals, rivers and shoreline Each September and October chestnuts became conkers and provided hours of entertainment for children throughout the city In 'making their own entertainment', working class Dubliners have incorporated themselves into the cityscape From children's street games [25] to

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[24] Based on interview material with Matthew Murtagh Indeed as Matthew suggested to me the liquid might have been of a more bodily nature

[25] See 'Street Games and other Pastimes' in Paddy Crosbie's You Dinner is Poured Out! (1984)

men's toss schools, child and adult have created a culture of the streets and of the built environment With a sensitivity to urban space, Brendan Behan wrote

> "Everyone from a town in Britain or Ireland knows about
> Soccer, because it is a game of the streets, where the ball is kept
> low and does not break many windows, and you are not often
> brought down on the hard asphalt" (Behan, 1970 360)

Tom Byrne, a retired cross-channel docker in the port of Dublin, told me how for boys it was a case of graduating from marbles, draughts, Snakes and Ladders, to cards and sometimes toss-schools Making one's own entertainment was the norm and Tom mentioned how harmonicas etc were played on the doorsteps of tenement houses [26] In his account of 'tenement Dublin' Kevin C. Kearns describes how

> "Girls played house with cardboard boxes, board and bricks,
> made dolls out of scrap wood and paper, and played with broken
> pieces of cups and plates" (Kearns, 1994 39-40)

Working class Dubliners have not always engaged in such 'non-commercial' leisure activities without hindrance If the owners of Dublin's Empire Palace music hall were responsible for curtailing the 'rowdyism' of the city's working class as part of the process of attracting a larger middle class patronage, they were not alone in suppressing aspects of working class cultural life (Watters & Murtagh, 1995 171-172) Indeed, the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) were far more overt in their imposition of social control According to Brian Griffin, DMP control in working class neighbourhood involved the suppression of

> "wrestling matches and prize fights, adult football matches in
> the streets, catching seagulls along the Liffey with fishing hooks,
> playing pitch and toss in the streets, swimming or bathing pets in
> the Grand Canal, and gambling, dancing or playing music in
> public houses, especially on Sundays" (Griffin, 1995 22)

In terms of home entertainment the late 1920s also saw the arrival of Irish public service broadcasting with crystal sets for sale from outlets such as McHugh Himself and Woolworths. In 1928 Paddy Crosbie's family acquired a gramophone from Kearney's of Capel Street (Crosbie,1984 209) [27] But according to Tom Byrne, former B &I worker on the cross channel docks, and Paddy Duffy, a retired Dublin baker, radio sets were not a common feature in Dublin working class homes until the 1930s due to the cost factor From her memories of working in Peats of Parnell Street

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[26] Based on interview material with Tom Byrne

since the war years, Pat Ferguson, daughter of the company's founder William Benjamin Peat, remembers that the first radios she sold were Mullards at £5. Pat also recalls how in the years following the Second World War, many of the tenement houses in neighbouring Dominic Street had no electricity and that families who did have radios used wet batteries, which had to be re-charged.[28]

Carriers/labourers and tradesmen tended not to socialise together and, according to Ronan Sheehan, carpenters sometimes hired an upstairs 'drawing-room' in Murray's public house on Sean McDermott Street where they held 'smoking concerts'. Such leisure activity involved *"drinking and smoking pipes and everyone in turn sang his party piece"* (Sheenan & Walsh,1988:53). Timmy 'Duckegg' Kirwin, a former docker from Corporation Street in the north inner city, told the oral historian Kevin C. Kearns (or his research assistant Kim McCulloch) that :

> *"Most labourers drank together, people who worked hard. But the tradesmen would drink together. Never drank with us. See, the tradesmen, they were the 'gentlemen' of the trades...they never classed us. Snobbery"* (cited in Kearns,1994:66).

Some working men's clubs were established in a spirit of clerical, bourgeois or petit bourgeois paternalism. These included the Dunlaoghaire Workmen's Club, the Matt Talbot Working Men's Club and the City and County of Dublin Conservative Workingmen's Club (CWC), respectively. While the CWC had formal loyalist/ unionist characteristics, according to Martin Maguire's research into the club, it also provided a cultural and social venue for Protestant working class Dubliners. Furthermore, despite the *"ambitions of its patrons"* towards enlightenment, the leading demands of the general membership was for *"beer and billiards"* (Maguire,1994:87). The Dunlaoghaire Workmen's Club was founded by a Professor W.F. Barratt in 1892 as a non-sectarian, non-party political centre for unemployed men in the area with an emphasis on temperance".[29] The Matt Talbot Working Men's Club was based in the Sean McDermott Street area where in the 1930s men went after work to *"read the papers, play card and draughts, listen to the radio. There was a billiards table there, but the most popular game was rings"*

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[27] Later, as an adult, Paddy Crosbie presented the popular radio programme *The School Around the Corner* on Radio Eireann and published his memoirs under the title Your Dinner's Poured Out! (1984)

[28] I wish to acknowledge Pat Ferguson for her assistance in providing me with this information.

[29] From In the Mind's Eye Published by the Dunlaoghaire Borough Heritage Society. P 10.

In pursuing the history of Dublin working class audiences for 'commercial' entertainment, the popularity of cine-variety must be acknowledged As an institution, music hall continued up to the 1930s However, live variety shows did not end, and cine-variety entertainment (a combination of a film and live show) became a key feature of the third phase in the life of the Theatre Royal (1935-1962) as well as in the Capitol, the Gaiety and the Queens Theatre Communal singing continued as part of Dublin variety entertainment with, for example, sing-alongs led by Tommy Dando at the Theatre Royal up to its closure in June 1962

Pantomime also figured in the calendar of working class Dubliners. According to Paddy Duffy, parents who had grown up in the music hall era encouraged their children to see the shows because of their own memories of 'live entertainment' Paddy Crosbie recalled how as a youngster Christmas was *"never Christmas without the Pantomime"* 'Pantos' were also held at the Father Mathew Hall in Church Street and the Boys' Brigade Hall in Lower Church Street (Crosbie,1984 195) During the late 1920s Crosbie also attended the Olympia where two shows by British companies ran nightly from Monday to Saturday featuring such stars as The Chocolate Coloured Coon (G H Elliott), Layton and Johnson the black American singers, Gertie Gitana and Billy Bennet (Crosbie,1984 209).

James Plunkett, the Dublin author, penned the following profile of the life of an 'average' Dublin male worker or 'Joe Soap' (to use his words) just prior to the second world war In 1938 his wage was between £2 50 to £3 pounds, 49% of his British counterpart Working five and half days a week and up to 48 hours entitled him to one weeks paid leave under the Holidays (Employees) Act If married he spent it at home with his family and if single, possibly on a trip to Liverpool or the Isle of Man (Plunkett,1980 136).

However, if that was an average profile of the male worker, leisure time was more difficult to define for working class women because their working lives spanned both the public and private domestic spheres Young unmarried women employed in jobs such as biscuit making, the confectionery business, domestic service, textile trade,

etc , had a measure of economic independence which meant that they could frequent Dublin cinemas and dance halls [30]

As part of his sociological analysis, Alexander J. Humphreys SJ (1966) discovered a number of differences between working class single and married women For example, one woman, who belonged to what Humphreys named as the 'artisan class', described how she had only known her own neighbourhood when she married at 23. That for her represented a stark contrast to the Dublin of the late 1940s-early 1950s in which

> *"boys and the girls, too, after they are sixteen are off all over*
> *the city to dances here and dances there and to movies and that*
> *sort of thing"* (Humphreys,1966 185)

For married working class women in the 'artisan' class, their recreation involved 'walking out', going to the cinema, parties, and football matches, and increasingly to lounge bars (Humphreys,1966·143) However, another married woman, Joan Dunn from the same class strata stated that while a married women and her husband would *"go out to the movies once or twice a week"*, married life for her had meant restrictions For Joan to go out

> *"regularly together to a party or a dance is almost unheard of I*
> *haven't been to a single party since Seamus and I got married,*
> *and we have been to just two dances in six years Of course, it is*
> *true that there are the children to take care of, but often it would*
> *be quite possible to get somebody take care of them It is just*
> *that they don't have many activities or affairs for young married*
> *couples Any organisation that runs social activities usually*
> *plans for banquets or dinners or affairs that are almost entirely*
> *for men and not for mixed company"*
> *(*cited in Humphreys,1966 143)

According Charles O'Brien, the current marketing manager of the Mosney Holiday Centre which took over Butlin's operation in 1982, many Dublin working class families would not have had an annual summer holiday away from home during the 1950s had it not been for the decision of the British company Butlin's to come to Ireland, where it opened on 13th of July 1948, in Mosney, Co Meath. Throughout the 1950s Billy Butlin's catch cry of 'Hi, Di, Hi' rang through the camp each summer as campers entered into Bonny Baby, Glamourous Granny, Knobbly Knees and Young Tarzan competitions judged by the ever young Red Coats So just as de-

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[30] See New Dubliners Urbanisation and the Irish Family (1966) by Alexander J Humphreys, S J for accounts of leisure activities among 'artisans' and 'general labouring' classes

mobbed British WW2 soldiers and factory workers were provided with 'regimented' holidays, so too, apparently, were members of the Irish working class.

Besides the books, comics, games, gramophones, playing cards, radio and toys that were the features of many working class homes, the family home was also the place of celebration around births, marriages and festive and special family occasions. At such 'get togethers' family, relatives and friends invariably 'made their own entertainment' with songs, dances, music and 'magic tricks'. The local public house/shebeen was an extension to the crowded living spaces that were home to the vast majority of working class families. It was at home and in the public house that birth, marriage and death were either celebrated or commemorated. That intimate link between home and public house was captured most succinctly by former Liberties publican Larry Ryan, when he states that pubs were *"tradition in Dublin, a way of life. They weren't just a watering hole, the family life was built around the pub"* [his emphasis] (cited in Kearns, 1996:89). It can also be added that 'family life' was threatened by excessive drinking and alcoholism among some working class men.

As part of Mairin Johnston's recollections of growing up close by in the Pimlico district of Dublin, the 'hooleys' in her family home included a variety of songs : *"music hall, popular, melodious, republican and labour"*. These sessions, most of which, according to Mairin, started up after the public houses closed, included a number of musicians. Mairin's grandmother sang Victorian songs, which had more in common with the *"drawing room than a music hall tradition"*. Family, relatives, friends and/or neighbours had *"their song"* which was requested in the course of a session. Mairin also mentioned that the repertoire of songs from different cultural backgrounds mingled together in a not too dissimilar way as the social mix between Quakers, Protestants and Roman Catholics in Pimlico. Mairin's mother, who played the concertina and the melodeon at the 'hooleys', also played along with other musicians at ceilidhs in a square in the neighbourhood. For Mairin, growing up in Pimlico had many joys and she remembers with fondness the excitement of the Saturday hustle and bustle of shopping, and farmers bringing their goods into the local stalls. It was, like many of her peers, a happy childhood with little knowledge of

the fact that others beyond her immediate surroundings had material wealth beyond that which her family possessed [31]

Writing about Dublin ballads, Brendan Behan singled out those *"nationally minded citizens"* who *"practically killed the old ballads of Dublin forty years ago with the rise of the Gaelic League"* (Behan,1985a 31) Behan also linked the decline of the Irish language in parts of Ireland to claims made during the 1916 period that songs of the Dublin northside and the Liberties were 'stage-Irish' In rejecting that contention he states that *"we are indebted for songs about the Invincibles"* to the *"ballad-makers of the Hidden Ireland of the slums"* (Behan,1985a 32). In that regard Behan highlighted the importance of the role of folk and popular songs in acting as a conduit for radical or revolutionary sentiments Among urban and rural working class people it was within such songs that a spirit of popular resistance found one of its clearest expressions

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[31] Based on interview material with Mairin Johnston I have also heard Luke Cheevers speak of the Dublin tradition of 'hooleys' during a session of unaccompanied songs he presented during Dublin City University Arts Week in 1997

4.6. The Trade Union Movement and Cultural Activity.

> *"No field of knowledge, no outlook in life, and no book should
> be closed against the workers, we should demand our share in
> the effulgence of life and all that was created for the enjoyment
> of mankind"* James Larkin [32]

Besides being the consumers and producers of popular culture in the home,

neighbourhood and workplace,[33] working class men and women also created a form

of cultural expression which was predominantly socialist (or republican socialist) in

character While infused with socialist sentiments it was often modeled on forms of

popular culture such as popular ballads and music hall entertainment

James Connolly, Frederick Ryan, James and his sister Delia Larkin, each in their own

way realised the significance of cultural expression as an integral part of the trade

union and socialist movements Frederick Ryan, a leading Dublin socialist at the turn

of the century, made his contribution to the cultural domain with a play on municipal

corruption entitled Laying the Foundation and which was staged in 1902

(O'Brian,1969 14-19)

According to Larkin's biographer (Emmett Larkin), James Larkin made the Irish

Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) *"a vehicle for social and cultural*

advancement as well" and in this regard was influenced by his earlier *"experiences in*

Liverpool with the Clarion Fellowship promoted by Robert Blatchford"

(Larkin.1989.161) Delia Larkin, Jim's sister, who had previously organised a choir

and dancing classes in the Irish Women Workers' Hall, continued her cultural

activities in Liberty Hall Mary Jones, in her history of the Irish Women Workers'

Union (IWWU) also refers to the choir, drama and Irish language classes at the

IWWU social club in Liberty Hall (Jones,1988·9) [34] The columns of The Irish Worker

(24/10/1914 & 28/3/1914) advertised 'All Night' dances organised by IWWU

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[32] From a presidential address to the Irish Trade Union Congress, City Hall, Dublin June 1 1914

[33] Places of employment such as Guinnesses and the Inchicore Works (Ryan,1996) had organised sporting and leisure activities as part of works environment

[34] Mairin Johnston mentioned to me that there was a piano in the Irish Women Workers Union and that Delia Larkin organised a dancing troupe with tap dancers in the music hall tradition

Jim Larkin, who had previously organised an ITGWU fife-and-drum band, was instrumental in setting up a pipers' band in June 1913. In an amusing article on the band, Brendan Behan described how, during the 1913 Lock-Out, the band, affectionately known as the Suffering Ducks, *"serenaded"* members of the Royal Irish Regiment based in Fitzgibbon Street Barracks (Behan,1985b 27-30) In 1919 a third ITGWU Band was formed, this time a brass and reed band From then until 1936 the band was administered by a committee from Dublin No 1 Branch Since then, the union's Dublin District Council has assumed responsibility for its activities Like the 'Suffering Ducks', the ITGWU band had its encounters with the British military, and during a raid on Liberty Hall by the Black and Tans, virtually all the band's instruments were *"smashed up"* (King,1984 61)

As part of their interests in cultural matters both Larkin and Connolly had recognised the significance of the Irish language movement and in their respective ways actively supported its restoration (Berresford Ellis 1972.192-193) However, Connolly placed the 'language question' firmly within the fight for national and social emancipation, and in so doing made the point that *"You cannot teach starving men Gaelic"* (Connolly,1948 58)

Sean O'Casey, probably the best known representative of Protestant working class Dublin, wrote that, during the period between the 1913 Lock Out and the Rising, James Connolly wrote labour songs which became the *"favourite melodies during the many route-marches of the* [Citizen] *army"* (O'Casey,1971 37) The importance of such songs for Connolly is captured in the following statement *"Until the movement is marked by the joyous, defiant singing of revolutionary songs it is a dogma of a few, not the faith of the multitude"* [35]

In the period prior to the 1913 Lock-Out, Sunday evening socials with a lecture and concert became a regular feature at Liberty Hall, and at Christmas a party was organised for workers' children with *"presents and ice-cream for all"* (Larkin.1965 162) However, Larkin's *"crowning achievement"* in terms of the union's cultural/recreational activities was the decision to rent a house and three acres

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[35] Cited in The James Connolly Songbook The Cork Workers' Club, Historical Reprint No 5

in Clontarf. The official opening of Croydon Park occurred on Sunday, August 3, 1913, with a Grand Temperance Fete and Children's Carnival, at which those attending were entertained with *"dancing and singing and games for children as the band played all day"* (Larkin,1989:162). While social activities were curtailed during the Lock-Out, during December 1913 three large marquees were erected at Croydon Park in which 5,000 children were fed and entertained with the usual Christmas fare. The union also organised two football teams and a boxing club (Larkin,1989:163).

Cultural activities associated with the labour movement between the 1913 Lock Out and the Rising ranged from concerts, to ceilidhes and commemorations. Sean O'Casey recalled how:

> *"the daily and nightly routine of the Citizen Army was sensibly relieved by many merry events which lightened the dull gloom of monotonous organisation"* (O'Casey,1971:36).

In a marque erected in Croydon Park during the summer months, *"popular concerts"* were held every Sunday where *"dancing, singing and piping kept the night perpetually young"* for members of the Citizens Army, *"their sweethearts, friends and relatives"* (O'Casey,1971:36). O'Casey considered Jim Larkin to be *"the life and soul of these gatherings"* where he sang 'The Red Flag' or the 'Rising of the Moon' (O'Casey,1971:36). According to O'Casey Larkin *"fought for the loaf of bread as no man before him had fought: but, with the loaf of bread, he also brought the flask of wine, and the book of verse"* (cited in Nevin,1994).

Larkin's cultural initiatives also had an ecological aspect. In a letter to a Liverpool seed merchant he stated that he wanted to *"interest our people in the culture of vegetables and flowers and window-box displays"*, and in an attempt to familiarise union members and their families with *"another side of Irish life"*, he bought a cow and calf for Croydon Park (Larkin.1989:163). James Larkin also made an interesting intervention in the controversy surrounding Hugh Lane's offer of a collection of French Impressionist paintings to the people of Dublin. William Martin Murphy, the press baron and industrialist who had taken the strongest anti-union stance during the 1913 Lock Out, said that *"the mass of the people of Dublin don't care a thráneen whether Sir Hugh Lane's 'conditional' pictures are left here or there"* (cited in

O'Brian,1982 55) In contrast Larkin put a motion to the Dublin Trades Council urging acceptance of the paintings Having castigated the opposition he went on to state in his motion that *"the primary reason"* for the failure to erect a gallery to house the paintings in Dublin was *"to deny the working class access to avenues of advancement and to limit the opportunities of unemployed men getting useful work"* (cited O'Toole,1994 8). It is also worth noting that when the collection had been displayed in Harcourt Street, Hugh Lane insisted that the gallery open in the evenings *"to convenience working class citizens"* (O'Brian,1982 53)

The virtual absence of visual representations of the southern Irish working class experience prior to the 1960s, reflects a restricted aesthetic vision in art production and the cultural hegemony of a Catholic bourgeoisie/petit bourgeoisie However, a uniquely working class artistic tradition did emerge from the Irish trade union movement, as it did in other industrialised nations That visual tradition is encapsulated in union badges, banners and illuminated scrolls [36]

Following his acrimonious departure from the ITGWU, James Larkin set up the Irish Workers Union in 1924 with his brother Peter and other trade unionists The new union premises on Marlborough Street was home to the union band and a boxing club. In the tradition of Croyden Park, members of the Workers Union of Ireland also organised events and outings to venues such as Elm Park in Whitehall

Probably the next most important example of a proactive cultural initiative linked to the labour movement was that initiated by John Swift of the Irish Bakers' and Confectioners' and Allied Workers' Union in the 1920s In a profile of Swift, journalist Michael Mc Inerney recorded how in 1927, Swift *"initiated forms of cultural activity unknown in union circles since James Larkin's famous efforts fifteen years before"* (The Irish Times 31/7/75) Besides playing an active role in the pursuit of trade union organisation, secularism and socialism, Swift was a lover of literature and classical music. The latter interest led Swift to form a union choir and orchestra during the 1920s. During the late1920s Swift had to contend with the popularity of

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[36] For an example of the art of trade union banner making and illustration see Marching Workers the programme for 'An Exhibition of Irish Trade Union Banners and Regalia compiled by Belinda Loftus A publication of The Arts Councils of Ireland in association with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions This topic will be revisited in Chapter Six and Nine

jazz music and dancing in Dublin. According to Swift *"dance band members were being paid handsomely and the members of my orchestra, who were all unpaid amateurs, fell for the easy money and the orchestra died"* This prompted him to state that *"I hate jazz I can't stand the sound of it"* (The Irish Times 31/7/75)

Swift greatly admired the way in which cultural activities were promoted in the USSR and told Mc Inerney that

> *"culture is present in every factory, office and village, and it is organised and encouraged by the trade unions It is impossible to escape culture it is everywhere Every Economic Plan has its cultural programme"* (The Irish Times 31/7/75)

Between 1937 and 1942 a cultural project with communist associations was embarked upon in Dublin This was the New Theatre Group (NTG) which enacted plays by Clifford Odets, Sergei Tretyakov, G.B Shaw. John Steinbeck, Stephen Spender, Eugene O'Neill, W H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Irish playwrights such as Denis Johnson, Sean O'hEidirsceoil and Thomas O'Brien. According to Thomas O'Brien, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and founder of the O'Brien Press, the NTG was formed in April 1937 and was linked to the Left Book Club which had been launched in Dublin the previous year While initially supportive of the *"Popular Front movement in Europe"*, by March 1943 O'Brien believed that it was *"no longer a workers' theatre a theatre which pledged itself to help forward the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism* (O'Brien, 1994 149) Yet its constitution was less explicit insofar as it stated that the aim of the NGT was

> *"to produce, present and exhibit, to its members and their guests, stage plays and films of social significance and educational value and to provide suitable premises and accessories for these purposes"* (O'Brien, 1994 29)

John Swift continued to pursue his interest in developing cultural activities within the trade union movement following his election as president of the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1946 As in the past he was motivated by a strong belief that *"unions should also help members to express themselves culturally, and of course, politically"* (cited in The Irish Times 31/7/75). With the opening of a new union headquarters in Harcourt Street in February 1946, John Swift and those associated with him extended the union's cultural activities The building, known as Four

Provinces House,[37] included the unions' administrative offices, a Guild Room, a library, the offices of Mianrai Teoranta, a restaurant and an auditorium. The Guild Room was used for lectures, film-shows, gramophone recitals and at various times for ballet classes and rehearsals by the Dublin Orchestral Players under the direction of Brian Boydell. The library's 8,000 volumes included works of philosophy, social theory, labour history, politics, economics, the arts, classsical fiction, and poetry Besides the socialist writings, the library also contained the writings of *"prominent capitalist and other writers"* (Swift,1991 140-152)

The mural painter Frances Kelly and visual/stain-glass artist Nano Reid were commissioned to paint sections of the auditorium. The images that were chosen included depiction of the history of baking, the Ralahine Co-operative, James Connolly and Jim Larkin In addition Frank Mc Kelvey was commissioned to paint four Irish landscapes representing the four provinces On the building's façade, a series of engraved plaques by the sculptor Laurence Campell, illustrating bread production and distribution as well as 19th century trade union struggles, were erected. Sadly both murals and plaques were lost when the building was demolished in March 1988 (Swift,1991.140-152)

What emerges from this selective presentation of cultural activities linked to the trade union movement is that women, as well as male workers supported the sentiments of the slogan *"Yes, it is bread we fight for - But we fight for roses, too!"*, thus expressing the claim to a cultural life independent of the 'culture industry'[38] These examples of Dublin working class cultural heritage will be further explored in Chapters Six and Nine.

Running alongside and frequently allied to such cultural activities, were the various attempts to establish an independent workers education programme In 1919 the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) established the Connolly College in North Great Georges Street with a curriculum ranging in subject matter from Irish industrial

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[37] "The Bakers Cultural Initiative" by Robert Ballagh in Obair Irish Labour History Society No 2 January 1985

[38] This verse comes from the song 'Bread and Roses' by James Oppenheim who was inspired to write the song by a strike that occurred in the American Woolen Company in 1912 Women workers in the company had carried a banner with the slogan 'We want Bread and Roses too' The strike was the inspiration for International Women's Day (Nevin,1994 316)

history to public speaking. Supported by the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and influenced by the socialist pedagogy of the Scottish socialist, John McClean, the college was funded from the proceeds of a concert held in May 1919, as well as financial contributions from Britain, and other sources. Its aim was to sustain Connolly's ideals and support the aims of the SPI. Its ideology ranged across the liberal, socialist and social democratic ideological spectrum. In that regard it had parallels with the Plebs League in Britain. Both a summer school and residential college were considered. Reasons for its decline, according to Tom Crean, were the suppression of the newspaper Watchword of Labour, Black and Tan harassment and William O'Brien's opposition to its president Nora Connolly-O'Brien, James Connolly's daughter. The latter antagonism reflected an increasing divide between pro-Bolshevik and pro-O'Brien factions. Cathal O'Shannon, who formed part of the former, criticised the trade union movement for not giving the college the necessary support to survive.[39] The college closed its doors in 1921.

The Irish Workers College in Eccles Street set up during the 1930s continued the tradition of the Connolly College. Then in 1948 the People's College (PC) was established. Set up with the backing of the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC) and the enthusiastic involvement of Ruaidhri Roberts (General Secretary of the ITUC), its aim was the development of an independent workers college with the main focus on trade union education. However, it was not to be left unhindered in that pursuit because in 1951 the Catholic Workers College (CWC) was founded by the Jesuit Order. According to Jack Gannon, who has been lifelong advocate of 'independent trade union education', and as a young man attended the Catholic Workers College, the main aim of the college was *"proselytisation and anti-socialism"*. For him the 'ethos' of the Catholic Church pervaded the college, typified by the fact that each class started with a prayer. While it may seem to smack of conspiracy theory to say that the CWC was set up to counteract the People's College, given the declared anti-socialist agenda of the Catholic Workers College, Oxford (established1921) [40] vis a

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[39] This account of the James Connolly College is based on a presentation given by Tom Crean to the Irish Labour History Society's 1996 Annual Seminar entitled 'Worker's Education: An Historical Perspective'. The James Connolly Songbook, Cork Workers Club Historical Reprints No. 5. contains a brief account of the events surrounding the SPI May 1919 concert and in Saothar No.19 the cover of the Souvenir Programme is reproduced.

[40] The anti-socialist perspective of the college is explicitly documented in A Silken Thread: The History of Plater College. 1921-1996 (1996) by Dennis Chiles. Plater College. Oxford. I wish to thank Jack Gannon for lending me a copy of Chiles's publication.

vis the neighbouring Ruskin College (est.1899), it is hard to imagine that the parallel development in Ireland by the Jesuits is mere coincidence, especially during the period of the 'Cold War'.[41]

Besides these and various other socialist/trade union-led educational projects, small groups of Dublin workers/socialists/communists attended the Lenin School and Ruskin College prior to 1960. But in singling out such educational projects it is important to mention that while exploitation of working class women as waged workers was included in the curricula, the question of domestic labour and patriarchal oppression was totally ignored.

The extent to which the Catholic Church hierarchy intervened in matters of private and public affairs since the formation of the southern state has directly contributed to the maintenance of capitalist 'relations of production' and patriarchal oppression in Ireland. As a result of the predominance of bourgeois and Catholic sociology in Irish post-secondary educational institutions, many of those with sympathies towards socialism acquired an idealist over a materialist analysis, or more specifically a Weberian as opposed to a Marxist world view. The outcome of such a privileging of the superstructural meant a prioritising of questions of culture and ideology rather than the capitalist relations of production.[42] Interestingly, that inversion of the Marxist analysis meant that some Irish socialists charged Irish clericalism as playing a greater role in working class subordination than capitalist exploitation.

4.7. Conclusions.

In this chapter some of the changing patterns of work, domestic life and leisure in terms of Dublin working class culture prior to the 1960s have been highlighted. In doing so the centrality of capitalist relations of production and the importance of the gender division of labour vis a vis an understanding of the Dublin working class have been fore-grounded. By linking the world of work to that of home and leisure I have

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[41] Based on a presentation given by Jack Gannon to the Irish Labour History Society's 1996 Annual Seminar entitled 'Worker's Education: An Historical Perspective' and subsequent discussion with Jack. Jack Gannon is currently on the staff of the Educational and Training Department of the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU).

attempted to present Dublin working class life as a *"whole way of life"* as outlined by Raymond Williams, thus refusing to separate the specifically cultural from its material basis (Williams,1980b 63) The totality of the Dublin working class experience, had in the 1900-1960 period parallels with other similar industrialised cities, and in that regard went through a process of 'massification', as theorised by Raymond Williams Such a development included the mass migration to the city, the growth of mass production, mass housing, mass transport, mass political action (e g trade unionism), mass culture, and mass-communication (Williams,1961 287-303) As part of that process many of the economic/ political advances made by working class Dubliners were achieved on the basis of a struggle, thus confirming E P Thompson's understanding of 'culture' as *"a way of struggle"* (cited in Williams,1981·135) My interpretation of Thompson's understanding of culture is that it includes the struggle of working class families to find the money for a child's pair of shoes as well as the struggle for a better way of life

From investigating the struggle to 'make ends meet' to that of transforming capitalist relations of production, I have explored both the enabling and constraining forces in that struggle In examining the enabling forces I have drawn attention to the distinction between the 'earnest minority' and the majority of the working class, as outlined by Richard Hoggart (1971) As for the constraining forces I have shown that at every turn of the national democratic revolution between 1900-1960 a bourgeois/clerical alliance stood in opposition to working class and women's emancipation.

Constraints were also evident in the cultural domain, for example the attempts to tone down the *"free-and-easy rowdyism of sing-songs"* at the Empire Palace Music Hall (Watters & Murtagh, 1975.171-172) That 'toning down' was not an isolated incident Capitalist exploitation and women's oppression was perpetuated by a range of controlling measures, denials, fines, ideologies, insults, policing, punishments, put-downs, reification, regulations, restrictions, rules, slaggings and snubs directed from without and within. To simply reduce that array of measures to a domination from above or to a 'false consciousness' ignores the complexity of class and gender

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[42] See 'Ireland and its People' by Dr Noel Browne <u>Sunday Independent</u> April 24 1988 for an example of this tendency

subjugation. The labeling of workers who sought wage increases etc as 'reds' or a system of 'schooling' which made young working class Dubliners aware of 'their station' all contributed to keeping working class people in their *"social position and physical location"* (Meyrowitz,1985 308) The charity dispensed by the Catholic Church and other organisations was hollow in the absence of a questioning of the socio-economic system that made a small percentage of the population wealthy, while the majority of people had to struggle to 'make ends meet', or lived in dire poverty

Attention was drawn to the various socio-economic subdivisions within the working class, division that were sometimes reinforced by working class people themselves For example, labourers and tradesmen socialised in their own, separate, circles In talking to the oral historian Kevin C. Kearns, John Gallagher from the Liberties mentioned how, if a woman whose husband had a job was seen in a new dress, she might be greeted by such remarks as *"Who does she think she is?"* And if children from the tenements were *"were sent to learn music they'd be jeered through the street —' trying to get above your class'"* [emphases in the text] (Kearns,1994 131). But while accepting that such divisions did exist among working class Dubliners, they fade in significance when compared to the class contradictions between the working class and bourgeoisie

As part of a 'feminist historical-geographical material analysis' I have explored the relationship of production and reproduction to that of space and community, doing so in a way that includes the pursuit of leisure activity In that regard I have examined how working class Dubliners have been associated with a range of artistic/cultural consumption and production processes, which include ballads, drama, literature, music hall, sport, street song, and the visual arts, in the period between 1900 and 1960 Working class life is never presented solely in terms of exploitation and oppression, but in its diversity and resistances While formed by its relation to production, reproduction, space and cultural heritage, working class Dubliners had a collective consciousness of their own. Although never homogeneous, that consciousness has core elements that were expressed in the concerns of day-to-day living, and the aspiration towards a better life For a minority, with influence beyond their small number, that aspiration for a better life involved visions that included a fundamental transformation of the existing power structure

Chapter Five

CINEMA GOING &
DUBLIN WORKING CLASS
CULTURAL IDENTITY (1909-1959).

"And we all went up to the Mero,
Hey there who's your man?
It's only Johnny Forty Coats
Bang Bang shoots the buses with his golden gun
Hi i diddle i and out goes she" 1

5.1.   Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to explore key aspects of the cinema going experience for

Dublin working class men, women and children in the pre-1960 period and on that

basis to investigate how cinema going contributed to a sense of working class cultural

identity Chief among those 'key aspects' to be explored are the consumption patterns,

cost of admission, the cinema buildings and staff, the uses, gratifications, escapism and

meanings associated with, and derived from cinema going 2 Besides relying on oral

histories which I have gathered from a number of men and women with experiences of

going to and working in Dublin cinemas, I also draw upon extracts from working class

autobiographies, fiction, and memoirs 3 In doing so I will take into account the

problematic nature of memory and its role in the construction of identity as was

discussed in Chapter Three

An evocative piece of writing by the Irish author Elizabeth Bowen captures something

akin to the totality of the cinema going experience in the way she listed her reasons for

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1 From <u>The Mero</u> sung by Ronnie Drew 'The Mero' was the nickname for the Mary Street Cinema, sometimes spelt as 'Mayro'

2 See Appendix D for a copy of the cinema going interview schedule that was used in this research

3 I wish to acknowledge Frances O'Brian's assistance in introducing me to members of the SIPTU's Broadcasting Branch It was Frances who informed me about the various social aspects of the Branch These included the Branch Committee Annual Dance, the Perpetual Challenge Cup, the Max Elliman Memorial Cup for football competitions arranged among the members of Dublin cinemas and theatres between the 1930s and 60s In speaking to Francis I became aware of the contribution of cinema workers to the countless hours of pleasure enjoyed by Dublin cinema audiences I believe that contribution ought to be explored in cultural, media and/or labour history

going to the cinema [4] Bowen's extract sheds light on the complexity and diversity of the cinema going experience and goes to the heart of some of the concerns I intend to examine within this chapter Not only does she highlight what viewers take from and bring to their encounter with the images and sounds emanating from cinematography, she also refers to the collective experience of cinema going and links her individual needs to her world beyond the cinema In that regard Bowen takes account of the wider socio-cultural ensemble of cinema audiences Her article, entitled "Why I go to the Cinema"(1938), from which the footnote (No 4) extract is taken, merits an inclusion in the history of Irish cinema audience research The foresightedness of Bowen's cinema analysis is impressive in so far as it touches on virtually all aspects of the five main traditions of communication research (Jensen & Rosengren,1990)

In addition I will draw on Janet Staiger's (1992) contribution to an historical materialist understanding of reception studies Such an approach

> "assumes an interaction among context, text and individual in
> which the perceiver's socially and historically developed mental
> concepts and language may be only partially available to self-
> reflection and are most certainly heterogeneous"
> (Staiger,1992 79)

I intend that the contents and finding of this chapter be read in parallel and in contrast to the Chapter Four, in which the Dublin working class world of work, housing, leisure (other than cinema) and cultural self-activity related to the labour movement were investigated

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[4] *"I go to be distracted (or 'taken out of myself'), I go when I don't want to think, I go when I do not want to think and need stimulus, I go to see pretty people, I go when I want to see life ginned up, charged with unlikely energy, I go to laugh, I go to be harrowed, I go when a day has been a mess of detail that I am glad to see even the most arbitrary, the most preposterous pattern emerge, I go because I like bright light, abrupt shadow, speed, I go to see America, France, Russia I go because I like wisecracks and slick behaviour go because the screen is an oblong opening into the world of fantasy for me, I go because I like story, with its suspense, I go because I like sitting in a packed crowd in the dark, among hundreds riveted on the same thing, I go to have my most general feelings played upon"* (Bowen,1938 205)

5.2. The Dublin Working Class Audience for Cinema.

In a publication on the Liam O'Leary Film Archive, it is stated that during the 1920s,

" *Three visits to the cinema per week was nothing unusual*" for Dubliners [5]

According to Maurice Elliman, former Manager of the Theatre-de-Luxe on Camden

Street and a member of the prominent Dublin cinema owning family

> "*Despite the unrelieved tales of poverty amongst Dublin's
> working classes from these decades* [1920/30s] *the relatively
> inexpensive admission to some cinemas allowed these cinemas to
> survive, if not always to prosper*" (cited in Rockett, 1989 360)

The former film projectionist Allen Collinge describes the 1940s and 1950s as the

heyday of the cinema going in Dublin and in his opinion the custom was something

akin to a *"religion"* [6] In a special article for the British cinema trade journal

Kinematography Weekly published in 1944, entitled 'In the Land of the Gaels',

Melchior A A Sinkins stated that there were forty eight *"decent halls"* in Dublin with

continuous shows during the week, and two on Sunday While the top price was half a

crown, cheaper matinee prices were available at 3 or 5 p m Describing the Irish as

"more film minded than any people on earth", Sinkins claimed that they attended the

cinema *"at least four times a week"* and *"queue for hours in the worst of weather"* [7]

According to Paddy Duffy, [8] Sunday night was the 'big night' for cinema going,

especially for courting couples The popularity of Sunday nights can be explained by

the fact that up until the 1960s many adults worked a five and half day week The

exception to this rule was among Dublin Protestants According to Mairin Johnston

"Protestants never went to the films on Sunday"

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[5] Cited in Cinema Ireland 1895-1950 From the Liam O'Leary Film Archive The National Library of Ireland 1990 p 16

[6] Based on interview material with Allen Collinge Allen started working as a page boy in the Savoy Cinema in 1928 at the age of fourteen He served his apprenticeship as a projectionist in the Rotunda Cinema and subsequently worked in several cinemas throughout the city until his last employment in The Stella Cinema, Rathmines Like his father he later worked as the projectionist in the censor's office until he too was eighty years of age

[7] Kineamatography Weekly January 13 1944

[8] Based on interview material with Paddy Duffy Paddy was born in 1932, grew up in Aungier Street and started going to the cinema in 1939 He served his time as a baker and having worked in the trade for 38 years moved into the second hand book trade in 1988, where he works to the present day He has been an avid film goer and in the post war years often went to the cinema five nights a week and sometimes twice on a Sunday

A ready made working class audience for 'mass entertainment' existed in Dublin when the first cinema opened its doors in 1909 due to a combination of socio-economic conditions and the existence of an established working class audience for music hall entertainment. As in other European countries:

> *"the conditions for the cinema emerged during phase one of industrial capitalism which created a working class concentrated in large industrial conglomerations, with increased leisure time and a financial surplus"* (Docherty et al, 1987:25).

The initial audience response to film was mixed and for many merely a novelty. According to C.S ('Todd') Andrews the infrequent showing of *"living pictures"* at the Rotunda prior to 1906 were *"really no better than animated photographs. There was no story line, just characters chasing one another"* (Andrews,1979:36-37). J Hanlon, General Manager of the Irish International Film Agency, considered such shows as *"entertainment for children only"*. Hanlon reiterated his point by adding that *"one or two visits during the season was considered enough to have seen this cinema novelty"* (Hanlon,1943:96).

While the new medium held a novelty value for some, others found the experience disturbing or complained that it brought on a dizzy sensation. That prompted some patrons to leave the building prior to the screenings, which followed the variety show.[9] Even when film narratives improved and the first cinemas opened in Dublin the appeal of film was less than unanimous. Recalling his father's days as film projectionist in Dublin's first cinema, the Volta, which opened in 1909, Allen Collinge states, *"the films were nearly all Italian, so the audience were given handbills with the titles and synopses translated into English"* thus minimising the appeal for at least a section of the audience due to illiteracy or literacy problems.[10] Indeed, literacy remained an issue throughout the 'silent era'. Michael Mc Govern , whose cinema going was mainly confined to Dun Laoghaire from the mid-1930s, remembered a story which confirms that reality. The story involved a group of working class women from Dun Laoghaire who relied on one woman to read the film captions. The amusing twist in the story was

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[9] Based on conversations with Matthew Murtagh. Matthew is the co-author of Infinite Variety: Dan Lowrey's Music Hall 1879-97. Gill and Macmillan, Dublin. 1975.

[10] The Sunday Tribune 16 December 1984.

that the narrator was illiterate and was in fact making up the dialogue as the film progressed, unbeknownst to her small circle of cinema going friends

However, by the 1910s some of the initial reservations about the new medium had receded and while many of those who had grown up with music hall entertainment were reluctant in their enthusiasm for film, a new and different audience for cinema had been constructed By 1914 the Irish Builder reported that there were *"twenty-six buildings for cinematograph display in Dublin alone"* (cited in Rothery,1991 187) Cinema's popularity among working class Dubliners can be illustrated by two references which appeared in the James Larkin edited newspaper The Irish Worker during 1913, the year of the Lock-Out Firstly, in The Irish Worker (29/11/1913), Sean O'Casey's acknowledged the receipt of £5 from Mary Street Cinema Company, and £10 from the Dorset Street Picture House with a promise of £5 *"weekly until further notice"* on behalf of a Relief Fund Committee [11] In the same edition of the paper a notice appeared advertising a Benefit Performance for the Women and Children Relief Fund at the Brunswick and the World's Fair Picture Houses In the November 1913 edition of The Irish Worker an advertisement appeared under the title *"Workers! Support the only Picture House in Dublin Owned by an Irishman"*, urging readers to attend The Irish Cinema on Capel Street It also announced that the cinema opened daily from 2 30 to 10 30 with a change over of films on Monday, Thursday and Sunday

Another indication of the popularity of cinema for working class Dubliners during the early 1910s can be surmised from a review of the premiere of *From the Manger to the Cross* in the March 14th 1913 edition of The Freeeeman's Journal In it the reviewer wrote that

> *"The audience as a whole was the class commonly seen in the picture palace, young lads of the clerk and shop assistant type 'and men of the artisan and labouring classes The proportion of women was smaller than usual"* (cited in Rockett,1989 351)

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[11] In his (semi-)autobiography Sean O'Casey writes on the potential of film making for the revolutionary movement O'Casey records asking a Mr Jamieson, the *"proprietor of the Rotunda picture house "* to make a film of a republican march Cited in Drums Under the Windows Autobiography Book 3 1906-1916(1972) Pan Books Ltd London p 162

Paddy Crosbie, of Radio Eireann's radio programme *The School Around the Corner* fame, has left a vivid account of cinema going in working class Dublin during the 1920s The most popular films according to Crosbie were *The Hooded Terror* and *Elmo - King of the Jungle, Pearl White* was the favourite serial or 'folly'n uppers' as they were known, while William S Hart gave way to Tom Mix in cowboys As for humour, Fatty Arbuckle, Charlie Chaplin, Lloyd Hamilton and Buster Keaton *"always put us in stitches"* Crosbie also singled out Larry Semon and Harold Lloyd as personal favourites, and remembered Richard Dix in *The Ten Commandments* (1923) which he considered a *"serious film"* (Crosbie,1984 122) Besides his love of Hollywood films, British comics and variety entertainment, Crosbie also expressed a youthful enthusiasm for Irish dance and language in a way not too dissimilar from Stephen Behan's 'two faces' towards Irish and English popular culture, as quoted in Chapter Two

While not adamant that the 'penny rush' started in the Phoenix Cinema on Ellis Quay prior to the Abercorn Hall Picturedrome on Harcourt Road, Crosbie does record that it ran at Phoenix Cinema every Saturday during the late 1910s and early 1920s Despite just having a seating capacity of 450, Crosbie claimed, perhaps with tongue in cheek, that up to 3,000 children from throughout the city arrived at the Phoenix Cinema every Saturday For the price of penny a child was directed to either the 'woodeners' or 'cushioners' depending on their place in the queue While the 'cushioners' were the most sought after seats, those to be avoided were situated underneath the balcony as boys frequently *"relieved themselves where they were"* rather than give up their seats Besides the obvious discomfort of those sitting below a *"trickle"* of urine made its way down to where the piano player sat'' (Crosbie, 1984 121-122) According to Paddy Crosbie, girls also attended the Phoenix Cinema, but were in a minority Later during the 1940s Paddy Duffy remembered that boys and girls were divided during the fourpenny rushes to avoid hair pulling and horse-play

Referring to the crowds of children in attendance at the Phoenix, Allen Collinge jokingly claimed that the queue started *"somewhere near the Wellington Monument"* Allen also told me that when an usher prompted boys and girls to move in along a row

of seats, some quick-witted school boy responded with the jibe that *"if you take the wallpaper off, you'll get more in"*. 12 This was another example, albeit humourous, of overcrowding in pre-1960 working class Dublin.

Childhood, as opposed to adult, memories of cinema going are fondly recalled by many working class Dubliners and have almost become an essential part of working class Dublin autobiographies and memoirs. For the young Lar Redmond his *"one aim in life"* as he grew up in the Liberties during the 1920s was to attend the Saturday afternoon matinee at the Fountain Cinema (nicknamed the 'Bowery'). in James Street. For him the *"desolation of the empty streets of a Saturday afternoon was a thing to be dreaded"* (Redmond,1988:42). For the young Eamonn MacThomais growing up in Dublin during the 1930s, cinema was:

> *"the be-all and end-all of life was the picture. It was the university. What you didn't learn at school you learned from films"* (MacThomais,1988:6).

In Lee Dunne's best known novel <u>Goodbye to the Hill</u>. which tells the story of Paddy Maguire's child and early manhood, the ten year old boy *"somehow"* got money for the Princess Cinema in Rathmines where he *"always went to the fourpenny rush"* on Mondays and Thursdays during the early 1940s. There he watched Flash Gordon, Captain Marvel, Roy Rodgers, Hopalong Cassidy, Tom Mix, Buck Jones and *The Durango Kid*, who inspired boyhood adventures beyond the cinema (Dunne.1969:9). <u>Goodbye to the Hill</u>, which draws on Dunne's own experiences of growing up in Mountpleasant Buildings in Ranelagh, was adapted for the screen as *Paddy* (1969) and later for the long running stage adaptation. 13

For Bill Doyle the pleasure of cinema was straight-forward:

> *"an essential thing was coming out happy - that the baddies were killed by the Cherokee Indians and they'd rode off into the sunset"*. 14

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12 Based on interview material with Allen Collinge.

13 <u>Cinema and Ireland</u> by Kevin Rockett, Gibbons & Hill. Croom Helm. London & Sydney. 1987. p 112.

14 Based on interview material with Bill Doyle. Bill was born in 1925 and saw his first film in the Camden Cinema. His father was a barman and his mother worked as a waitress in the Gresham Hotel. He described his family situation as *"a cut above the tenements"*. During the 1960s he was a member of the Guinness Film Society and the Dublin Film Society. In 1967 he worked as a stills camera man and was employed by the Rank Organisation to cover opening nights throughout the 1970s/80s. Bill's photographic work has been included in a number of publications.

The highlights of Paddy Duffy's boyhood visits to the cinema were the 'folli 'n uppers' [his spelling]. These included *The Gang Busters, The Overlanders, Buck Rodgers and Flash Gordon*. Following them meant that *"you had at times to put up with some rubbish as the main feature"*. The 'folli 'n uppers' acted as an incentive to further attendance, in a not too dissimilar way as 'soaps' are scheduled to 'capture' evening television audiences, particularly in the days before remote controls. If a child did not manage to see a 'folli 'n upper', it was acted out for them by boys or girls who had seen the episode. During the Christmas holidays Paddy also attended special cartoon shows at the Savoy Cinema, the queue for which stretched around into Cathedral Street *"3 or 4 deep"*. According to Paddy, during a break in the show the organist Philip Dore would lead off with a twenty minute session of everyone in the auditorium singing Christmas carols and songs. Paddy also mentioned that 'once in a blue moon' a Wells Fargo or Laurel and Hardy film was shown at his school.

Part of the excitement of cinema for Mairin Johnston as a girl was sharing the film's story-line with her friends: *"re-enacting it on the streets"*. The 'goodies' versus 'baddies' polarities within the film narrative facilitated both re-enactment and the cultivation of stereotypes. That process came naturally because, according to Mairin, *"story telling was part of our culture"*. So if cinema is rightly described as a medium of story telling, its meanings were frequently revealed in the process of retelling and enactment. [15] In communication and media research this process is known as the 'two-step flow hypothesis,' which in effect means that 'mass communication' is mediated rather than directly impacting on the individual.

For the future film star and director Gabriel Byrne, it was with his granny, Toblerone bar in one hand, her hand in the other, that he first got to know the *"the lovely dark*

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[15] In his account of prison life, prisoner D 8322 refers to the process of retelling the narrative of films he had seen in Dublin to his fellow prisoners in Portlaoise Jail, a practice which was so graphically captured years later in the film *The Kiss of the Spiderwoman* (1985). According to the following extract from his I Did Penal Servitude (1946), the prisoner, who only identified himself by a prison number, retold the story of the films he had seen prior to his arrest. These included *Rebecca, Citizen Kane, Love on the Dole, Moon over Miami, Blossoms in the Dust* . In describing how he retold the films, he made the debatable point that *"Criminals resemble children in many ways. They dearly love a story"*. However, he obviously pleased his companions, as he would often retell them on *"some time-killing job, such as digging headlands...Love on the Dole was too depressing but they liked Moon over Miami, because the contrast of millionaire's playground, with pin-up Betty Grable and high-kicking Charlotte Greeenwood, to a convict Trappist prisoner was succour for their adventurous imaginations "*p.8-9.

womb of the picture-house" Seeing *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* (1959) ensured that *"the world outside the picture-house would never be quite the same again"* (Byrne,1994 34) Then, as he grew older, Saturday afternoons were spent at the Apollo Cinema (Walkinstown) or the Star Cinema (Crumlin), where Byrne and his friends enjoyed cowboy and gangster films, while hating films *"about animals or girls and most especially we hated kissing"* (Byrne,1994 37)

In his 'memoir' of Luke Kelly, Des Geraghty recalls how, during the 1950s

> *"the centres of entertainment for most Dubliners were the local cinemas where adults queued up on a Sunday night and we could get in for fourpence for a children's mad rush on Saturday afternoon"* (Geraghty,1994 30)

Cinema going was part of women's entertainment prior to the 1960s, having perhaps a special attraction given the lack of alternative forms of entertainment open to women Cinemas represented one of the few public spaces where working class women could frequent without departing from social convention When I asked Ann O'Donoghoe what drew women to Dublin cinemas she replied by saying that there was *"nothing else to do"* and that it was *"unheard of women to go into the pub"* It was not until the 1960s that public houses would encourage women's custom with the building of lounge bars and separate toilet facilities This is yet another distinctive feature of the working class experience in pre-1960s Dublin, an experience which contrasted to the lives of the Dublin petit bourgeoisie, who had a wider range of commercial leisure activities available to them for both economic and cultural reasons

Mrs Annie Byrne, who as a young married women lived in Lombard Street (off Pearse Street) before moving to Ballyfermot in 1950, recalls the matinee shows in the Palace Cinema (later to be named The Academy) on Pearse Street, where she went *"three times a week when the money was available"* Besides making a point in going to see films which featured Bette Davis, *"historical dramas"* were always a favourite with Annie She also recalled how women would frequently breast feed their babies while watching favourite melodramas [16] Talking to Annie I got a real sense of the importance she and other working class women associated with their visits to the

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[16] Based on interview material with Annie Byrne

cinema It was their time, where in the dark of the cinema, beyond prying eyes, they could let their thoughts flow with the narrative and forget the responsibilities of family and endless domestic chores They could look without being looked at In the cinema, they could take pleasure in seeing strong and beautiful women and handsome men, they could become enveloped in love stories, take pleasure in seeing women who answered back, had confidence, glamour, smoked in public and wore trousers with no mind to current predominant Irish conventions

In her oral testimony to Kevin C. Kearns (the oral historian) 80 year old Mary Walron, who grew up in a tenement house on Gloucester Street recalled that

> "The women were very fond of the pictures years ago Here in the
> Lec (cinema) on Talbot Street on a Sunday night a couple of
> women would go in together, three of them maybe, and bring in
> one or two bottles of stout between them and _hot_ pig's feet Oh,
> yeah, bring it in under their shawls And they'd be looking at the
> pictures and eating them and drinking the bottles of stout"
> [emphasis in the original] (cited in Kearns,1994 80) [17]

Maureen Flavin recalled how her mother put aside money from the housekeeping budget so that she and her children could go to the cinema matinees together This she did unbeknown to her husband, ensuring that she was back home in time to have the evening meal prepared While working class men of Mrs Flavin's generation had the warmth and camaraderie of the public house to avail of, that was not an option for women, thus making a visit to the cinema even more appealing

Allen Collinge summed up the pleasure his mother and aunt experienced in going to the matinees in the Green Cinema on passes he had provided It was one of fantasy involving living in _"beautiful houses"_ In her research on the relationship of a group of predominantly working class Waterford women to cinema during 1940s/1950s, Helen Byrne singles out the attraction those women had for _"glamour, stars and stories"_ and argues, on foot of Richard Dyer's (1985) concept of 'utopian sensibility,' that cinema also offered a

> "utopian space in which these women could experience
> pleasurable emotions and which temporarily satisfied needs which
> were frustrated or denied in Irish society at the time"
> (Byrne,1997 102)

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[17] 'The Lec' was the nickname given to The New/Electric Cinema on Talbot Street

Building on Hans Magnus Enzensberger's (1979) notion of 'utopian situation',

Richard Dyer makes the significant point that the *"categories of the utopian*

sensibility are related to specific inadequacies in society", which he lists in the

following contrasting columns, which I have reduced to their headings

(Dyer,1985.228)

Social tension/Inadequacy/Absence	Utopian Solution
Scarcity	Abundance
Exhaustion	Energy
Dreariness	Intensity
Fragmentation	Community

But in contrasting societal 'inadequacies' against utopian solutions, Dyer states that,

while his schema offers *"some explanation as to why entertainment works"* [his

emphasis], there is *"no mention of class, race or patriarchy"* in the left hand column,

factors which are *"denied validity as problems by the dominant (bourgeois, white,*

male) ideology of society" (Dyer,1985 228) Later Dyer makes a further point that

"entertainment provides alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by

capitalism" [his emphasis] (Dyer,1985 228)

Interestingly, Dyer's dual categorisation parallels Bowen's synopsis of reasons given

for going to the cinema (See footnote No 4 of this chapter), which she listed as

follows:

> *"wish to escape, lassitude, sense of lack in my nature or*
> *surroundings, loneliness (however passing) and natural frivolity"*
> (Bowen,1938 205)

Helen Byrne's (1997) concluding points also confirm Dyer's point that *"entertainment*

provides alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by capitalism" in the way

she describes how, for the Waterford women she interviewed, cinema acted as a

"socialising agent into modernity" with the screen becoming *"a huge shop window*

for consumer goods" (Byrne,1997 102)

It was in the telling of cinema going memories that the sheer enjoyment of viewing

films for women was expressed For example, during my interview with Ann

O'Donoghoe she enthusiastically referred to the pleasure of *"looking into Paul Newman's eyes"* [18] Elizabeth Bowen described such enjoyment as

> *"the delights of intimacy without the onus, high points of possession without the strain This could be called inoperative love Relationships in real life are made arduous by their reciprocities, one can too seldom simply sit back The necessity to please, to shine, to make the most of the moment, overshadows too many meetings And apart from this - how seldom in real life (or so-called real life) does aquaintanceship, much less intimacy, with dazzling, exceptional beings come one's way Rapture lets me suppose that for me alone they display the range of their temperaments, their hesitations, their serious depths They live for my eye Yes, and I not only perceive them but am them, their hopes and fears are my own their triumphs exalt me Not only do I enjoy them I enjoy in them a vicarious life"*
> (Bowen,1938 213-4)

Then there was the 'dressing up' to go the cinema and the interest in what female film stars wore According to Eamonn Mac Thomais, cinema was a place where *"your mother"* wore her new hat and in Mrs Hickey's memories *"if you had a new rig out you'd go to the pictures to show it off"* (MacThomais,1977 10) [19] Ann O'Donoghoe described how as part of the pleasure of cinema going she sometimes sought out a similar cut of dress or an item of clothing in Dublin department stores that she had seen a film actress wear on screen This phenomenon illustrates the intimate relationship between film star 'glamour' and the fashion industry, highlighting the wider consumption patterns emanating from the cinema going experience (Dyer,1990)

During the 1930s, one of Maureen Flavin's favourite films was *Dante's Inferno* (1935) which starred Spencer Tracy His character, she believes, epitomised a sense of 'manliness' At first Maureen listed an all male list as film star favourites which included Tyrone Power, Hughie Hayward, Tom Conway and Errol Flynn Later when I asked Maureen if she had favourites female actresses she mentioned Ruth Roman in *Strangers on a Train* (1951), Rita Hayworth *"for glamour"* and Paulette Goddard who she recalls visiting Dublin with her husband Burgess Meredith Bette Davis was also a favourite, and what stood out about Davis was her 'confidence' and a behaviour that few Dublin women of the period would countenance Maureen also kept a scrapbook of her favourite stars which she cut from film magazines which she bought

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[18] Based on interview material with Ann O'Donoghoe

[19] Thomas Street Folklore Survey, June 1985 MS 2160 Folklore Department University College Dublin

and then passed on to friends [20] From such magazines Maureen picked up fashion and hair style ideas She smiled as she recalled buying a cigarette holder after seeing a film actress use one on screen Such magazines provided another contact point with the cinema audience and besides playing an advertising function ensured that images of stars were further circulated (Ellis,1985) Visiting film stars to Dublin such as James Cagney, Paulette Godard, Alec Guinness, Rita Hayworth, Grace Kelly, Laurel and Hardy, and Tyrone Power further reinforced the star system (Dyer,1990) Maureen Flavin also mentioned that Yul Brynner came to Dublin to visit his son who was a student in Trinity College [21]

According to Jackie Stacey's cross-class research survey on the relationship between British female audiences and female Hollywood stars of the 1940s and 1950s, 'escapism' was one of the *"most frequent reasons given"* for their *"cinema-going enthusiasm"* (Stacey,1994 91) Relating her finding to Richard Dyer's analysis of the concept of 'escapism' and his notion of 'utopian sensibility', Stacey documents convergence and divergences from Dyer's dual formulation For Dyer, 'entertainment forms' can be understood in terms of *"abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and community"* (Dyer,1985 228) Stacey's findings concur in terms of 'abundance' where women reported on the pleasures of the 'ritualised event', i e , the contrast between the luxurious cinema surroundings (its 'other worldliness') and the duller domestic space Her respondent's accounts of the communal experience tallies with Dyer's understanding of 'community'

As with women, men also expressed an interest in film magazines Paddy Duffy bought Picture Goer, The Movies and the Irish publication The Screen As a film fan he wrote away to Universal City and was sent signed photographs of Doris Day and Gordon Mc Crae As a young man Paddy's favourite film stars were Errol Flynn and Humphrey Bogart What Paddy liked about such actors was their 'independence' When discussing the impact cinema had on him, Paddy mentioned the *"things that you*

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[20] Based on interview material with Maureen Flavin

[21] I have my own vague memories of standing outside the American ambassador's residence in the Phoenix Park in Dublin with my mother who had traveled across the city in the hope of seeing the film star Grace Kelly I can still recall the large shiney black car and Kelly's wave and smile to us! At least that is how I remember it

wouldn't have been conscious of at the time", such as the way men smoked and drank on screen According to Paddy, Hollywood film stars like Bob Hope gave Dubliners a sense that their own 'one liners' were a form of comedy rather than simply being a form of dry Dublin working class wit. Terms used in Hollywood films entered the vocabulary of working class Dubliners One such term according to Paddy was *"thats it, period"*, an abrupt term used by screen gangsters and picked up by Dubliners

Cinema provided a range of points of identification, with cinemagoers developing their own sense of identity in their relationship with particular stars, for example, notions of femininity or masculinity were either confirmed or challenged It is in this context that Gabriel Byrne's description of *"the lovely dark womb of the picture-house"* is worth examining (Byrne,1994 34) The pleasurable free-floating associations of the pre-Oedipal and the later identification with the m/other as theorised by Jacques Lacan is crucial to a tendency within film studies which focuses on the question of 'identification,' a process crucial to the construction of identity According to the media theorist John Ellis, a process of dual identification creates a bond between members of the audience and that which appears on the screen According to Ellis there is firstly the

> *"dreaming and phantasy that involve the multiple and contradictory tendencies within the construction of the individual"*

and then secondly

> *"the experience of narcissistic identification with the image of a human figure perceived as other"* (Ellis,1982 43)

For Jackie Stacey, 'identification' in film studies involves *"sympathising or engaging with character"*, and the process of watching from the character's (visual or narrative) 'point of view' As such, 'identification' refers to *"a set of cultural process which describe different kinds of connections between spectators/readers and fictional others"* (Stacey,1994 130) Of significant importance to a feminist understanding of 'identification' is the role of the male spectator's gaze and the positioning of women in terms of both that gaze and the film narrative At its heart feminist film theory is a critique of the patriarchy which results in women and men occcupying unequal positions to each other within the gender hierarchy In focusing on the memories of female spectators rather than the film themselves, Stacey found that psychoanalytic

film theory was both '*unsatifactory*' and '*reductive*' (Stacey,1994 170-171) As a result she widens the range of her ethnographic study According to Stacey memory

> "*involves a set of complex cultural processes these operate at a psychic and social level, producing identities through the negotiation of 'public' discourses and 'private' narratives These histories of spectatorship are retrospective reconstructions of a past in the light of the present and will have been shaped by the popular versions of the 1940s and 1950s which have become cultural currency during the intervening years*" (Stacey 1994 63)

Dublin working class cinema audience responses differed from that of music hall Gone was the often rowdy audience engagement with those on stage, the unrestrained laughter and shouting But that is not to say that Dublin working class audiences fell silent Some of the people I spoke to remembered people 'talking back at the screen'. Former cross channel docker, Tom Byrne, recalls being present in the New Electric on Talbot Street during the second world war when the re-screening of a previously seen film prompted a near-riot, which resulted in a new film been sent for and screened In 1957 there were the Teddy Boy riots during screenings of *Rock Around the Clock* (1956), which featured Bill Haley and the Comets As part of the Garda response to the cinema-based disturbances the legendary Garda,'Lugs' Brannigan, who in Dublin popular mythology took on the notorious Animal Gang single handedly, ended up seeing the film over ninety times¹ (Neary,1986 56-58)

Prior to the 1960s, cinema-goers in Dublin tended not to pick and choose films as they do in the 1990s, but went to the cinema irrespective of what was on As well as frequenting their local cinemas Dubliners had their favourite cinemas in town If city centre dwellers missed a recommended film when it was shown in town, they had a second chance of seeing it when it was screened in a suburban cinema Besides the main film, the schedule included advertisements, cartoons, newsreels, a short film and trailers As for the 'shorts' Paddy Duffy and Maureen Flavin mentioned *James A Fitzpatrick's Travelogue* and *John Nesbits's Passing Parade*, a series produced by MGM

In the course of interviewing Paddy Duffy he mentioned how he had preferred Movietone News (linked to Twentieth Century Fox) than Pathe News (linked to the Rank Organisation) In doing so, he stressed the importance of newsreels in a pre-

television era Allen Collinge told me that the Carlton Cinema was the first to show Movietone newsreels and that he vividly recalls the *"harrowing scenes from German concentration camps"* Paddy Duffy singled out the *Time Marches On* newsreels also which dealt with Nazi war crimes. The ideological potential of such broadcasts was reinforced by the 'captive audience' factor and the lack of alternative visual media Cinematic images of emaciated human beings been liberated from Nazi concentration camps had a potency that surpassed the spoken or written word

The popularity of cinema continued throughout the 1950s and reports from Irish cinema managers in the April 1960 edition of Kinematography Weekly expressed relief that the *"customary seasonal falling -off in business noticed during the Lenten period"* was not as sharp as that of the previous year, and that there were *"no new complications to the already difficult conditions created by Dublin being within fringe television reception from both BBC and UTV"* Despite the optimism expressed by those in the cinema trade, there could be no denying that the 1960s would witness an end to the special relationship Dublin working class audiences had to the cinema That changing relationship was directly related to the increased circulation of international capital and culture, the closure of the Theatre Royal in 1962, shorter opening hours in suburban cinemas (changing from 2 to 6 o'clock houses), and the rise in home based leisure activities centred on television viewing following the arrival of Telifis Eireann in December 1961

5.3.   Cinemas as Venues of Love and Romance.

In a period in which many working class Dubliners lived in tenement or overcrowded living conditions and publicans did not encourage the custom of young women, cinemas were the most popular venues for heterosexual couples When I asked Bill Doyle about bringing girlfriends to the 'pictures', he recalled how young men would 'chance their arm' by saying to the usher/ette *"backseat please"* in the hope of some intimacy [22] In an interview conducted by the Thomas Street Folklore Survey in the mid 1980s, a Mrs Hickey recalled how during the time she frequented Dublin cinemas

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[22] Based on interview material with Bill Doyle

as a young woman *"the fellas would be eating the girls at the back seat"*.[23]
According to Michael McGovern , a colloquialism of the day was, *"get your hand off me knee, here's your Woodbine back"*.

The popularity of the cinema for courting couples was that it provided a private space in a public venue for pre-marital intimacy which was deemed to be socially acceptable. According to Eric Hobsbawm the popularity of the cinema for British courting couples was that it:

> *"not only cost less and lasted longer than a drink or variety show, but could be- and was- more readily combined with the cheapest of all enjoyments – sex"* (cited in Jones,1987:10).

According to Allen Collinge when you *"started going with a girl"* the two of you went to the cinema *"because there was nowhere else to go"*.[24] It was one of the unmentioned aspects of the courting ritual or 'company keeping' that when a young women accepted an invitation to go to the 'pictures', made after meeting at a dance for example, she was indicating her attraction towards the young man and her wish to see him again. Maureen Flavin told me how it was a *"fellow's privilege"* to buy the ticket,[25] chocolates and cigarettes followed by coffee or a visit to a Milk Bar.[26] To be taken to an ice cream parlour after a film was a special treat.[27] According to Ann O'Donoghoe, who has worked on the sales kiosks of several Dublin cinemas, it was *"unheard"* of for female patrons to buy either the ticket or the sweets or refreshments when accompanied by a male partner.[28]

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[23] Thomas Street Folklore Survey June 1985/June 1986. A Survey conducted under the auspices of the Thomas Street Heritage Project and presently housed in the Irish Folklore Department. University College Dublin.

[24] Based on interview material with Allen Collinge.

[25] According to Mairin Johnson it was more a case of being *"obliged to pay for her"* than a privilege.

[26] Gay Byrne describes that when he worked as an assistant manager in the Strand Cinema, North Strand, [which he describes as a *"dump"* with a staff that *"could wipe your eye in a flash"*] *" A lot of time was spent checking stocks of ice cream and pop corn, because this was the beginning of the big sales push in cinema-chains and the pop corn was becoming more important than the movies. Indeed, head office secretly believed that they could run a good sweet shop if only the pesky customers didn't keep on insisting on seeing films all the time"* (Byrne, 1972:5). No comment required!

[27] Based on interview material with Maureen Flavin.

[28] Based on interview material with Ann O'Donoghoe. Ann started working in Fairview Cinema when she was thirteen in 1957 at £1.26 a week working as a sales girl. To get the position she pretended to be fourteen. In that position she carried a tray of 6d ice cream tubs, Orange Maids and 6d bags of pop corn and was lit up by a spot light as she stood in the front of the cinema during the intervals. Since then she has remained, on and off, in the sales end of the cinema business and in 1995 had worked almost 37 in the cinema trade.

Joanna Bourke describes cinema as a *"sexual educator"* and states that in England *"Books were almost as educative as the cinema"* In that regard she mentions that Marie Stopes's <u>Married Love</u>, which had been published in 1918, had sold 400,000 copies by 1923 (Bourke,1994.35-36) Given that such literature was banned in Ireland it is safe to assume that cinema played an even greater role as a *"sexual educator"* in the Irish context, confirming, in the words of Eamonn MacThomais, *"What you didn't learn at school you learned from films"*(MacThomais,1988 6) Due to the over crowded living conditions, one of the few opportunities married couples had for sexual intimacy was when their children were at the cinema during the weekend

5.4. Dublin cinemas: their characteristics

In Paddy Duffy's memory it was the butterfly decorated curtains in the Adelphie Cinema and the marble decor in the Green Cinema that gave it its distinctiveness In contrast, Tom Byrne's memories of the New Electric on Talbot Street was not its decor, but the noise and vibrations which were heard and felt throughout the cinema when trains on route to Amiens Street station virtually passed overhead.[29] According to Paddy Duffy, the film *The Smallest Show on Earth* (1957) which centres on a run-down English cinema, and featured Peter Sellers and Margaret Rutherford as projectionist and cashier respectively, was an excellent portrayal of 'flea pit' cinemas, which also existed in Dublin during the first half of the century

Then there were the various smells associated with Dublin cinemas, yet another barometer of social class An *"abiding memory"* for Charles E Kelly of the Abercorn Hall Picturedrome on Harcourt Road in the early 1910s was the *"strong smell of Jeyes Fluid or some similar carbolic concoction"* (Kelly,1976 17) Bill Doyle, who first went to the Camden Picture House in 1937 when he was 12, recalled that *"there was always a smell of Jeyes Fluid"* in the cinema, *"but in a way it was an attraction - a familiar smell"* [30] Michael Mc Govern, who saw his first film, the serial *The Clutching*

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[29] Based on interview material with Tom Byrne Tom, grew up in the North Wall area of Dublin and later worked as a docker in the cross-channel section of Dublin port He now lives in Portmarnock where he continues to maintain close contact with old friends and acquaintances from the north inner city

[30] Based on interview material with Bill Doyle

Hand, in 1935 at the age of six, described the smell emanating from the exit doors of the Kingstown Picture House after a show as been one of body odour and cigarette smoke – *"a pong"*. [31] For Paddy Duffy the smell in both the Phoenix and The New Electric was one of urine mixed with that of oranges. Some of the more upmarket cinemas were sprayed with perfume, even though that was not publicly acknowledged as was the case in London cinemas (O'Brien & Eyles, 1993). [32]

According to Paddy an epidemic of fleas during 'The Emergency' was linked to the widespread availability of turf, which was stacked in the Phoenix Park prior to delivery throughout the city. Paddy also described how in the New Electric *"usherettes would appear during the show with flit-guns to counteract the smell and attempt to keep the fleas at bay"*. Allen Collinge told me his father's joke of two fleas coming out of the Volta Cinema and one asking the other *"will we walk or hop a dog"?* According to his father it was said of the Mary Street Cinema that *"if the fleas didn't bite you, you got your money back"*. [33] While the presence of fleas in Dublin cinemas is sometimes referred to with nostalgia, their existence was part of a harsher reality. According to Ann O'Donoghoe, who in 1998 had worked in Dublin cinemas over forty years, the existence of fleas was an indication of poverty and insanitary housing conditions in Dublin tenements where fleas lived in the damp wallpaper. [34]

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[31] Based on interview material with Michael McGovern. Michael was born in 1929, grew up in Dunlaoghaire where he still lives. He saw his first film at six years of age and continued going regularly up to the 1960s. Following a family tradition he served his time as a plumber and after joining the trade married and has a grown family. Nowadays Michael has a keen interest in local and military history.

[32] Based on interview material with Paddy Duffy.

[33] Allen told me that his father, who was known by the names Alan, Lennie and/or Bertie, was a projectionist in the Volta where he got the job after carrying out electric work on the premises. He remembered James Joyce, the cinema's manager, as *"a quiet man"* whom he met on his *"comings and goings"*. In those early days of cinema the projector was cranked by hand and Lennie would joke about speeding up the film when he wanted to get home early. According to him films were slow to catch on at first and the cost of entry inhibited those whose with limited resources. He started his married life in Galway where he worked in the Town Hall as a projectionist before taking part in the 1914-18 war. On his return he got a job in the Grafton Cinema where he organised the projectionists into the Electricians Trade Union (ETU), but scabs broke the strike and furthermore his attempts unionise the members into the ETU were resisted by the ITGWU and ended up being blacklisted by that union. He then teamed up the three brothers known as the Carron Brothers Travelling Cinema who like himself had fought in the war. Together they traveled along the south coast ending up in Kilkee. The projectionist sat in a steel box which was bolted together for fire safety and the show included banjo playing. Alan later returned to Dublin where he got a job in the Stella Cinema, Rathmines, when sound was being introduced. Such were the hiccups with the new development that in *"some of the westerns the horses were talking"* due to lack of synchronisation with the sound disks. He became a member of No. 7 Branch of the ITGWU when P.J O'Toole was secretary of the branch and Bob Tait, chief projectionist in the Savoy Cinema, was President. After retiring he sometimes stood in for projectionists in the Inchicore Cinema near where he lived and was projectionist in the Censors office until he retired at eighty years of age.

[34] Based on interview material with Ann O'Donoghoe.

In drawing attention to the class nature of Dublin during the 1920s, Paddy Crosbie described how seating in Catholic churches was arranged on the basis of *"positive class distinction"*. Furthermore he parallels that divide with a class divide in cinema audiences. According to Crosbie, altar boys - the sons of shopkeepers and publicans *"went to large picture - houses down town"* while the sons of the *"ordinary working people"* went to the 'penny rush' in the Phoenix Cinema (Crosbie,1984:141-142). According to Michael Mc Govern class distinction in terms of cinema going was reflected in the cost of admission and interestingly he was more conscious of a Catholic/Protestant distinction growing up in Dunlaoghaire. [35] Allen Collinge also believes that the difference in cinema tickets corresponded to social divisions/ distinctions. He also mentioned how coloured ropes acted as a barrier to divide off the 'posh' sections of some cinemas.

Confirming such class distinction, Bill Doyle described to me how:

> *"the middle class would go to the Grafton- people who went to the Mayro* [Mary Street Picture House] *would never go to the Grafton, young women might meet their friends and go there".*

Bill also mentioned specific cinemas that working class Dubliners frequented. For example, people from the Queen Street and the Bridewell neighbourhoods went to the Volta and the Mary Street Picture House, people from Ballybough and Fairview to the Fairview Grand and the Strand cinemas, and those from the North Wall and Talbot Street area, the Masterpiece and the New Electric, both on Talbot Street.[36]

According to Eamonn Mac Thomais, the author of several popular histories of Dublin, cinemas were an integral part of working class communities:

> *"The local cinema was more than a picture house, it was a community centre, place to kill a few hours, something to look forward to, a chance for your mother to wear her new hat, a university of conversation, because whoever saw the picture first*

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[35] Based on interview material with Allen Collinge. Allen started working as a page boy in the Savoy Cinema in 1928 at the age of fourteen. He served his apprenticeship as a projectionist in the Rotunda Cinema and subsequently worked in several cinemas throughout the city until his last employment in The Stella Cinema, Rathmines. Like his father he later worked as the projectionist in the censor's office until he too was eighty years of age.

[36] Based on interview material with Bill Doyle.

> would come home and tell the whole road about it"
> (Mac Thomais,1977 10) [37]

In her account of cinema going among working class Briton between 1890 and 1960, Joanna Bourke makes the point that it *"encourage*[d] *socialising between people living in the district"* But she also makes the point that parents might have been sent their children to the cinema to *"keep them away from neighbouring children"* (Bourke 1994 143)

In discussing what she described as *"this rest-of-the-audience factor"*, Elizabeth Bowen captured that social, communal dimension of cinema going, which a cultural studies approach to media studies addresses Bowen also made the point that 'something' was missing when not seeing a *"Gracie Fields film in Gracie Fields country"*, (working class London), a social reality which she attributes to the debatable notion that *"hard-living people like to have some one to admire, they like what is like themselves"* (Bowen,1938 209)

5.5. Getting in at all Costs.

A limited disposable income was a significant factor in the lives of most working class Dubliners during the first half of the century and while, in hindsight, the 'fourpenny rush' may seem an inexpensive form of entertainment, that was not the case for many working class families It must also be remembered, especially when countering the more romanticised versions of 'the good old days' that the owners of Dublin cinemas never opened their doors for free. So economic factors did determine, to a large extent, the choice of cinema and the location of the seat within the cinema for working class patrons As with the design and decor of cinemas, admission costs paralleled the class structure of Dublin society That distinction can be judged by comparing the entry costs to two Dublin cinemas in the 1910s Admission to the Sackville Street Picture House on O'Connell Street, which opened shortly after the Volta in 1909, cost

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[37] Stephen G Jones makes the point that cinemas in working class districts of Britain prior to World War One were *"collective cultural institutions, bringing working people together and providing common identities and reference points"* (Jones,1987 12)

6d for the parterre and one shilling for the balcony [38] As part of that price *"patrons were supplied with a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits free during the performance"* (Hanlon,1943 98) In contrast, ticket prices for the Irish Cinema on Capel Street, which was frequented by predominantly working class patrons, were 3d, 4d, and 6d, four years later in 1913 [39] In the same year cinema admission prices in the Kingstown Picture House in Dunlaoghaire were 3d, 6d and 1s (McGovern,1996 36) A comparative indication of what these prices meant in 1913 can be gleaned from the fact that in that year a pint of Guinness cost 3d (old pence) [40]

Confirming the fact that the cost of some cinema tickets were beyond the income of working class Dubliners, Greg Dalton, in his reminiscences of Dublin during the 1950s, wrote that going to the Green or the Grafton Cinemas was out of the question as *"we couldn't afford them"* (Dalton,1994 80) In hindsight, cultural factors may also have contributed to a reluctance by members of the working class to frequent such cinemas In other words they may not have felt welcome in a cinema with a predominantly middle class clientele But there again Paddy Duffy was a regular visitor to the Green Cinema, which raises the question - did city centre (Paddy lived in the city centre) working class Dubliners have a great sense of spatio-cultural mobility

Kevin Rockett, the Irish film historian, in contrasting Dublin patterns of cinema attendance to other metropolitan centres between the 1920s and 1950s draws attention to the *"sad fact"* that the

> *"famous Dublin cinema queue was often for the cheapest priced tickets, as the depressed economic conditions of the Dublin working class precluded them from admission to the more expensive seats"* (Rockett,1991)

That trend echoed that of British experience where in 1934 *"80% of cinema admission were for seats not above one shilling"*, thus confirming the majority working class patronage of British cinemas (cited in Jones,1987 7)

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[38] According to Margaret O'Brien and Allen Eyles(1993) *"Typical evening admission prices at a leading South London cinema showing new circuit releases in the late Thirties were "front stalls sixpence, back stalls one shilling, back circle one shilling-and-sixpence front circle two shillings"*

[39] The Irish Worker 9/8/1913

[40] Based on information from Guinness Brewery, James Street, Dublin

Rather than present a homogeneous profile of the Dublin working class cinema audience, it is important to point out the social distinctions made by working class patrons themselves In giving her account of that distinction Annie Byrne explained that paying 8 pence for the 'cushioners' upstairs afforded the patron greater comfort than the '4 penny' 'woodeners' downstairs in the Palace Cinema on Pearse Street Annie added that she herself *"wouldn't dream of going downstairs"*

Paddy Crosbie recalled the various ways in which Dublin working class boys and girls procured money for the cinema, besides receiving it from their parents or family as pocket money, or more likely for running errands According to Paddy Crosbie, an eight-penny tram ticket to Dalkey was identical in size, shape and colour to that used for entry to the Volta, a *"dodge"* which worked for a while (Crosbie 1984 119) Paddy Duffy used to get 1/2d or *"a slice of bread and jam"* from his grandmother, Granny Smith after going for messages, which was invariably a *"a pint of plain porter"* Michael McGovern described raising money for the cinema by gathering and selling bottles, bones, fire wood, rabbit skins etc, during the 1930/40s According Liam Weldon, growing up in the Coombe in the same period

> *"we'd go around after Sunday dinner, and you could get a bucket*
> *of greasy water, and get a few hard crusts and throw it And you'd*
> *go down to Ennis's Ennis's had a big yard and they kept pigs*
> *You got your penny or tuppence for the greasy water, and you*
> *were able to go to the Phoenix down below, or the Tivoli or*
> *whatever"* (Weldon,1988 25)

Eamonn MacThomais has written how if he didn't 'bunk-in' into the cinema as a youngster during the 1930s, a jam-jar would raise a ha'penny and a whiskey bottle a penny During the same period altering the ticket number in the Leinster Cinema in Dolphin's Barn would give youngsters the opportunity to see repeat shows using the same ticket However, ticket numbers were checked by ushers and usherettes to prevent it happening

A shortage of bottles during world war two further enhanced the value of disposable glassware, and for the likes of Paddy Duffy it provided a regular source of income towards the price of a cinema ticket

Table 5 1   Prices for Glassware Empties during the 1940s

Hair Oil Bottles	1/8 of 1d
Sauce Bottles	1/4 of 1d
Jam Jars, 1 lb	1/2 of 1d
Jam Jars, 2 lb	1d
Large Stone Jar	5d
Wine Bottles	2d

Source Information contributed by Paddy Duffy

Some of the people I interviewed and spoke to stated that the practice of paying into cinemas with bottles had been discontinued by the 1960s, and had in fact died out after the shortage of glassware during the war years Others have told me that during the 1950s they were traded on the queue rather than being brought to the kiosk in lieu of cash payment Before that glassware was brought to scrap merchants etc rather than the actual cinemas themselves

5.6. Taste and Escapism.

According to Elizabeth Bowen the *"degree in pleasure sought"* was the same for *"all sorts"* of cinema patrons, what differed was their taste in films and that differed *"widely"* (Bowen,1938 207) In making such a distinction Bowen foreshadows the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who in his cultural analysis investigates how forms of consumption reveal patterns of taste, which are, in turn, markers of social class (Bourdieu,1986) In considering Bowen's claims it is worth returning to Allen Collinge's account of his mother and aunt going to the matinees in the Green Cinema *"to live in beautiful houses"* [41] Needless to say, the lives of two working class women from the Liberties differed from that of middle class women such as Bowen As a result it is reasonable to assume that representations of *"beautiful houses"* would hold more fascination for working class women So by implication they possessed a different sense of taste However, the pleasures gained from the cinematic portrayal of

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[41] Based on interview material with Allen Collinge

glamour, or a well told story, were not exclusive to women from any one social class
Furthermore all women share common points of reference vis a vis patriarchy, which,
to a large degree, transcends social class

The idea of forgetting, of losing oneself in 'beautiful houses', of escaping from the
darker aspects of the world beyond the cinema, was also mentioned as a significant
aspect of cinema going by a number of the participants in this research project It also
cropped up in the writings of Dublin working class authors The concept of escaping
was both a process of 'escaping from' and 'escaping into' Based on almost forty years
working in the sales end of the cinema trade, Ann O'Donoghoe spoke of members of
the audience arriving at the cinema in a *"poor mood and leaving cheered up"* She
recalls seen many a moist eye when the house lights came back on after ('tear jerker')
films such as *Imitation of Life* (1959) and *Madame X* (1966) [42]

The concept of 'escaping from' appears in a number of publications written by
working class Dubliners In his recollections of growing up in the Liberties area of
Dublin during the 1920s Lar Redmond describes how those who were

> *"unemployed stood around on street corners penniless but*
> *somehow they managed to scrape the price of the cinema*
> *together, for in the warmth of the building they could forget for a*
> *little while the grim world around Everyone sought refuge in the*
> *picture house"* (Redmond,1988 42)

Escaping from the cold was yet another reason for going to the cinema According to
Annie Byrne many working class women sought the warmth and comfort of the
cinema to avoid lighting a fire at home and thus conserve what were, in many cases,
meagre fuel resources, particularly during the war years when fuel was rationed
Paddy Duffy recounted how elderly men and women on small incomes and those who
were unemployed used the cinema as a place to get in out of the cold during the winter
months According to Paddy the sight of patrons sleeping during a film was not
unusual Annie Byrne also described how some working class women went to film

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[42] Based on interview material with Ann O'Donoghoe I have taken the liberty of assuming that the version of
Madame X Anne is referring to is the 1966, rather that the earlier 1927 and 1937 and later 1981 versions

matinees to avoid the *"society man"* (the official from the insurance company collecting weekly premiums) [43]

For Patrick Boland, son of a carter in Dublin corporation, going to the cinema while growing up in the Liberties during the 1930s/40s was *"pure escapism from everyday worries"* (Boland,1995·44) And writing of his time in the Artane Industrial School during the 1950s, Pat Touher mentions how film shows in the school's custom built cinema meant an *"escape from the reality of our surroundings To me it was pure fantasy, it helped me through many a dreary week"* (Touher,1991 59)

The escapist aspect of cinema has been described in both positive and negative terms by commentators from both sides of the right/left political divide [44] For Gabriel Fallon, one of a number of conservative Catholics who put their worst fears on the 'menace' of cinema into writing, the medium was *"an attractive possessive palliative, an escape from reality, a drug"* (cited in Rothery 1991 195)

There is a suggestion of disapproval expressed in the writings of Dominic Behan on the escapist aspects of cinema In his account of working class Dublin during the 1930s, Behan describes the somewhat *"uppish"* tastes of young people in the tenements of Russell Street with regards to the cinema According to Behan

> *"They created a dream world inhabited only by Al Jolson and*
> *Rudolph Valentinos Their homes were really situated not in the*
> *slums of Monto, but far away on the Pacific seaboard, Sunset*
> *Boulevard"* (Behan,1963 41)

Interestingly, while Behan's understanding of the 'effects' of cinema are escapist, he also writes of a process of imaginary 'creation' In that regard he was probably at odds with the dominant communist/socialist attitude towards Hollywood at the time, which was largely condemnatory in regards to its escapist and frivolous features

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[43] Based on interview material with Annie Byrne Annie was born in 1920 in the Liberties area of Dublin She spent her early married life in the Pearse Street part of Dublin and in 1950 moved to Ballyfermot with her family

[44] Such was the significance of the escapist characteristics of cinema that the BBC1 *People's Century* oral history-based documentary on cinema going was entitled the 'Great Escape' BBC1 25 October 1995

5.7. The Meanings Derived from Cinema.

In the south of Ireland where memories of national oppression and an awareness of 'unfinished business' was pervasive, cinemas became the site of anti-colonial/ imperialist protests which had the support of a sizeable proportion of Irish people [45] But if that was the case, did cinema representations support or detract from an Irish bourgeois hegemony? Jeffery Richards states that in 1930's, British cinema *"played an important part in the maintenance of the hegemony of the ruling class"*, which was achieved in the way in which

> *"The actual films were used either to distract or to direct the audience's views into approved channels, by validating key institutions of hegemony, such as the monarchy and Empire, and promoting those qualities useful to society as presently constituted hard work, monogamy, cheerfulness, deference, patriotism"* (Richards, 1989 323)

In the absence of an Irish film industry, film representations were virtually all imported from North America and England [46] It was in its naturalisation of capitalist relations of production and the sexual division of labour, that British and United States films were most effective in maintaining bourgeois hegemony Such films fulfilled a similar role for the Irish bourgeoisie Paddy Duffy told me that seeing representations of the 'American Dream' in Hollywood films prompted thoughts *"at the back of the head"* which touched on social inequity in Irish society He admits that when he saw cinematic images of North American boys with bicycles of their own it did encourage aspirations for such possessions

Hollywood's most progressive portrayals involved the relatively powerless individual standing up to the powerful, be they land owners, corrupt business men, bigots, bullies and/or racists, an adult version of 'goodies' and 'baddies,' except with more complex and sometimes problematising narratives. Paddy Duffy spoke to me how the story of *Boys Town* (1938) presented an alternative to adult bullying of young men Positive and strong male and female ideal roles were played by actors such as Spencer Stracey

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[45] Both Allen Collinge and Tom Byrne informed me that 'anti-British' protests occurred in several Dublin cinemas prior to 1960, particularly directed against newreels of the British royal family

[46] According to Des Geraghty, Luke Kelly's *"musical tastes were dominated by America"* and in that regard *"Our entertainment came straight from celluloid"* (Geraghty, 1994 30)

and Bette Davis, respectively Such characterisations were the antipathy of individual subjugation and as such were potential positive role models But while the response to oppression was invariably courageous, it was seldom collective and when, for example, in *On the Waterfront* (1954) a stand is made against corruption, it is made by an individual Furthermore it is directed against a corrupt union official, rather than an exploitative employer Working class collective political action is never valorised Hollywood's reluctance to portray positive representations of collective working class actions extends to representations of the collective aspects of the working class life Commenting on Hollywood's representations of working class life during the 1930s, Leonard Quart and Albert Auster make the point that *"there was always a tendency for the movies to patronise and trivialise the working class"* and that in

> *"Warner's social conscience epics - never got beyond depicting workers as a mixture of urban ethnics, taxi-drivers, bellhops and chorus girls, all looking for the main chance - a world of elegance that was epitomised by a snap brim hat, a double breasted suit and diamond pinky ring"*
> (Quart & Auster,1981 163)

Hollywood's promotion of the 'American dream' was paramount, and irrespective of the occasional and important cinematic representations of anti-racism and pleas for tolerance, bourgeois individualism was pervasive Working class people were invariably portrayed as 'salt of the earth' characters Hollywood cinematic representations never suggested that working class people could take ownership of the earth The myth that anybody could make it to the top of the pyramid was repeatedly portrayed in 'lucky break' films and the alternative 'Soviet model' of collective political action largely castigated Communists, when represented in Hollywood films were stereotyped as sinister, anti-American, anti-family and anti-Christ Members or sympathisers of the Communist Party of the USA or its associate organisations were witchhunted out of Hollywood during the 1940s and 1950s by the House Committee on Un-American Activities An example of an anti-communist film was *The Woman on Pier 13* (1950) in which a former communist who has become the vice-president of a San Francisco shipping company is blackmailed by the Communist Party In Ireland the message of anti-communist films dovetailed with bourgeois opposition to communism/socialism and the call for prayers for the conversion of Russia and China by the Catholic Church hierarchy

The British and North American cinema industry had both ideological and economic characteristics, and as an industry was embedded in capitalist relations of production This reality ensured that cinema industry executives did not threaten their own existence by permitting cinematic representations which questioned those relations of production. Irrespective of the countless hours of pleasure cinema provided, its message was limited to showing how *"Prometheus was set free"*, rather than in promoting the *"pleasure in freeing him"*, to quote the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht While Brecht's comments focus on the theatre, encouraging the *"pleasure of changing reality"*, can also be related to the medium of cinema (cited in Fischer, 1978 10) There can be little doubt that mainstream cinematic representations contributed to making audience members feel 'bigger' for a few hours However, its encouragement of an anti-patriarchal capitalist awareness was virtually non-existent Furthermore, unless heightened awareness was translated into some form of political action or response, then the contribution of cinema in that regard was limited So at best 'utopian sensibilities' represented a dream rather than a political vision

Probably the most thorough critics of the Hollywood system were the members of the Frankfurt School who relocated to North America following the rise of Nazism in Germany during the 1930s In Dialectics of the Enlightenment (1949) Theoror Adorno and Max Horkheimer stated that an increased 'reification' within (monopoly) capitalist society found its expression in the 'culture industry' which they believed had a controlling/manipulative function. They also believed that the process of commodification of culture led to standardisation and administration (Jay,1996) Along similar lines, in 1948 the German composer Hanns Eisler wrote that

> *"the culture industry, like every other industry, satisfies needs*
> *These needs arise from the necessity of the masses to reproduce*
> *the labour power that they have expended in alienated working*
> *processes That is to say the needs arise from the necessity to*
> *have repose, to relax and to have amusement at any price and at*
> *a low one"* (Eisler,1978 156-7)

Rather than focusing exclusively on its hegemonic features I have sought to discover the resistances expressed in the words of working class Dubliners In doing so, I am mindful of Todd Gitlin's warning not to elevate the idea of audience 'resistance' to some form of *"work against fascism"* as he thinks is the case with some research conducted by contemporary cultural and media critics (Gitlin,1996 336)

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The idea that cinema gave expression to issues not normally part of day to day currency in pre-1960s Ireland was expressed by a number of participants in this research project and the Dublin working class writers whom I have quoted in this chapter For example, Lar Redmond wrote that as a child during the 1920s he expected no support from his mother when he had not raised the necessary money for the cinema, because in her belief *"pictures have the children ruined today"* Such a view, according to Redmond, was also *"backed by the priest and the Canon, who weekly slated the Hollywood imports"* that were considered to be a *"pernicious and diabolical influence on the young and we, the generation of the damned, were knee deep in mortal sins"* (Redmond,1988 44)

If cinema provided adults with a place in which to explore liberating images and representations of sexuality, the Catholic clergy were quick to link the influence of cinema to forms of moral deterioration (Rockett,1991) In taking such a stand, clerics allied themselves to conservative elements within Irish society who placed restrictions on the body and opposed the flowering of various forms of human sexuality Not only were films edited by official censors, in other cases, albeit exceptional, by projectionists prompted by their own conservative values

In its pronouncements on cinema, the Catholic Church hierarchy sought to restrict freedom of expression It adopted a particularly protective attitude towards girls For example, in a 1941 edition of <u>The Irish Messenger</u> publication entitled <u>What a Girl Should Know Being the Letters of an Uncle to a Niece</u>, written by Rev L Gallagher S J, his advice was as follows

> *"Plays and pictures are for amusement I would rather you*
> *became interested in the theatre that the cinema If you do go to*
> *the pictures, do not become a slave to them Choose ask those*
> *with discernment before you waste your money, and your time*
> *The stuff shown is not, for the most part, even good entertainment*
> *Much of it is dangerous, the more so because its immorality is*
> *cloaked in richness and loveliness Let the pictures (in strict*
> *moderation) amuse you Learn your morals from whose who have*
> *them"* (Gallagher,1941 14)

Gabriel Fallon, in an air of self satisfied superiority that is representative of a certain strain of thinking towards cinema during the 1930s/40s, warned that the 'unsophisticated' might find the influence of films which included *"Clark Gable*

moustaches, the coiffures a la Garbo Remember the Valentino side locks" as
"tending towards moral, artistic and intellectual degradation" (cited in
Rothery 1991 195) What is most galling about reference to the *"unsophisticated"* is
that it is the working class whom he is referring to For him the working class is the
'other' to the *"nationalist, the economist, the sociologist, the moralist"* who together
consider cinema and the attraction it holds for the 'unsophisticated' *"a menace"* (cited
in Rothery 1991 195) Fallon's concern with pleasure has disturbing resonances with
Matt Talbot's self-mortification of the body and in a retrospective reading is an
articulation of a form of Jansenist Catholicism that abhors bodily pleasure
(Sheehan,1988) According to Fallon, on visiting the cinema *"Your body relaxes in the
ease of the well-sprung, generously padded seat of plush"* and as the *"pleasurable,
attractive, fascinating, penetrative"* experience takes over he warns that *"With your
body off duty, it may be that your mind is off duty too"* (cited in Rothery,1991 195)

If the Catholic Church was fixated on sexual morality (to the exclusion of the morality
of capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression), as an organisation it was at the
forefront of realising the medium's potential In that regard it was directly involved in
the establishment and running of the National Film Institute of Ireland from the mid
1940s By the 1950s the institute was advertising a catalogue of *"1,500 Educational
Films specially chosen for use in Primary and Secondary Schools, Vocational
Schools and Training Colleges"* [47]

When I asked Tom Byrne to what extent he believed that the cinema influenced his
working class peers during the 1920s and 1930s, he replied with the story of how a
representative of the Roman Empire responded to reports of discontent among 'his'
people by suggesting that they be given bread and circus According to Tom cinema
fulfilled a similar role in the 1920s/30s with *"young fellows coming out of cinemas
galloping along hitting horses that weren't there"* Tom also believes that cinema
counteracted the appeal of public meetings held in Dublin during the 1920s Tom
remembers his workmates on the B & I cross channel docks discussing issues they had
heard at such meetings In retrospect Tom now believes that *"cinema changed all
that"* and instead of discussing day to day issues his workmates increasingly discussed

the *"fantasy world of cinema"*. Those discussions diverted attention from issues of poverty, poor housing and high unemployment. In his opinion cinema provided an antidote to communism during the 1920s, and irrespective of its entertainment value, at times promoted racist representations thus *"poisoning the minds of the people"*. In Tom's opinion Chinese people were often portrayed as conniving and Germans shown in a negative light, particularly as World War Two approached.[48]

Exploring the counter-hegemonic responses of interviewees raises a number of questions: From where did such resistant thinking arise? Why did some interviewees articulate a form of ideological critique, while others did not? Knowing that Tom's father had close associations with James Larkin, and was an active trade unionist prior to Larkin's arrival in Dublin, may well explain Tom's proud class consciousness. The fact that Mairin Johnston had an inkling from childhood that Hollywood's representation of the native American Indians was 'racist', and as a young woman recognised that having their *"land stolen"* had parallels with the Irish plantation cannot, in my opinion, be divorced from the fact that republican/socialist politics were spoken about in the Johnston household when she was growing up. Neither can it be divorced from the fact that as an adult Mairin became in involved in communist/ socialist and feminist politics.[49] Mairin's use of the term 'racist' confirms a point made by members of the Popular Memory Group (see Chapter Three) where they argued that oral history, like all history, is *"influenced by discourses and experiences in the present"* (Johnson et al,1982:243). In order to further explore this point I talked to Mairin again, mentioning she had used the word 'racist' to describe the representations of North American Indians. I also asked what made her aware of that oppression as a girl growing up in Pimlico. Having thought for a moment Mairin explained as follows:

> *"The way it was, I'd go into the kitchen where my mother was working and she'd say 'where have you been' and I'd say 'at the pictures'. She would ask me 'what was it about' and I'd say 'cowboy and Indians' to which my mother would have said 'those poor unfortunate Indians' or words to the effect. That's how it*

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[47] Beanati Bulletin of The Past Students' Union St. No. 6. 1957.

[48] According to Tom Byrne, public meetings took place outside the 'Elephant House' on the corner of O'Connell Street and Middle Abbey Street and at other popular public speaking venues such as The Five Lamps on Amiens Street.

[49]. The first ever film Mairin saw was *The Mystery of the Wax Museum* in the Rialto Cinema in 1937 when she was six years of age. Mairin worked in a textile factory in the Liberties, had a family, was a member of the Communist Party of Ireland and later a founder member of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement. She also has a number of publications to her name.

*would go and I would pick up from her that they weren't been
treated right".*

I also spoke to, rather than interviewed, Sam Nolan, a life long trade unionist and
communist/socialist activist whose involvement in the unemployed movement of the
1950s was discussed in Chapter Four. As part of our conversation Sam recalled seeing
the film *Love on the Dole* (1941) as a young man. Sam's recollection of that film was
the sense of a shared experience between working class Dubliners and Britons, the
image of a similar working class way of life and way of poverty. The fact that he saw
the film in the company of his father, a well known Dublin communist, raises the
question whether their conversations about the film contributed to Sam's class
conscious interpretation. Cinema's overall impact was acknowledged by Sam when he
mentioned that as a young man his knowledge of North America came mainly from the
cinema screen. [50]

In the case of Tom Byrne, Mairin Johnson, and Sam Nolan, it is safe to say that their
oppositional or resistant responses to cinematic representations were at least partly
formed by influences beyond the domain of cinema. It can also be argued that these
thought processes had a material foundation rooted in the totality of socio-economic
relationships which existed in Dublin at the time and that included their families and
their social class.

If conservative forces articulated a sense of 'moral panic' in response to cinema, so
too did communist/socialist commentators. In their response to cinema they argued
that 'mass culture,' as expressed in its Hollywood form, provided an 'amusement and
escape' that was both an opiate and detrimental to the interests of the working class.[51]
But those in communist and Left Republican circles were no less aware of its
ideological and propaganda potential than were conservative forces in Ireland.

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[50] Based on a conversation with Sam Nolan. Sam was born in 1930 and grew up in the Cork Street area of
Dublin where his local cinemas were the Rialto, the Leinster and The Fountain. During his teenage years he
frequented the Regal Rooms where he saw films of a *"more mature"* nature. Sam has played an active part in the
Irish labour movement throughout his life.

[51] In Road to Wigan Pier (1937) George Orwell had written that *"the post-war[WW1] development of cheap
luxuries has been a very fortunate thing for our rulers. It is quite likely that fish and chips, art-silk stockings,
tinned salmon, cut-price chocolate (five two-ounce bars for sixpence), the movies, the radio, strong tea, and the
football pools have between them averted revolution".* Cited in Eric Hopkins's The Rise and Decline of the
English Working Classes, 1918-1990: A Social History Weidenfeld. 1991. P.37.

During the 1960s John Swift, the then General Secretary of the Irish Bakers'
Confectioners' & Allied Amalgamated Union decided to include facilities for film
screenings in the union's headquarters on Harcourt Street, as previously mentioned in
Chapter Four. George Lawlor P.C., a former union colleague of Swift's, described to
me a scene from a Sergei Eisenstein film which he saw in the union premises.
According to George the film portrayed *"capitalists gorging themselves while workers
were outside starving in the streets"*.[52] By focusing on the collective aspects of class
struggle Eisenstein's films differed fundamentally from Hollywood's prioritising of
individualism and its reluctance to portray collective (working class) political action.[53]
According to Elizabeth Bowen:

> *The Russians break with bourgeois-romantic conceptions of*
> *personality; they have scrapped sex -appeal as an annexe of*
> *singularising, anti-social love. But they still treat with glamour;*
> *they have transferred it to mass movement, to heroicised pro-*
> *human love"* (Bowen,1938:213).

5.8.   Conclusions.

Based on the findings of this chapter the attractions of cinema for Dublin working
class audiences from its commencement in 1909 to 1959 were as follows: its pleasure
for both men, women and children, its escapist qualities, its relative inexpensiveness,
its geographical accessibility, its convenience in terms of peoples' leisure time vis a vis
work in and out of the home, the warmth of the cinema and its communality. Then
there were the specified favourite genres, stars and cinemas. For married women
cinemas were a place apart where for a few hours it was 'their time,' a time and space
beyond the 'duties' of mother and wife. Initially cinema drew its audience on the basis
of curiosity, but as the industry developed audience came and stayed with the new
medium. Cinema compensated for a lack in the lives of working class Dubliners. The
world portrayed in Hollywood films was in stark contrast to the tenements and
inadequate housing conditions, poor working conditions, unemployment and in general

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[52] Based on interview material with George Lawlor, PC. George worked in the bakery trade, was an active
member of the Irish Bakers Union and his political involvement included IRA membership, solidarity work with
the Soviet Union and election agent for Noel Browne when he stood as a Clann na Phoblachta candidate.

[53] In the opening seconds of *Blood Simple* (1984), the lines *"in Russia they have it mapped out so that everyone
pulls for everyone else, that's the theory anyway. What I know about Texas, down here you're on your own"* are
spoken.

the marginalisation experienced by working class Dubliners within the southern state during the first sixty years of this century.

According to Martin McLoone, broadcasting has become *"the primary site for the mediation, promotion and the maintenance of collective identity"* in the twentieth century (McLoone,1991:10). So how did the cinema going experience contribute to a sense of personal and collective class identity among the Dublin working class audience prior to 1960? I will now examine that contention in the light of the contents of this chapter.

While it is problematic to take the responses of the few working class men and women whom I interviewed as being representative of the Dublin working class, when the views of other working class Dubliners who have written their accounts of cinema going are also taken into the picture, so to speak, then I believe that a coherent profile emerges. When that profile is contextualised within the wider patterns of the world of work, domestic life and leisure, as presented in Chapter Four, there can be little doubt that cinema going prior to the 1960s was an integral part of a Dublin working class culture. Contexualised within the wider socio-cultural ensemble of relationships, cinema going in the pre-1960s era can be seen to have dovetailed with the economic and gender divisions of labour, with housing and the social environment. The actual cinema buildings formed part of the spatio-cultural dimension of city centre and suburban working class communities.

The importance of cinema in the lives of working class Dubliners can be further illustrated by the fact that in each decade from the 1910 to the 1950s, its central position was celebrated in popular memory and in print. In the course of researching the material for this particular chapter the issue of memory kept cropping up. Between those I interviewed and the Dublin working class writers I quote, childhood rather than adult memories of cinema going came to the fore. In both groupings of cinema goers the anecdotes, the buildings, the smells, and cinema employees were remembered more so than the actual film narratives which they saw. Perhaps at the time the films were seen they were not given the singular importance now bestowed upon them by film critics and theorists.

In answering the question why do *"countless millions read books, listen to music, watch the theatre, go to the cinema"*, Ernst Fischer answered by stating that men and women want to be more than themselves, to be 'whole,' to attain 'fullness' which *"individuality with all its limitations cheats"* them of They strive towards a more comprehensible, a more just world and meaningful world to make their *"limited 'I' in art with a communal existence, to make [their] individuality social"* (Fischer,1963 7-8) That act of striving (albeit imaginary) encompasses the utopian potential of cinema and connects with a world beyond what Fisher calls the 'I'

When set against the descriptions of forgetting, of escape from Dublin slum housing conditions, the drudgery of unemployment, domestic labour or the confines of an Irish Industrial School, then Richard Dyer's (1995) concept of 'utopian sensibility' becomes fully transparent. Cinematic representations portrayed the 'ideal' male and female and, in centreing on the individual, never countenanced a working class political action capable of transforming the capitalist relations of production Working people were portrayed as decent and hard working, and for that they got the *"diamond pinky ring"* (Quart & Auster,1981 163) It is only with an understanding of the range of socio-economic and other forms of inadequacies experienced by working class Dubliners prior to the 1960s that the specific nature of the escape into the frivolous and alternative modes of consciousness can be understood Escaping from the consequences of class exploitation and patriarchal (and indeed national) oppression in the world of cinema obviously had its attraction And if film gave rise to a utopian 'yearning' (hooks,1991) that, I believe, is a positive factor

That sense of yearning among working class Dubliners sometimes found its expression beyond the cinema, in the 'national democratic' phase of the Irish NDR However, unless the awareness arising from cinema was channelled into a viable political outlet for change, the response could equally have been one of frustration and illusion In Chapter Four I examined some of the communist/socialist inspired political and cultural projects partly to offset any exaggerated utopian claims ascribed to cinema by media and cultural critics While those project were tied into an 'agenda of change' Hollywood films never made such claims

The communal aspect of cinema going was frequently singled out for mention by both the project participants and other Dublin working class writers The communal bond of queuing, sitting, watching, laughing, crying etc were all part of collective memory of cinema It is those recollections that endure as much as favourite film stars or genre A 'sense of belonging' to an audience was a distinguishing feature of the cinema-going experience and contributed to a sense of heightened collective consciousness, of common identification The experience of cinema going linked into the distinguishing characteristics of Dublin working class culture, i e its collectivist nature, its tendencies towards solidarity etc.[54] Meanings were not only derived from the immediate encounter with screen representations, but also in later retellings and post-mortems with family, friends, neighbours and work-mates

Cinema going was important to working class Dubliners because it provided a space for dreams, fantasy, escapism, identification, imagination, learning and sexual pleasure It is for those reasons that the memories persist and became integral to personal and collective working class cultural identity

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[54] See John Fiske's and John Hartley's (1985) discussion of the relevance of Marx's distinction between a class in and for itself for identifying the social class in audience research

Chapter Six

WORK, HOUSING AND LEISURE
PART TWO (1960 -1990s).

"Dublin keeps on changing and nothing stays the same" [1]

6.1. Introduction.

If the turn of the 20th century marked the arrival of the Dublin working class in terms of a distinct economic, cultural and political identity, developments in the 1960s were of corresponding significance.[2] Chief among these developments was the impact of the post-war boom in international capitalism on the Irish economy and the related cultural penetration. The combined effects were to alter the face of Irish society and be the main factors in the *"massive transformation"* of the Irish working class (Wickham, 1980:81).

The bourgeois analysis of post-1960 Ireland identifies a process of 'modernisation' overcoming that of the retrogressive forces of 'tradition'. The most articulate advocates of this perspective are Dr. Garret Fitzgerald (former Fine Gael Taoiseach), Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien (former Labour Party Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and recent member of the UK Unionist Party), and the historian Professor Joe Lee, as particularly expressed in their earlier writings. Sections of the 'Irish left' have succumbed, at least in part, to the 'modernisation'/ 'tradition' analysis. An example of this trend is summed up in Paul Bew et al's description of post 1960s Irish society as a *"baffling mixture of modernity and backwardness"* (Bew et al, 1989:10). In such a formulation industrialisation/urbanisation is equated with 'modernity' while nationalism/Catholicism is linked to 'tradition'.[3] One of the side effects of this analysis is that it diverts attention away from the contradiction between imperialism and the

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[1] From the song Dublin in the Rare oul Times.

[2] According to Richard Breen et al *"1958 dates the beginning of the contemporary period in Ireland"* (Breen et al, 1990:5)

[3] In a critique of the modernisation versus tradition analysis Raymond Williams presents his analysis vis a vis the Welsh countryside in "Between Country and City" (Pugh [Ed].1990). Having stated that the country and city were *"indissolubly linked, within the general and crisis-ridden development of a capitalist economy, which had itself produced this division in its modern forms"* Williams goes on to highlight the *"most hopeful social and political movement of our time... emergent 'green socialism', within which ecology and economics can become, as they should be, a single science and source of values, leading to a new politics of equitable livelihood"* . p.18.

Irish people It is as if modernisation[4] has assumed the 'motor' role once bestowed on class struggle and that nationalism has been stripped of its potentially progressive anti-imperialist attributes

Not withstanding the advances which have occurred in post -1960s Ireland, it is an analysis that is fundamentally a fusion of Christian Democrat and neo-liberal ideology As such it is resistant to the ending of class subordination and the abolition of the causes of working class exploitation As Jim Wickham puts it

> *"Historians working within the modernisation perspective may*
> *well be aware of class differences, but questions of class conflict*
> *and class domination must be only secondary to their concerns"*
> (Wickham, 1980 82)

Rather than adopting a 'modernisation'/ 'tradition' analysis to interpret the interconnected changes in post 1960s Ireland, I propose to use an interpretative theoretical 'trellis' which takes account of changing productive forces and relations of production in both class and gender terms It is a metaphor which addresses both the international dimensions of capitalism (its internationalisation / 'globalisation') and the changing shape of Dublin city and county It is a form of analysis that does not atomise human/social reality, but *"offers to study social process in its totality"* (Thompson, 1978 262) My abstract interpretative trellis is 'feminist historical-geographical materialism' (FHGM), a mode of interpretation which was initially introduced in Chapter One and developed in Chapter Two

Guided by the principles of FHGM this chapter will investigate changing labour relations, the growth of (cultural) consumerism and the increased privatisation of leisure My investigation will include an examination of suburbanisation, i e the demographic shift experienced by working class Dubliners as they moved from inner to outer Dublin As in Chapter Four, the cultural self-activity of working class organisations will be examined in terms of cultural production and educational projects Against the totality of these changing sets of relationships, questions of Dublin working class cultural identity will be addressed

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[4] When used in the singular the term 'modernisation' will denote the general meanings of the word arising from modernisation theory' When used with the prefix capitalist' the meaning coincides with David Harvey interpretation presented in Chapter Five of <u>The Condition of Postmodernity</u> (1989)

6.2. Class Politics, Labour and Social Movements.

"Watch out for the man with the silicon chip.
Hold on to your job with a good firm grip.
Cos' if you don't you'll have had your chips,
the same as my old man" Ewan MacColl. [5]

The claim that the 1960s witnessed a transformation of the Irish economy is supported by various sources. For example, an Industrial Development Authority statement recorded that by December 1978, *"656 new industrial projects had been set up by overseas-sponsored companies"* with the assistance of various incentives.[6] A clear indication of how lucrative those incentives were is illustrated in a report on the US Department of Commerce's Annual Statistical Survey of Overseas Direct Investment by Ken O'Brien (the then The Irish Times Business and Finance correspondent). According to O'Brien in 1977 *"the rate of return, after tax, for US manufacturing firms in Ireland was 25.0%"*, which was *"higher than any other country, and more than twice the world average of 11.5%"* (The Irish Times. 12/10/78).

However, while the policy of 'industrialisation by invitation' achieved significant employment gains, the initial successes of the policy failed to provide the necessary boost to the national economy. This situation was acknowledged in the 1982 Telesis Report, which reported that virtually none of the new companies located their 'research and development' in Ireland. Jim Smyth states that foreign industries *"did not act as a locomotive for the development of indigenous industry"* (Smyth, 1991:105). Job losses occurred in food, drink, tobacco, textile, clothing and footwear production, a development which was particularly detrimental to the Dublin working class (McLaren, 1993:59). As Richard Breen et al states:

> *"industrial employment opportunities available to them [working class Dubliners] and their children were concentrated in the old indigenous Irish industry, which fared poorly in the post-1958 era relative to the new industries attracted through the State's development policies"* (Breen et al, 1990:73).

Breen et al (1990) also argue that the fruits of the post-world war two boom were *"very unevenly distributed, leading to a growing polarisation between social classes"* (Breen et al, 1990). Des Smyth also spells out the project of the Irish bourgeoisie, i.e. the appropriation of

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[5] From My Old Man written and sung by Ewan MacColl. [Compact Disk]. 1990 Cooking Vinyl. London

[6] Irish Industrial Authority literature.

the *"major share of the country's wealth"*. This he argues was achieved with the *"help of mass emigration and the power of the Catholic Church"* (*Smyth, 1991:95*).[7] Multi/transnational corporations have also pursued a process of appropriation and have in some instances contributed to the diffusion of social conflict. For example, South Korean companies have introduced anti-union practices, which once taken hold, influence the industrial relations of other Irish-based companies.[8]

In Dublin Port the gradual introduction of 'containerisation' from the late 1960s led to the loss of both permanent and casual employment centered on the import/export trade. According to the Hogan Report (December, 1978), the introduction of container haulage limited the locational advantage of industrial and manufacturing companies based in the dockland areas of Dublin port. The extent of the decline in Dublin docklands is illustrated by the fact that between 1970-76 employment fell by approximately 1,000. In addition, jobs in the garment industry virtually disappeared in the face of the importation of *"cheap synthetic fibres"* (Sheehan & Walsh, 1988). Not only did employment opportunities decline, but so too did the working class dockland communities on either side of the river Liffey. The link between dockland employment and working class communities was organic, a relationship which is often ignored by Irish labour historians. For example, there are few accounts of the role women played in supporting families when the male 'bread winner' was out on strike. In her memories of coping when her husband was on strike from Gouldings, Tessie Dowdall states:

> *"The burden was all on my shoulders. Like I had to borrow money*
> *for the house. I couldn't say that to my husband. Men were*
> *different then. He loved me. But you couldn't sit down and tell*
> *them things. It's a different generation now".* [9]

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[7] While the Irish bourgeoisie is normally reticent about disclosing its wealth, a remark by Tony O'Reilly (perhaps off the cuff) reveals the nature of its power. In a discussion on the acquisition of oil exploration licenses off the Irish coast O'Reilly is reported stating that *"Since I own 35% of papers in Ireland I had close contacts with politicians. I got what we wanted"* Forbes Magazine, 1983. (Based on information compiled for the inaugural conference of Media Watch in Trinity College Dublin, 11 March 1989). To date there has been little scrutiny of the Irish bourgeoisie and its international connections, its family networks, its private clubs, its secret societies and its crimes. Costly tribunals paid for by taxpayers into the beef trade, donations to politicians, safety regulations in the Stardust have left them unpunished as 700 prisoners serve their time in Mountjoy Jail for crimes that are in the most cases incomparable.

[8] I wish to acknowledge that this point was made to me in conversation with Des Bonass, current president of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

[9] Cited in Living in the City. North Inner City Folklore Project.

During the late 1960s new industrial estates were established in suburban Dublin as part of the state's drive to attract foreign investment to the city. Companies such as Cadburys (Ireland) Ltd, Chivers & Sons Ltd, and Jacobs Biscuits were part of a process of industrial/manufacturing relocation. However, these industrial estates lacked the organic link that had existed between the living and working environments of, for example, Dublin's dockland. The relocation of the approximately 3,500 Jacobs/Irish Biscuits workers from Aungier Street to Tallaght had a far-reaching dislocative effect on both the workers and their families. The complex socio-spatial and cultural matrix within which they had lived their lives was disturbed by the move. For shop stewards, the weekly trip back into the city centre trade union head quarters with union subscriptions meant an additional task beyond the job of acting as union representatives for their workmates [10]

Economic re-location was directly tied to the restructuring of the city's economic base and what Jim Smyth describes as *"the unmaking of the Irish working class"* (Smyth, 1991). The decline of the docks and dockland manufacturing jobs coincided with the growth of the service industries and the emergence of an information-based sector (Brunt, 1988). Dublin's changing economic base can be illustrated by the following results of Labour Force Surveys conducted between 1951 and 1990 by the Central Statistics Office

Table 6 1 Dublin's Changing Economic Base 1951-1990

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1987	1989	1990
Industry	101,715	108,000	122,000	112,900	84,000	82,700	86,300
Services	168,744	162,600	187,800	242,900	242,600	251,800	253,900

Source Andrew MacLaran (1993) Dublin The Shaping of a Capital

On an international level these changes have been analysed in terms of socio-economic shifts which have resulted in new and distinct cultural sensibilities. According to the same commentators, what is at stake, in the post-1960s period, is a complex,

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[10] I wish to acknowledge that this point was made to me in conversation with Des Bonass during 1997 when he was president of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions

inter-locking, overlapping set of transformations, none of which foreground the possibility of a transition from capitalism to socialism.

There is a general consensus that the restructuring of capital and re-regulation around telecommunications, broadcasting and computers which occurred during the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan and Mrs Thatcher were in office, were to the fore in that shift. It is widely believed that these changes arose from a crisis within capitalism which was exasperated by the decision of the oil producing Arab nations to increase oil prices and to *"embargo oil exports to the West in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War"* (Harvey, 1989:145). That crisis within capitalism marked the end of the post WW1 boom and was directly related to a world-wide process of decolonisation.

In one seminal text on 'postmodernism', Frederic Jameson describes this new phenomenon as the 'cultural logic of late capitalism', a form of capital that is transnational in character. As such it can be distinguished from the earlier form of 'state monopoly capitalism' (Jameson,1992). His analysis is important, in that it identifies a correspondence between the economic and cultural domains and leaves no illusion as to the continuing reality of capitalism, a 'pure' economic system that has become global with the 'collapse of communism'. It is a capitalism that continues its relentless drive for profits as identified by Marx in the 1840s. It was Marx who wrote of *"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe"* (Marx & Engels, 1977:37). In continuing its global 'chase', the contemporary bourgeoisie has moved into areas such as cultural artefact, heritage, image and information.

The shift from industrial to services industries has had a significant impact on the Dublin working class. As a result, patterns of Dublin working class employment in the 1990s range from the new well paid positions in key sectors of the economy to the decreasing number of traditional manual jobs, as well as the new low paid jobs in the service industries. Patterns of employment include the continuation of the culture of the 'nixer' and the rise of the 'self employed' worker. The latter is either the subject of begrudgery among his/her peers or more often than not admiration. For working class men who go 'out on their own', the small companies they establish are mainly in

trade/services related to their former livelihood. For women who do likewise it is normally in hairdressing, dress making etc. In social class terms these individuals have entered the petit bourgeoisie and in most cases have experienced a form of 'embourgeoisement' or more correctly 'petit bourgeoisement'. However, many retain cultural connections to their working class backgrounds and so can be considered as 'bicultural'.[11]

 Working class women and men have fought against low wages and the inadequacies of the social welfare system throughout the post-1960s period. As in the pre-1960 period, the 'point of production' remained a key organising arena for Irish workers, with the trade union movement the leading defence organisation. In 1970, with the conclusion of a twelfth pay round, the first of seven National Wage Agreements/Understandings was inaugurated by the Employer-Labour Conference. They ended in 1981 and were followed by six years in which pay claims were negotiated at the local level. Since 1987 centralised bargaining has been the norm and every three years a new 'national agreement' is negotiated between the 'social partners' and the state. While initially comprising the employer, trade union, and farming organisations, since 1996 'social partnership' has been extended to include 'community and voluntary organisations' (O'Donnell and Thomas, 1998:128).[12] In 1997 the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched a campaign for a £5 minimum hourly rate. Following negotiations on the claim an hourly rate of £4.40 was agreed during 1998.

The Irish trade union movement has also fought for equal pay and an end to sexual harassment in the workplace. But by failing to make alliances with the women's movement, this focus remains exclusively centred on the public sphere, and so in effect accepts the sexual division of labour which goes to the heart of the capitalist system. As a result the trade union movement has never acknowledged women's domestic labour in the bargaining process. It was the National Women's Council of Ireland

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[11] See Working Class Women in the Academy: Labours in the Knowledge Factory edited by Michelle M.Tokarczyk and Elizabeth A.Fay, for an informed discussion of the issues North American working class women face when they enter the largely middle class domain of 'higher education'.

[12] These national agreements have gradually widened their brief as is reflected in their titles - the Programme for National Recovery, the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, Programme for Competitiveness in Work and finally the current programme, Partnership 2000.

(NWCI) who finally raised the issue of women's unpaid work in the bargaining context of the Partnership 2000 agreement.

Without the trade union movement many workers would suffer the unrestrained exploitation of capitalism. But while partnership has delivered undoubted gains for many Irish workers and their families, others, who are not within the ambit of the social partnership agreement have not fared as well (O'Donnell & Thomas, 1998). Setbacks can also be identified. [13]

In his analysis of the Irish trade union movement, James Plunkett, the former union official and author of <u>Strumpet City</u> (1969), identifies the third phase in the history of the Irish trade union movement as one in which the trade unions form an *"economic trio"* with the employers organisations and the state (Plunkett, 1980:141). That arrangement has effectively reduced the Irish trade union movement to acting in the role of broker within an unequal partnership with employers' organisations and the state. By the 1980s it was becoming clear to many trade unionists that centralised bargaining was having a debilitating effect on the movement and on the wider working class. The payment of large salaries to some top trade union officials seemed to go hand in hand with the loss of trade union independence. The effects of reducing trade unionism to the negotiation and implementation of three year 'national agreements' is very well expressed in the following quote from Ellen Hazelkorn and Henry Patterson:

> *"During the 1960s and 1970s, the unions had been in the ascendancy; industrial militancy was led by skilled craftsmen living, in the main, in local authority housing. By the 1980s, the surge in public and private sector service workers with mortgages, changes in work practices, new streamlined industrial relations procedures confirmed in law, and centralised bargaining, had left the unions with little industrial or political leverage"* (Hazelkorn & Patterson,1994:65-66). [14]

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[13] In 1970 the introduction of 'two-tier picketing' and the decision to give the Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) the authority to grant an 'all-out picket' restricted the right of workers to withhold their labour power. Then in 1990 the Industrial Relations Act further tied the hands of the unions with fines and restrictions. What is even more lamentable is the fact the 1990 Act was agreed by the ICTU without a ballot of members of its affiliated unions. In addition, prior to the Amsterdam Referendum in 1998 the ICTU recommended a 'Yes Vote' without convening a special delegate conference.

[14] According to Richard Breen et al *"The Irish trade union movement has been dominated by short-term relativistic and sectional concerns. As a result, it lacks a class-based identity and the capacity to define interests in terms of a class-based analysis of inequalities"* (Breen et al,1990:164).

The deduction of union dues through the weekly payroll has also contributed to weakening rank and file ownership of Irish trade unions. Prior to its introduction, shop stewards collected union dues each week, which gave them an opportunity to hear the member's concerns. This had the affect of maintaining an umbilical chord, so to speak, between member and trade union. Some unions paid a commission to the shop steward to offset the costs involved. Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union shop steward, Eddie Storey, tells that when he was a shop steward in Chrysler Motors, he noticed that when union members had a query they held on to the union dues while waiting for a satisfactory answer from him. According to Eddie, in that engagement the trade union member was exercising his/her rights, and in contemporary parlance it represented a sense of ownership of the union by its members.[15] Another affect of centralised bargaining is that few younger trade union members have direct experience of negotiating at plant or local level. Besides the general decline in union membership, the lack of experienced negotiators is also contributing to a fall off in active participation and as result has led to an ageing profile.

But resistance to the acquiescence of sections of the trade union leadership has continued with the leadership of that struggle mainly part of the 'earnest minority'.[16] Trade union militancy, which had grown against restrictive National Wage Agreements during the 1970s, reached its short lived zenith in 1979 when almost one million PAYE workers took to the streets of various cities and towns with a *"left-wing demand for a democratic tax system"* (Wickham, 1980:86). As part of the nation-wide protest, which can be described in terms of a 'class action', upwards of 150,000 marched in Dublin in a protest organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions (Cody et al, 1986:234). In addition there are the locally based examples of working class militancy that are often unrecorded. One example is the short lived workers' council that existed in the Ballyfermot/Bluebell Industrial Estate during the 1970s. Comprising elected representatives from each factory the council's aim was to:

> *"Provide an advisory service and a platform for an*
> *exchange of ideas, up to date information on bonus*
> *schemes, productivity deals, etc. ".* [17]

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[15] Based on personal recollections of conversations with Eddie Storey.

[16] See Appendix E for a FHGM analysis of the NDR in terms of the leading Irish 'Left' organisations.

[17] The Trade Unionist Bulletin of the Dublin Shop Steward Committee Second Edition 1973/4.

Matt Lacey, an Irish Transport and General Workers Union shop steward in Semperit (the tyre factory), was the local contact person and was to the fore in developing the council With the benefit of hindsight that concept of a 'workers council' could be re-envisioned to meet the needs of the wider local community and women's role within it Workers' Councils have been a central aspect of 20th century socialism and are essential in any discussion of working class power The significance of such forms of organisation to the working class can be seen in the writings of Antonio Gramsci on Italian soviets and Georg Lukacs's writings on workers' councils (Meszaros, 1995) [18]

In Dublin working class communities with high levels of long-term unemployment the trade unions are represented by senior officials on boards of Local Development Partnerships, having been appointed by the ICTU If instead, a system of delegation from the more locally representative Dublin Council of Trade Unions was brought into being, those delegates could act as the formal conduit between working class communities and the trade union movement An alternative or parallel arrangement might involve the election of local shop stewards to such boards from the local companies/factories At present the Dublin Trade Union Council has 280 affiliated delegates representing 35 unions in the greater Dublin area As such it is the ideal forum or 'parliament of labour' to use the title of its documented history - The Parliament of Labour: 100 Years of the Dublin Council of Trade Union (1986) written by Seamus Cody, John O'Dowd and Peter Rigney With the growth of Dublin 'satellite towns' such as Tallaght, perhaps it is time that they had their own trades councils

While highlighting aspects of 'economic class struggle', I also wish to point out that behind the statistics presented earlier on the changing economic base of Dublin lies a set of capitalist relations of production within which thousands of working class men and women live out their day to day lives (MacLaran, 1993 58) They do so in various places of employment throughout the city and county of Dublin expending their labour power, a commodity Marx defined as

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[18] These forms of organisation are not a replacement or substitute for structures of national representative democracy, but are the type of necessary complementary bodies required if democracy is to be extended beyond its present limited bourgeois parliamentary form

"the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which [s]he exercises when [s]he produces use value of any description" [my inserts] (Marx, 1970 167)

It is the 'mental and physical capabilities' of thousands of Irish workers which have been the main factor in wealth creation in Ireland and the main source of the prosperity of the late 1990s But as is the nature of capitalism, the Irish and sections of the international bourgeois class has been the main benefactor [19] In his major work to date, Beyond Capital (1995) Istvan Meszaros sets out to reveal the *"structural deficiencies and potentially explosive antagonisms"* of the contemporary *"capital system"* in an analysis comparable to Marx's Capital (1970) He does so in a way that makes imperative the transition to a *"very different social order"* (Meszaros, 1995 xvi-xvii) For Meszaros, terms such as 'modernisation', 'postmodernism', and 'globalisation', conceal and fetishise capitalist relations of production

In terms of contemporary Irish industrial relations, the trade union movement has had to contend with major industrial/technological transformations and an ever-increasing mobility of capital and labour Digitisation is further transforming the nature of work and requires innovative thinking among trade unionist and socialists to ensure that advances in technology are shared by the many, and not the few corporate giants who own and control the 'commanding heights' of transnational computer corporations

With transnational companies willing to pay above the union rate and in some cases provide more favourable working and recreational facilities than was the norm, the benefits of trade union membership is being questioned by some workers The concept of worker directors has given way to worker participation in the form of workplace 'teams' Such models of worker participation are largely driven by bourgeois interest and in some cases are used to undermine the role of trade unions Given that working class men's and women's labour power is essential to the functioning of the capitalist mode of production, it is important that their trade union organisations ensure the most fulfilling use and award of that labour power

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[19] See Denis O'Hearn's Inside the Celtic Tiger (1998) for a detailed account of the profits accruing to transnational corporations operating in Ireland, and related statistical information

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Then there is the inability of capitalism to provide full employment Not only does unemployment isolate the worker from the environment of the workplace, but also devalues his/her sense of personal well being Rather than being considered as an essential part of the working class, a 'reserve army of labour', new terms such as 'disadvantaged' or 'underclass' have crept into discourses on the economy and the labour market While at one stage the weekly 'signing on' had a collective aspect to it, that process has been fragmented with staggered 'signing on' times and payments made through local post offices That in turn has made organisation among the unemployed a far more difficult task While the existence of 'unemployed centres' has benefited many unemployed workers, it could also argued that the existence of such centres has institutionalised an acceptable level of unemployment

For those who have not benefited from 'modernisation', the stark choice has been between unemployment or emigration [20] The reality of emigration in post-1960 Ireland is poignantly expressed in Philip Chevron's song 'Thousands are Sailing', as well as plays such as James McKenna's *The Scattering,* and Dermot Bolger's *High Germany* [21]

Some of those who stayed were drawn into criminal activity Since the 1960s, the life of prison and juvenile detention the south of Ireland has been represented in television programme such as *A Week in the Life of Martin Cluxton* (1971), *The Spike* (1978), and *Inside* (1985), as well as in written accounts by Mannix Flynn (1983) and Patrick Togher (1991) etc Alan Robert's play *The Rasherhouse* (1997) explores how the crack/heroin trade flourishes in Mountjoy Jail, locking prisoners into spiralling heroin addiction and financial debt It is not as if the issues surrounding working class involvement in crime are not known, indeed the Whitaker Report was largely ignored after its publication in 1985 (Tobin, 1990 61)

The imprisonment of this small population of largely unemployed young working class men mainly from 3 or 4 Dublin postal districts is not only a 'confinement' of them alone, but as Michel Foucault argued, is directed against the wider working class in

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[20] The stark reality of the extent of emigration becomes clear when it is known that *"four out of every five children born in Ireland between 1931 and 1941 emigrated in the 1950s"* (Toibin, 1990 23)

terms of policing and surveillance (Foucault, 1987) By holding a minority in prison others are threatened by the same fate To a lesser extent the process can occur at the level of parental admonishment of children e g 'if you don't watch it you'll end up in Artane' (the former Dublin-based Industrial School) [22] By singling out and making a fetish of 'working class villains', bourgeois and petit bourgeois representations elevate the threat to property and in effect distract attention away from the injuries of class and gender perpetuated by patriarchal capitalism Furthermore, with the exception of drug barons/pushers, 'working class villains' pose virtually no threat to working class communities

Another factor in the changing climate of the post 1960 period was the emergence of the social movements [23] Irish people are today more likely to join/actively support social movements, single issue lobbying groups, or self-help organisations, than political parties, thus challenging the notion that political analysis and/or action ought to centre exclusively on political parties [24] One of the main social movements has been the women's movement Following the birth of the second wave of the Irish Women's Movement in 1970, a group calling itself the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) was founded by women willing to challenge the way in which patriarchal Ireland was constituted The aims of the IWLM were as follows

(i)   One family, one house
(ii)   Equal rights in law
(iii)   Equal pay now removal of the marriage bar
(iv)   Justice for widows, deserted wives, unmarried mothers
(v)   Equal educational opportunities
(vi)   Contraception - a human right (Smyth, 1993 253)

As the women's movement grew, so did campaigns on issues as diverse as family planning, divorce, equal pay, women's health/sexuality, abortion, the need for crèches in the workplace, sexist representations in the media, rape, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women (Smyth, 1993) Women entered forms of employment previously denied to them such as bus conducting/driving, army, gardai and the manual trades

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[22] I wish to thank Tom Stokes for drawing my attention to this fact

[23] The changing role of Irish communist, socialist, social-democratic and republican parties in terms of a NDR analysis is presented in Appendix E

Developments in domestic technologies offered women more time to devote to personal and political matters. According to Noreen Byrne, chairperson of the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) between 1995-1999, the contraceptive pill, the motor car, and the washing machine, had an *"enormous positive impact"* on the day to day lives of Irish women from the 1960's.[25] Launderettes and domestic washing machines marked the increasing privatisation of domestic labour, and for some working class women brought to an end the communal laundering in Dublin wash houses.[26] In addition, the arrival of domestic washing machines resulted in the closure of several well-established Dublin laundries, traditional places of employment for working class women.

The question of social class soon emerged within women's organisations, and working class women started to express their needs. While sharing common concerns with those of bourgeois and petit bourgeois women, working class women had specific class/gender demands. A socialist-feminist perspective was to the fore in the struggle to include the demands of working class women in the agenda of the Irish women's movement. [27] By the 1980s, feminism had found its way into working class communities, and its impact was evident in a new assertiveness in the way working class women organised, explored their creativity, and dealt with officialdom. However, to assert that all such activity is informed by a (socialist) feminist analysis, would be to overstate the case. Furthermore, Irish women's moment has not been successful in integrating questions of gender, class and nationality within a popular political platform.

If the Irish women's movement suffered setbacks during the 1980s as it faced an onslaught from the Catholic right (O'Reilly, 1988), it came into the 1990s still prepared to take on the patriarchy. Indeed, since the foundation of the northern and southern confessional states, it is the 'woman question' that has been most clearly

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[24] An indication of the extent of self-help and charitable organisations can be gleaned from the three and a half page list of 'Charities and Caring Groups" in the 01 area Telecom Eireann Telephone Directory 1989/9.

[25] Information based on a series of conversations with Noreen Byrne during 1996-7. The NWCI has 152 member groups representing approximately 300,000 women.

[26] For a brief account of Dublin communal laundering see Mary Corbally's account of same in Living in the City published by the North Inner City Folklore Project. p.8-9.

[27] For an account of the Irish women's movement see "The Women's Movement in the Republic Of Ireland 1970-1990" by Ailbhe Smyth in Smith,1993.

subversive of that church-state relationship For that reason alone the struggle for the separation of church and state is essential to any understanding of the NDR. There can be little doubt that the process of capitalist modernisation, and women's participation in it, has resulted in the greater visibility of women in the public sphere

Based on international experience the strength of the women's movement has been its ability to defend its autonomy In Ireland the necessity of that task takes on an even greater importance when the spectre of incorporation looms large Considering that the NWCI is now a member of what is called the fourth pillar of the 'social partnership' arrangement, the danger to its autonomy is ever greater (O'Donnell & Thomas, 1998) Indeed, the loss of autonomy experienced by the labour movement through its participation in partnership agreements ought to be a salutary warning to women's organisations The message ought to be crystal clear - 'the women's movement is not for sale'

With the growth of the women's movement, men were confronted with their sexism in the private and public spheres While many resisted change, others started to change their behaviour In general, men had a choice to make They could break with the patriarchal ways of their grand/fathers and boycott the Charlos of this world [28] Men, including the bourgeois and petit bourgeois Charlos, could either confront the patriarchy or become dinosaurs in an era in which sexist attitudes and behaviour have become increasingly unacceptable, similar to the way in which white racists are gradually becoming marginalised in a 'post-apartheid' South Africa

While the post-Second World War generation were responsible for rebuilding the economies of Europe, a generation growing up in the 1960s was confronted with the previously hidden costs of (capitalist) modernisation Oil spillages, river poisonings, etc., focused minds on environmental questions and the dark side of 'modernisation' In Ireland opposition to a proposed nuclear station at Carnsore, County Wexford in the 1970s heightened environmental consciousness, an awareness that was reinforced after Chernobyl in 1986 It was against that background and reported damage to the

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[28] Charlo was a representation of a particular abusive working class male in Roddy Doyle's television four-part series *The Family* (1994)

food-chain that the Green Party emerged as an new political force in Irish politics. [29] Its arrival was crucial for various reasons, not least that the Irish Left had tended to adopt a 'jobs at any cost' approach up to the 1990s.

6.3.   From Inner to Outer Dublin.

> *"Ireland may be a small country, but it's a long, long way from Ballsbridge to Ballyfermot"* Joe Lee (1993:40).

The process of economic relocation from Dublin's city centre to the suburbs that began during the 1960s was directly related to an accompanying growth in private and public suburban housing. It was also linked to a wider infrastructure that included the development of state services, hospitals, supermarkets, transport and recreational facilities. The inner city of Dublin is commonly regarded as the area within the Royal and the Grand Canals. While in 1926 over half the metropolitan population resided there, by 1981 less than one-eleventh of the population did so (Lincoln,1993:208). Journalist Fintan O'Toole makes the point that in the waves of suburbanisation affecting working class Dubliners since the 1920s, the planners denied the development of urban and political entities, which he links to the denial of *"a public realm"* in the wider society (O'Toole, 1991:36-37).

According to journalist, John Waters, there are *"at least two Dublins"* and if Dublin north of the River Liffey is the *"real Dublin, then these people were outsiders in their own city, confined to the northside reservation, away from the thriving heart of 'official' Dublin"* (Waters.1991: 104). The 'reservation' metaphor is also employed by Maura Corr who wondered during the 1988 Millennium celebrations whether those in *"outposts known as suburbia"* were *"true Dubliners"* at all, given the attention focused on the city centre. Corr continues along that train of thought by stating how a lifelong friend of hers *"likened our plight to the Indians- confined to the reservations"* (Corr, 1989:4). Such remarks confirm the importance of highlighting the relationship between geography and social class.

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[29] In making these points I wish to acknowledge that my analysis is influenced by Stephen Rawson, a Green Party candidate and formerly a student at Dublin City University.

The building of Ballymun and Coolock was partly a response to chronic housing conditions in Dublin's inner city. In June 1963 four people died when, within a fortnight, No. 20 Bolton Street and Nos. 3 & 4 Fenian Street collapsed. It was in response to such appalling housing conditions that the Dublin Housing Action Committee (DHAC) was formed. In the first issue of its newsletter it boldly stated that *"we say that the idle, surplus property of any big speculating landlord should be squatted in"* (Squatter June 15, 1969). One squat organised by the DHAC led to the arrest of Dennis Dennehy, a Dublin busworker, in January 1969. The campaign for decent housing and tenant rights continued with the work of The National Association of Tenant Organisations (NATO) and during the 1980s re-housing became a key demand of north inner city residents organised in the North City Centre Community Action Project (NCCCAP) [30]

At the time of the Bolton/Fenian Street tragedy, construction had begun on 1,100 houses in Coolock, on the northside of Dublin. In 1966 the first tenants moved into 2,814 flats and 400 homes in Ballymun, which was completed in 1969 (Sweeny 1988 56). The policy of re-housing families from the inner city and elsewhere in new corporation housing schemes continued throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s. For the families who made the move the new housing represented a major improvement in their living conditions. Later on many families altered the structural aspects of the living space by adding porches, additional rooms, new hall doors, garden sheds etc. Original window frames were replaced by aluminium windows, which in some cases were paid for with insurance money paid out after the death of a husband. Some working class families cultivated their gardens, tarmacadamed and then tiled pathways. They also had new gates installed. As for the internal decor tastes changed in the post-1960 period. The major changes involved carpeting, wallpapering and painting, as well as suites of furniture and glass cabinets. Paintings such as 'The Crying Boy' were gradually removed from over the living room hearth and replaced by more contemporary reproductions.

As in the pre -1960 period the experience of housing re-location had traumatic effects. The problem of 'forgetting' among those who moved to suburban Dublin impinges on issues of cultural identity and raises the question of how a working class sense of the

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[30] The video *Looking On* (1983) contains clips of the demolition of Gardiner Street and the comments of local community activists on the question of re-housing and maintaining an inner city community

past is constructed and which memories are sustained or forgotten It also raises the very real issue of how the trauma of oppression (e g the poverty of tenement Dublin) is dealt with in collective memory As part of the process of remembrance the actual physical erasure of place or its transformation must also be taken into account

That feeling of isolation experienced by women, some of whom were prescribed tranquilising drugs ('mothers little helpers') as a palliative, was further compounded by the fact that many of their husbands worked in and around the city centre, thereby having their working day extended by the inclusion of travel time If a man was to work overtime, travelling home for a meal to Coolock, for example, would involve extending his working hours as well as the extra transport costs Furthermore, many men continued to drink in pubs that they had previously frequented contributing to tensions between men and women Men were also drawn away from the new working class suburbs by sporting commitments Trade union meetings were also based in the city centre head offices Children continued their schooling in the locality from which they had come and church services were often attended in people's former parishes While petit bourgeois families also experienced the dislocation associated with moving to the suburbs, they had the economic means to lessen the impact e g ownership of a car, a telephone and most importantly greater financial resources

Gradually a sense of belonging was developed by the peoples' own efforts and sometimes with the support of petit bourgeois professionals working in the suburban housing estates Cathleen O'Neill, a 'community activist' feels that she belongs in Kilbarrack because *"we've done something in our area for ourselves"* (cited in Johnston, 1988 22/103) If men were, and continue to be, dominant in trade union and work place organisation, women were to the fore in the building up of communal networks, which were largely an extension of the domestic sphere It is arguable that, having been left with the 'domestic responsibilities' in the pre-1960s period (Humphries, 1966), and having no direct means of economic income, women working in the home extended their sphere of influence into their own communities with a range of skills, hitherto ignored by Irish society Indeed, by the 1990s working class women had become leaders of many organisations with the term 'community' affixed to them, a development publicly validated during Mary Robinson's presidency through her many visits to such projects (1990-97)

Working class men have also been active in community-based activities and like women contribute countless hours in voluntary activities such as supervising sporting clubs etc However, men are less visible, and by and large have yet to develop positive roles for themselves, in the life of the community, especially unemployed men [31] The task of developing those roles is complicated by the steady rise of 'community workers' in what is now described as the 'community sector' As a result tasks that were once conducted on a voluntary unpaid basis are now earmarked as part of the community worker's remit For example, Annette Halpin, a resident of Tallaght, remembers in 1980 sitting in a room with another ten women discussing the future of the area That sounds fine, except the discussion was about the jobs of 'professionals' associated with the 1st EU Programme to Combat Poverty and she was the only woman from Tallaght in that room (Halpin, 1991,149) By the end of the 1990s more working class people have entered that 'room' Some are learning that their futures are in their own hands

6.4.   Forms of Dublin Working Class Leisure.

The issue of 'modernisation' is also linked to changes in patterns of leisure and cultural consumption among the Dublin working class According to Des Geraghty the dislocative impact of 'modernisation' during the 1960s had the effect of unleashing creative forces that had hitherto lay dormant or repressed in Irish society (Geraghty, 1994) However, others believe that what was culturally distinctive about Ireland would diminish with European integration (Coughlan, 1972 29)

The burst of economic prosperity during the 1960s, coincided with the show band dance boom between 1961-66, which saw Dublin dance halls open seven nights a week (Power, 1990:19) Venues such as the Crystal Ballroom, the Top Hat and the Television Club shook to the new dance rhythms In Dublin Eileen Reid left her factory job in Jacobs, Dickie Rock gave up his fitters job, Butch Moore quit printing and all in their separate ways took to the dance circuit with the Cadets, Miami and

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[31] These community-based artistic/cultural/sporting activities will be further examined in Chapter Nine

Capital showbands, respectively (Power, 1990). Sonny Knowles celebrated his pre-show business employment by parodying a window cleaner's wave to the delight of his audience.

Others would find their musical inspiration in rawer 'rock n' roll' and 'rhythm and blues' styles. For Phil Lynott the lure of following in Jimi Hendrix's footsteps was too great to hold him to his apprenticeship as a fitter/turner.[32] The Beatles and The Rolling Stones spawned their Dublin imitators, and new clubs and venues drew their own particular followings. The '60s', however, was not experienced in a uniform manner across Irish social classes, e.g. for families moving to Ballymun and Coolock the period was dominated by one of change and dislocation. During the 1980s Don Baker played his version of the blues and with a hard-driving back-up band struck a chord with a Dublin working class audience with songs that came out of a predominantly Afro-American urban experience. In the 1990s Baker's music reached a wider cross-class audience. The combination of popular music and dance had a liberating impact on youth identity and sexual relations, giving rise to forms of cultural expression which both loosened and challenged parental authority. 'Recreational drugs' vied with alcohol as the new intoxicants.

However, the use of drugs had a darker side and from the 1980s inner city and suburban working class communities had to confront the blight of heroin. Besides the harrowing effects of heroin addiction, drug pushers created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation corrupting young people who acted as their 'runners'. Furthermore, homes that were once safe enough to leave the key in the hall door became increasingly prey to burglaries carried out by addicts desperate to get the means to secure a 'fix'. In time drug related crime became the highest recorded incident of reported crime in Dublin.

Once its devastating consequences became evident people started to organise resistance to the trade (Sheehan & Walsh, 1988). During the 1980s, residents of working class communities came together to form Concerned Parents Against Drugs and soon the tide was turned against the drug pushers in north and south inner city

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[32] *The Rocker: A Portrait of Phil Lynott* . Produced and Directed by Shay Healy Network Two. 3/1/1996.

communities, as well as communities such as residents of St Teresa's Gardens and the Dolphin Barn flats Parents could no longer tolerate seeing their children's health being destroyed and finding used needles and blood stains on the stairways to their homes And so they joined the campaign to drive out the pushers (Toibin, 1990, Flynn & Yeates, 1985)

But then in the mid-1990s heroin and 'crack' was openly on sale via restructured distribution networks It was Tony Gregory's courageous naming of several drug barons, the murder of the journalist Veronica Guerin for her fearless exposure of drugs barons[33], and the extension of the drugs trade into middle class districts, that caused the issue to finally receive the national attention anti-drugs activists had been demanding since the heroin problem had taken root in the 1980s During the late 1990s, governments and the state finally responded, and besides giving the Criminal Assets Bureau the green light, the Gardai implemented Operation Dochas

However, despite the introduction of such measures there was a widespread belief in the working class communities worst effected by heroin that not enough treatment centres were been opened to assist addicts in recovery and that Gardai were not tracking down and prosecuting the drug barons with enough vigour This tension became clear when Gardai attacked a crowd of anti-drugs protestors in Summerhill early in 1996, an attack that resulted in a riot That incident had a ripple effect throughout the city as local working class communities decided that they would have to re-organise themselves In Fettercairn, Tallaght, one woman set up a hut outside a drug dealer's house Shortly afterwards residents of Killinarden followed suit and set up a series of huts in their neighbourhood to publicly declare that they were watching the pushers and their 'runners' Community-based groups came together and were represented in affiliated organisations such as Coalition of Communities Against Drugs (COCAD), the Dublin Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign (known as 'Citywide') and Inner City Organisations Network (ICON) As a result of these organisational developments a feeling of solidarity and strength developed, with a network of support

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[33] It appears as if the media exposure of the drug barons in the mainly working class read Sunday World mattered less than features/editorials in the Irish/Sunday Independent

linking working class communities such as Ballybough, Darndale, Killinarden and Sallynoggin, with the one aim of driving every drug dealer out of Dublin

As local communities organised themselves, successes began to be attributed to the anti-drugs campaign By the late 1990s the heroin trade in Dublin was being opposed by a range of organisations and individuals which include those who maintained vigils, conducted patrols of their neighbourhoods, the ex-addicts warning their peers of the dangers of heroin, drug counsellors, the state services, the Gardai, etc If during the 1980s the thrust of the campaign was mainly directed against the drug pushers, by the 1990s there was a widespread awareness that the 'heroin problem' was a symptom of deeper inadequacies within working class communities and that more than an anti-drugs strategy was required It was widely accepted that the 'heroin problem' was symptomatic of deeper structural inequalities within Dublin working class communities. There is a risk in exaggerating or idealising the extent of the communal bonds which emerged in the struggle against the heroin trade Nevertheless, the manner in which some anti-drugs groups organise their campaigns represents a genuine form of local working class democracy and self-activity

The 1960s also witnessed an upsurge in the popularity of ballads and 'singing pubs' In a 1967 interview, Luke Kelly of The Dubliners identified *"a new spirit among young people, a political and social awareness"* which he linked to the 'ballad movement' (cited in Geraghty 1994 11) While similar developments were also occurring in Britain and North America, in Ireland those involved in ballads had, according to Des Geraghty, to contend with an elitism in the language movement *"associated with civil servants and 'gaelgoiri'"*, a complaint previously articulated by Sean O'Casey (Geraghty, 1994 27) [34]

According to Frank Harte, the collector and singer of Dublin ballads, Dublin songs were an integral part of Irish traditional music, but that it took Brendan and Dominic Behan and later Luke Kelly to make them acceptable to a wider audience Harte goes on to state that while Sean O'Casey's music can be traced back

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[34] The 1960s were marked by the death of Sean O'Casey in 1964 and Brendan Behan 1967

to music hall *"Behan went straight at it, unaccompanied"*, capturing the 'Dublin thing' that O'Casey only got in his plays (cited in Geraghty,1994: 26). [35]

As in the pre-1960s period English cultural influences continued to have their impact and were now fused with those of North America. Working class parents started naming their children with non-traditional names. Girl's names included Shirley and Vivienne while boys were given names such as Darren and Jason. When Christy Brown, author of My Left Foot, was asked the question: 'What sort of education did I have?' he replied:

> *"The Beano, the Dandy, Hotspur, Captain Marvel; all of these erudite publications were high on my list of reading matter as a child and later, as an overgrown boy"*
> (The Sunday Times April 1 1990).

For women, the building of lounge bars and the growth in bingo halls represented new places of leisure beyond the domestic sphere. Bingo, which had been introduced from Britain during the early 1960, first started in the National Ballroom (Parnell Square) and then opened in the Macushla Ballroom (Amien Street). As in Britain it coincided with the decline in cinema attendance.[36] Gael Linn, the Irish language organisation, also ran bingo sessions in Dublin during the early 1960s. According to Larry Lawless of Gael Linn, they had six venues in Dublin, three of them former Rank's cinemas in Cabra, Crumlin and Whitehall. While the Gael Linn venues still attract a predominantly older working class clientele, in the late 1990s of those who attend their sessions 1/3 are under 40 and 1/2 under 50 years of age.[37] A no-smoking prohibition introduced on foot of European Union legislation had a marked effect on attendance in some Dublin halls as having a smoke was part and parcel of the evening entertainment for many working class women and men.[38]

For Dubliners with summertime memories of the 1960s, when dragon flies could still be seen, the coastline along the then unpolluted seashore of Dublin Bay between Howth and Bray attracted thousands of day trippers on sunny weekends. Beaches and

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[35] Once while in America Behan told his audience that *"When Samuel Beckett was in Trinity College listening to lectures, I was in the Queen's Theatre, my uncle's [Paddy Bourke] music hall. That is why my plays are music hall and his are university lectures"* (cited in de Burca,1993:12).

[36] Based on information supplied by John Martin. August 1997.

[37] Based on information supplied by Larry Lawless of Gael Linn. August 1997.

[38] Based on information supplied by John Martin. August 1997.

swimming venues were thronged, while others swam in the canals and in the River Liffey. For working class families summer holidays in rented caravans, holiday camps such as Butlins (Mosney) and Red Island and British and Isle of Man resorts were by the 1970s extended further afield to sunnier destinations, with Spain the most popular. Dublin working class families continued to visit Butlins in Mosney Co. Meath, which had opened in July 1948. With the realisation among its British based owners that for a few extra pounds English families could afford a holiday in the Costa del Sol in Spain and that a similar pattern would follow in Ireland, the Rank Organisation pulled out of the venture in 1970. By then some Irish working class families could indeed afford a sun holiday in Spain. Having gone into the doldrums during the 1970s, in 1982 Phelim McCluskey took over Butlins as a hands on owner/manager, and has since built up the holiday camp to the extent that in the late 1990s it can accommodate up to 3,000 campers during June, July and August. According to the current marketing manager of the Mosney Holiday Centre, Charles O'Brien, the same Hi-Di-Hi factor still pertains even though at times it appeared to go out of favour. According to Butlin's own research 85% of new customers will return at some stage, and continue to do so until their children have reached the age of 14-16. There is tendency among those who have been to Butlins as children to return having 'done' the Costa del Sol and Florida. While traditionally a working class holiday venue, according to Charles O'Brien such categorisation are far less applicable in the late 1990s, and while the leisure activities and regimentation remain, these are less obvious to the camper, many of whom come for the sheer nostalgia and the wish to be part of what had worked for them in earlier years. Red Island in Skerries, owned by Fergal Quinn's father, modelled itself on Butlins. [39]

Holidays abroad have contributed to changing eating habits, and as supermarkets extended their range of foods, the cuisine of other nations gradually appeared on supermarket shelves. Having acquired refrigerators, the cuisine of working class families broadened to include curries, pizzas, tandoori chicken, and other convenience and 'take away' foods. Working class men found pate a welcome change from the diet of cold meat/cheese sandwiches in packed lunches. As well as pushing supermarket trolleys working class men gradually began pushing prams.

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[39] Fergal Quinn is the current owner of the Superquinn network of supermarkets.

In the post-1960s period working class men have exchanged heavy overcoats for anoraks and windcheaters and like women discovered the ease of wearing tracksuits and runners irrespective of whether they are involved in sports or not A ban on women wearing jeans in public service jobs was lifted, headwear ceased to be obligatory for mass going The almost universal headscarf ceased to be the popular garment for Dublin's working class women But while many benefited from the availability of reasonably priced imported clothing, some working class Dubliners continued to rely on the second hand clothes markets in venues such as the Iveagh Markets and the Saturday mornings Cumberland Street market

 Dublin first shopping centre was opened in Stillorgan in 1966 During the 1970s, 80s and 1990s others were built across suburban Dublin, contributing to a transformation in patterns of consumerism and creating new points of communal and cultural interaction If the pedestrianisation of Henry Street and Grafton Street facilitated the freer movement of the city centre consumer, the new shopping centres suburbs provided new points of 'massification' (Williams, 1961 287-290) It is in the new 'cathedrals of consumption,' with their own palace guards, that the workings of consumer capitalism is most clearly evident and its range of commodities most tantalisingly displayed to those with the necessary cash to participate in the 'spectacle' (Enzensberger, 1979)

Parking facilities, crèches, baby changing rooms, 'saving stamps' for Christmas hampers have all benefited the consumer But for those without sufficient cash or without a car to comfortably access the new shopping centres the experience is one of exclusion, frustration and unfulfilled desire The new shopping centres do not facilitate instalment payments for household goods as did the older city centre department stores

By the 1980s leisure activity had become increasingly bound up with consumption In the 1990s superstores such as Atlantic Homecare, Texas HomeCare and Woodie's DIY sell a range of DIY, household and gardening products which are the primary taste leaders in domestic commodities With the introduction of Sunday trading there are even greater opportunities to consume In some cases the shopping centres have

become the venue for the family Sunday outing. Shopping centres are increasingly replacing centres of worship as places of weekly pilgrimage. According to David Harvey:

> *"Pleasure, leisure, seduction, and erotic life are all brought within the range of money power and commodity production"* (Harvey, 1989:102).[40]

For elderly working class Dubliners on state and personal pensions, many of the consumer goods in Dublin's new department stores and shopping centres are beyond their means. For some elderly people 'palaces of consumption' have become social rather than marketplace venues, a place to get in out of the cold during winter months. Without having the same spending power as those still in the labour market it seems their pre-retirement contribution to Irish society is largely ignored as they struggle to survive in a society where new needs and wants are constantly being created by capitalism.

In the post-1960 period teenagers started wearing jeans, tee-shirts, track suits, runners and base ball hats, making them indistinguishable from their North American counterparts. By the 1990s child wear had almost matched the range of clothing available to teenagers. Advertisements to encourage brand loyalty are targeted at children from the ages of two and three. According to Fintan O'Toole the availability of American styled clothing means that teenagers (especially during summer) *"came to look more alike, regardless of class background"* and those who did not have the outfits stood out as noticeably different (The Irish Times 4/41990.p.13). Skipping ropes and hoola hoops gave way to increasingly expensive toys such as Cabbage Patch Dolls, Mountain Bikes, Nintendos and Play Stations.

As for male sporting activities, interest continued in gambling on horse and dog racing, while the pitch and toss schools virtually disappeared.[41] Pigeon flying and fancying continues to be a virtually all-male Dublin working class sporting activity. Eddie

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[41] The introduction of the Lotto and the assorted 'scratch cards' means that gambling is now a national pastime, with hopes of a 'big win' holding out the promise of personal fortune and a escalating ladder to misuse Nico Poulantzas's (1979) metaphor for upward mobility. A Lotto win has become the main utopian dream among many working class Dubliners. In the RTE sitcom *Upward Mobile* the fortunes of a working class family who have won the Lotto is juxtaposed to their middle class neighbours.

('Muscles') Moore, a resident of the North Wall and the first to win a pigeon race (from Strawhaven) from his rooftop loft in the Sheriff Street, claims that *"There was always pigeons around dock area and any big city It was a poor man's sport at one time"* But Eddie now believes that it has *"gone middle class"* due to high price now sought for champion pigeons [42] Pete Smyth, a community activist from Tallaght mentioned another working class-related aspect of keeping pigeons to me According to Pete, when men who keep pigeons move from a working class estate to a more 'middle class' neighbourhoods the pigeon loft is left behind The class-relatedness of leisure and sport is clearly demarcated in Dublin working class culture (albeit with exceptions) i e pitch and putt rather than golf, soccer rather than rugby, boxing rather than tennis, darts rather than bridge, majorette routines rather than ballet

Besides dancing, rock, pop and ballads, cinema continued to draw a working class audience during the post-1960s period But following the launch of RTE in 1961 and the greater availability of British channels a gradual decline could be identified Tracing the national trend in cinema admissions between 1950 and 1991 a drop and then a gradual increase in attendances can be detected. In Dublin that rise can be related to the opening of new suburban multi-screen cinemas such Omni Multiplex (Santry) and UCI (Coolock, Tallaght and Blanchardstown), which are linked into other commercial recreational and food outlets

Table 6 2 Cinema Admissions in Ireland from 1950- 1993

	1960	1970	1980	1985	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1993	
	41 0	20 0	9 50	4 5 *	5 2	6 0	7 0	7 4	8 08	9 3	

Source Screen Digest September 1992 [43]

Christmas pantomimes remained the most popular attraction in the world of live theatre performance But if the world of theatre and the arts is riven with class divisions, it is in the cultural domain that the clearest class convergence can be

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[42] Information contained in the North Inner City Folklore Archive Pigeons were attracted to the docks due to the import/export of grain and the gram silos

[43] The drop in cinema attendance in 1985 was due to a screen writers strike

identified That convergence occurs in areas of life style and consumer goods, a process that contributes to a flattening out of cultural taste Besides the commodity aspect of consumer capitalism, factors such as television and advertising contribute to a sameness in contemporary consumerism and the 'culture industry' In such an environment maintaining and developing a specific working class cultural identity goes against the grain Telling working class stories infused with a sense of totality and that elude the cardboard cut-outs of the culture industry is even more challenging

6.5. Trade Unions and Cultural Activity.

Cultural activities associated with the trade union movement from the 1960s to the 1990s were, as in the period 1900 to 1960, mainly initiated by socialists and communists However, while the tradition continued into the 1960s and 1970s it went into decline during the 1980s and 1990s May Day celebrations organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions invariably included cultural inputs For a number of years Connolly Folk were the main contributors While mostly a threesome of Gerry Crilly, Eric Fleming and Ted McKenna, Connolly Folk was also a platform for other singers/musicians According to Eric Fleming, the origins of Connolly Folk can be traced to Berlin, where in June 1973 he and a number of like-minded socialists attended the World Festival of Youth and Students There he met Jack Mitchell, a Scottish academic (then based in Berlin) and author of a work on Sean O'Casey, who already had the idea for a Larkin Folk group Arising from that meeting Connolly Folk was formed Eric traces his involvement in folk music back to the mid-1960s and the influence of Bob Dylan His interest in music paralleled his support for the Vietnamese people and over time he and others in the groups expanded their repertoire to include radical songs from North America and Britain, anti-fascist songs from the Spanish civil war and any songs with a labour content [44]

As in the pre-1960s period outlined in Chapter Four, drama continued to be a vehicle for enlightened and socialist ideas For example, *The Non-stop Connolly Show* written by Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden was performed in Liberty Hall, headquarters of

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[44] Based on information from a telephone conversation with Eric Fleming during July 1997

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the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU), during Easter 1975 Included in its cast were members of The Irish Workers Cultural Centre, which was established in 1974 *"to promote working class culture in Ireland"* [45]

In January 1980 The Cultural Division of the ITGWU was established It included organisations representing actors, artists, composers and playwrights The Division's document <u>Policy on the Arts</u> was adopted by the union as its policy on the arts at the 1982 Annual Conference Its aims include union representation for its members and providing the union membership with *"a greater understanding and appreciation of the Arts"* One of the recommendations is for the establishment of a *"Union Cultural Workers Centre"* (O'Neill 1984 56-58) In an article on the Cultural Division, Dublin busworker Mattie O'Neill, a then leading Dublin trade unionist with a keen interest in cultural affairs, saw the establishment of the Cultural Division as a continuation of the union's cultural heritage. As part of that heritage he included Sean O'Casey, A E Russell, Cathal O'Shannon, Frank Purcell, Harry Kernoff, Peadar O'Donnell and last, but certainly not least, James Connolly According to O'Neill, Connolly had called on the support of those in the 'cultural field' to assist in ending the social system which had produced the condition where in the eyes of most workers *"the most priceless manuscript of ancient Celtic lore would hold but a secondary place in their esteem beside a rasher of bacon"* Connolly believed that all this good in *"literature, art and science"* should be *"recognised as the property of all - and not the heritage of a few"* (cited in O'Neill, 1984 56)

Badges, banners, bands, emblems and commemoration scrolls have been an essential form of trade union cultural and symbolic expression The history of the ITGWU's bands and badges have been recorded by Eileen King (1984) and Francis Devine (1984) and more recently the contribution of the banner makers, Ger and Eithne O'Leary have been documented [46] They have developed their own distinctive style of banner making for trade union, communist, socialist, student, and unemployment groups, as well as for commemorative committees and solidarity groups They have

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[45] <u>Programme of The Non-Stop Connolly Show</u>

[46] See Jer O'Leary's <u>Banners of Unity Hand Crafted Banners of the Labour and Progressive Movement</u> North Inner City Folklore Project Dublin 1995

designed and made at least 220 banners. According to Robert Ballagh, the artist and stage designer, the banners are:

> *"Remarkably free of any attempt to ape either academic painting or commercial art. They shake trade union imagery away from Victorian paternalism. A gallery is a useful place to have a closer look at them, but on the streets they billow like sails set for a voyage"* (cited in Jer O'Leary's Banners of Unity. 1994).

During the centenary of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions in 1986 various artistic, cultural and seminar events were organised by the council. James Plunkett's *The Risen People* was staged and a plaque erected in Wexford Street to the memory of Brian Noonan (alias Robert Tressell) the author of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist. For the centenary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) in 1994 commemorations included a carnival-type parade through the centre of Dublin, a concert, a Irish Labour History Society conference, and radio lectures on the history of the ICTU (Nevin, 1994). The parade showed what was possible, and rather than being confined to the dedicated few, it became an event of the many, despite an apparent hesitancy among its organisers. Coinciding with the ICTU's 100th anniversary a 'Labour in Art' exhibition was presented in the Irish Museum of Modern Art. Running concurrently was a photographic exhibition of Derek Speirs's photographs entitled 'At Work'.[47] In the 'Labour in Art' exhibition catalogue Fintan O'Toole assesses visual representation of Irish workers and concludes by stating that in their under-representation:

> *"Workers remained, if they are represented at all, the passive subjects of art, with no political role in determining the nature of the representations".* [48]

In a subsequent review of the 'Labour in Art' exhibition, Charles Cullen questioned the decision to confine the exhibition to the fine art tradition, thereby excluding *"photographs, cinematography, video, contemporary journalism, posters, badges and banners"*. According to Cullen, some of those art forms have 'abolished' the distinction between art and work, an aesthetic practice associated with sections of the Soviet and Weimar Republic artistic avant-garde during the 1920 and 30s. In Cullen's opinion the inclusion of such artefacts in the exhibition may have generated a more popular public response. In regard to those artefacts he singles out Cashman's 1913

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[47] See Tony Murray's review of Derek Speir's exhibition in Saothar 20. 1995.

[48] Labour in Art :Representations of Labour in Ireland (1870-1970) Irish Museum of Modern Art. 1994. p.10.

photographs of the baton charge on O'Connell Street against locked out workers, and the now famous image of James Larkin with his raised hands, as reproduced in Oisin Kelly's statue of Larkin on O'Connell Street Cullen also mentions films commissioned by the Irish Labour Party during the 1940s According to Cullen, the inclusion of Jer and Eithne O'Leary's banners in the exhibition would have established links between the artworks and their context in a more direct way than the oil paintings that were included in the exhibition.[49]

Before leaving the theme of labour artistic representations it is important to draw attention to Cullen's own contribution in that regard Not only has he designed a series of trade union banners and book covers for the James Connolly classics published by New Books, the ensign of the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI), but he has painted an excellent portrait of James Connolly which is on view in the Irish Labour History Museum In his more mainstream work Cullen reveals both the hypocrisy and the class division in Irish society Commenting on European artists of the calibre of Georg Grosz, John Heartfield and Fernand Leger, in a catalogue of his own paintings Cullen mentions his one time involvement in the CPI In doing so he also expressed a restraining influence due to the traditional support of that party for an aesthetic based on Socialist Realism. Or to put it in his own words

> *"There was a kind of cloth cap, anti-art thing there too, the*
> *Stalinist thing, and there was a romantic thing even"* [50]

The absence of graphic representations of the Irish working class reflects a narrowness of artistic vision and the hegemony of the Catholic middle class in southern Ireland prior to the 1960s The significance of that absence, or the predominance of images which centre on three types, caricature, criminal or victim, cannot be underrated or divorced from questions of cultural identity and power In Carlos Fuentes's The Old Gringo there is passage in which a Mexican revolutionary leads a group of peasants into the hacienda which the rebel peasants have just appropriated from the landowner Entering a large room with mirror lined walls the peasants are both amazed by the wealth of household and in the very act of seeing their own reflection the revolutionary act is made manifest They have replaced the owner of the hacienda and now see their

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[49] See "Art and Labour History" by Charles Cullen in Saothar 20 1995
[50] Cited in Charles Cullen Retrospective Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art 1997 P 39

own full-length images reflected back to themselves My interpretation of Fuentes's

analogy is that image making for those who are in a subordinate position within a

social hierarchy is bound up with the struggle for democracy and cannot be achieved

on their behalf by either a political party or revolutionary intellectuals The working

class is its own emancipator As regards the lack of working class artistic/cultural

artefacts, Raymond Williams made the following point with regard to the British

working class during the late 1950s

> "The working class, because of its position, has not, since the
> Industrial Revolution, produced a culture in the narrower sense
> The culture which it has produced, and which it is important to
> recognise, is the collective democratic institution, whether in the
> trade union, the co-operative movement, or a political party
> Working-class culture, in the stage through which it has been
> passing, is primarily social (in that it has created institutions)
> rather than individual (in particular intellectual or imaginative
> work) When it is considered in context, it can be seen as a very
> remarkable creative achievement" (Williams, 1961 314)

If that was/is the case in Britain it is even more so in the context of Ireland where a

comparable tradition, albeit smaller, is treasured by sections of the Irish working class

who celebrate that cultural heritage in events such as May Day parades as well as

labour commemorations and concerts In recent years such events have shrunk to the

committed few hundred In acknowledging its virtual demise, it is necessary to

re-invent the form while retaining the content of the tradition for the new millennium.

An example of such events was the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the death

of James Larkin, held in Liberty Hall on January 30, 1997 The event included a

keynote lecture by Larkin's biographer Emmet Larkin, music, poetry, readings and

song Commemorating the life of a man such as James Larkin is important, but in

paying tribute to his memory his ideal ought not to be divorced from contemporary

struggles

The Irish Labour History Museum is today a valuable custodian of labour

documentation and memorabilia The importance of having such a 'storehouse' of

labour history is that it keeps alive and celebrates what Karl Marx described as the

> "aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities
> existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever
> he produces use value of any description"
> (Marx,1970 167)

Ken Warpole outlines the cost of not retaining the labour legacy in the following extract on the British trade union movement

> "The fragmentation of working class historical and cultural
> consciousness   is not exactly surprising given the fragmentation
> and lack of concern for the material artefacts of that
> consciousness, that is to say the photographs, short stories,
> novels, autobiographies, histories, produced by that historical
> class culture which were allowed to disappear through neglect, or
> were killed at the roots by frosts of socialist economism Such
> processes were not actively resisted, yet people are surprised that
> 'consciousness' has become 'discontinuous' " [my emphasis]
> (Warpole, 1983 9-10)

Groups or projects that tried to maintain a continuity were those such as the trade union linked Scéim na gCeardchumann, "whose aims were to promote the Irish language and Irish culture" (Geraghty 1994 103) In the mid 1960s the Ireland-USSR Friendship Society showed Russian films (Swift, 1991 188) Then during the 1970s members of the small Internationalists/Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) initiated a number of cultural events and publications in its front organisation Culture and Art for National Independence Study Group (CANISG)

In a 'discussion paper on the arts' published by the Culture and Communications Committee of the Workers Party in 1990 the opening paragraph countered "narrow and elitist" definitions to an understanding of "the arts as arising out of culture, as an expression of a way of life of the people" The document calls on the state to meet its obligation to artists, for more drama production in RTE, the re-establishment of the Film Board and support for rock music, Irish language and cultural heritage Besides a section of 'Socialism and the Arts' the introduction concludes by stating that

> "In Ireland today the economic conditions for political change
> already exist There is an urban working class as the majority
> component of society and there is the failure of the economic and
> political institutions to meet the basic needs of that class
> Crucially, what does not yet exist is the culture of change, a set of
> values and attitudes on the part of the working class as a whole
> that is conductive to change The cultural question therefore,
> could be a central one" [51]

As in the pre-1960s period independent trade union education initiatives were organised In 1970 the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (ITGWU) purchased 10 Palmerston Park as a centre for its Development Services Division,

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[51] Towards a Cultural Democracy A Discussion Paper on the Arts The Workers Party Culture and Communications Committee April 1990

which included its Education and Training Department As part of its shop-steward training, paid day-release courses were commenced during the decade They had, according to Jack Gannon, the full support of the then General Secretary of the ITGWU, Michael Mullen In 1997 the Services, Industry, Professional, Technical Union (an amalgamation of the Workers Union of Ireland and ITGWU) moved its Education and Training Department from Parnell Square to Canal House, South Circular Road from where it runs a range of shop steward courses etc for union members.

In the late 1990s members and associates of the Communist Party of Ireland continue to organise a series of lectures and events under the auspices of the James Connolly Education Trust Also within the sphere of left wing pedagogy is the annual C Desmond Greaves Summer School and the on-going seminars of the Irish Labour History Society Trokskyist groupings such as the Socialist Workers Party also organise summer schools and public meetings with speakers addressing a range of issues Together these projects involve no more than several hundred people

6.6. Conclusions.

In this chapter, as in Chapter Four, I have investigated the worlds of work, housing, leisure, and cultural and pedagogic self-activity among working class Dubliners In addition I have investigated the rise of the women's and ecological movements, questions of life style and the campaigns to rid working class communities of the menace of heroin At the start of the chapter I argued that the 'modernisation' versus 'tradition' analysis is weak in terms of class analysis and therefore proposed FHGM mode of interpretation In advocating an understanding of modern Irish history in terms of the NDR in Chapter One, I distinguished between its 'national democratic' and 'socialist-feminist phases' In the course of discussing the 'national democratic phase' in this chapter the question of the separation of church and state as a key component of the NDR was made explicit, a separation which is a prerequisite of any Republic worthy of its name Based on my analysis I have no option but to conclude that 'modernisation' alone will not solve the fundamental interests of the working class, i e its subordinate position within capitalist relations of production

In the years since 1960s the material well being of all the Irish people has improved and gone are the days of extreme poverty associated with the 1940s and 50s Post-1960s Ireland also witnessed a liberalisation in terms of what Fintan O'Toole describes as the *"private realm"* (O'Toole, 1991 183) But while living conditions have markedly improved the benefits of wealth creation has not been distributed equally among all sections of the population Furthermore, unequal access to the arts, education, medical services, housing, and employment, remain part of the reality of many working class families Class exclusivity is particularly evident at third level education According to Patrick Clancy, in 1963 8% of university children were from *"families of manual workers"*, 23 years later the percentage had only risen to 11% (Clancy,1995 485) The proliferation of terms like 'disadvantaged', 'marginalised', 'poor', 'underclass', and 'underprivileged' testify to the lack of access and participation which is experienced by many working class people in Irish society

Rather than presenting working class people as victims of patriarchal-capitalism and parasites such as drug barons/dealers, I investigated a Dublin working class *"whole way of life"* not only in terms of exploitation/oppression but of resistance to it (Williams,1980b 63) Whether trying to make ends meet, improving pay, living and working conditions, building new suburban communities, surviving on welfare or organizing to drive drug dealers out of their communities I have shown how working class culture is also *"a way of struggle"*, to use E P Thompson phrase (cited in Williams, 1981 135) As previously discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of 'struggle' was seen to be crucial to an understanding of social class and the related class consciousness Consciousness takes the form of 'them and us' or a more political class-conscious articulation among the 'earnest minority' [52] It not only occurs at the 'point of production', but also pervades the wider society

There can be little doubt that the internal fabric of the Dublin working class was weakened with the recurring waves of housing re-location as families moved from inner to outer Dublin But if working class families who moved to suburban housing estates experienced a sense of dislocation and trauma, they have also developed a new sense of belonging as they came together to shape their communities During the

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[52] See Appendix E for a FHGM analysis of the NDR in terms of the leading Irish 'Left' organisations

1980s and 90s some inner city and suburban housing estates had to contend with a lethal form of escapism, i.e. heroin. The rise of the heroin trade represented a major threat and once realised prompted working class people to organise against it.

Prior to the heroin threat working class women were being prescribed 'pills' to deal with emotional stress, rather than being advised to confront the causes of 'stress', which is partly a byproduct of a society where the pursuit of profit assumes greater significance than the actual quality of life of the citizen. Such 'health problems', [53] and indeed the trauma associated with redundancy, unemployment and aspects of suburban re-relocation experienced by some working class Dubliners, represent, in my opinion, what Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb(1973) describe as the 'hidden injuries of class'. They are part of the working class experience.

The 'women's movement' was shown to have opened up new fronts against oppression. Its insistence that questions of 'reproduction' must be included in any political analysis forced a fundamental rethink in terms of 'class politics'. The days in which the struggle against capitalism can be limited to the workplace or the economic sphere alone are over. If production matters, so too does consumption and the associated ideology of consumerism.

In the section entitled 'Forms of Dublin Working Class Leisure' I examined many of the widespread changes in forms of cultural and commodity consumption, which have in turn impacted on the construction of identity. The commodity form has entered everyone's consciousness, shaping the way they perceive themselves, their bodies, their looks, their image and their identities.

Cultural activities organised by the trade union declined in the post 1960 period due to the changing economic base of the city, an improvement in living conditions and a greater variety of leisure and recreational facilities. While the trade union movement did continue to organise cultural events by the 1990s they had lost much of their

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[53] As in CS ('Todd') Andrews's Dublin of 1901 (Appendix B), the question of health still has a class-relatedness in the closing years of the same century. For example, those with working class backgrounds are 70% more likely to die of chronic illnesses than those in the upper end of the socio-economic ladder, according to the Irish Medical Journal October 1996

earlier dynamism, which was largely linked to a more productionist form of capitalism In an 'arts and culture' document published by the Workers Party in 1990 the point was made that *"what does not yet exist is the culture of change"* [54] Working for that change remains the challenge for all those who refuse to accept that this is 'as good as it gets' The NDR is a possible framework in which to envisage that change

The chapter ended with a brief account of trade union and socialist pedagogy Antonio Gramsci argued that 'the working class movement' needed to develop its own 'organic intellectuals' as part of the process of emancipating itself At one stage in the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* they are being tracked across various types of landscape by a posse with a highly experienced scout and after failing to shake them off Butch asks Sundance *"Who are those Guys ?"* Today, more than ever, the working class needs its own scouts, men and women with a sharp sense of 'cognitive mapping', a sense of totality from a working class perspective (Jameson,1992) Education and its contents in Ireland has largely been determined by sections of the petit bourgeoisie, who play a crucial role in the ideological reproduction of capitalism, which alongside the actual material conditions of capitalism ensures the continuing exploitation of the working class That reality is seldom acknowledged or challenged Doing so is an essential step in the process of working class emancipation

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[54] Towards a Cultural Democracy A Discussion Paper on the Arts The Workers Party Culture and Communications Committee April 1990

Chapter Seven

WATCHING TELEVISION

"the 'telly-glued masses' do not exist,
they are a bad fiction of our second-rate analysts"
Raymond Williams (1980b 361)

7.1. Introduction.

Telifís Éireann was established in December 1961 during a time of shifting political and economic forces that included an increasing penetration into Ireland of transnational capital and culture The first decade of the station's existence paralleled a period of major transformation in Irish society Television was deemed by many to be pivotal to a process of modernisation (Toibin,1984/Bew et al,1989) Advocates of this process also singled out the introduction of 'free' secondary education and the emergence of a liberal press as additional significant factors in that process Telifís Éireann's birth was not an easy one due to the conflicting sets of interests representing the state, the civil service, the churches, business, sporting bodies, the Irish language lobby, and the arts Two women sat on the commission and Terence Farrell, the president of the Congress of Trade Unions, represented the trade union movement (Savage, 1996 108) Reflecting the dominant groupings within the Irish nation-state, the commission was, in effect, an alliance of bourgeois and petit bourgeois interests, with one representative of the working class (Savage, 1996)

Established under the 1960 Broadcasting Authority Act the station had a remit to play its part in restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing 'national culture' But because the notion of 'national culture' was deemed to be exclusivist in the Ireland of the early 1970s, in 1976 that remit was redefined in terms of the 'culture of the people of the whole of the island' [1] The launch of an Irish television station significantly altered the way in which meanings were circulated and a national sense of belonging constructed and maintained. But if Telifís Éireann (and from 1965 Radio Telifís Éireann) reinforced a sense of shared Irishness, nationality was privileged over social class and gender When social class was included in the frame it was considered in terms of a bourgeois/social democratic analysis i e contextualised solely within the Irish capitalist mode of production

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[1] See Broadcasting Act 1960 and Broadcasting (Amendment Act) 1976

De-fetishising the relations of media production is part and parcel of exploring the relationship between Dublin working class media consumption and the class and gender aspects of working class cultural identity Like film, television programmes are commodities that have use, exchange and symbolic values They are embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of society and as with all commodities the process of fetishisation/reification is at work If Raymond Williams traces a direct line from the *"chaos of 18th century theatre"* to the *"mass of material now on television and in the cinemas"* (Williams, 1980b 291), John Ellis (1985) provides one of the most thorough exploration of the difference and 'mutual dependency' between the medium of cinema and 'broadcast television'. According to Ellis 'broadcast television' differs from cinema in that it is domestic rather than public/collective It is characterised by a 'segmentalised' flow rather than a *"single unitary film"* (Ellis,1985 126) [2] Screen size differs and so does the lighting used when viewing Television is *"intimate and everyday"* rather *than "any kind of special event"* (Ellis,1985 126)

For Dublin working class households television became a highly popular and relatively inexpensive form of entertainment and information from the 1960s At first many families could not afford a television Households that did possess a set in the early 1960s became popular ports of call for neighbours and friends Ben Savage, a former member of the North Inner City Folklore Project told me how he and his friends used to watch television in the window of McHugh Himself on Talbot Street prior to his family acquiring a set According to Lilo (Burke) Shelvin, another resident of the north inner city, after she married in 1960 she and her husband acquired a 'rental slot television', which took 2 shilling pieces For other working class families there was the option of hire purchase (Fagan et al,1992 44)

Besides the cost of a television purchase or rental, an annual licence fee, and later the cost of cable and/or satellite link, had to be budgeted for To encourage the purchase of licence fees, the Post Office introduced saving stamps In the 1970s the stamps cost 10 pence each By 1990 a choice of £1 and £5 stamps were available [3] According to Raymond Heavy a television, hi-fi and Video retailer on Upper Liffey Street, during the 1960s when he first went into the business a Bush 17 inch screen cost 69 guineas and a Pye 19-inch screen cost

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[2] John Ellis's (1985) concept of 'segmentalised' flow is a derivative of Raymond Williams influencial concept of 'flow' which he introduced in Television Technology and Cultural Form (1979)

[3] I wish to thank Donal Fitzpatrick of An Post for making this information available to me in June 1998

70 guineas Depending on which part of the city, an aerial cost approximately £100 [4] By the 1990s the domestic cost of television had become a taken-for-granted part of the household budget

The aim of this and the next chapter is to explore the relationship between a group of ten Dublin working class families and audio-visual domestic media technologies in order to discover how that relationship contributed to their sense of cultural identity That objective will be pursued in terms of their consumption of television 'soaps', comedy and sports programming, as well as their use of video recorders and computer games By consumption is meant those active and passive audience processes at the receiving end of audio-visual messages

With televisions now in the living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms of many working class families the medium is woven into the fabric of their everyday lives, in way that is markedly different from that of music hall and the cinema going experience [5] The shift from media effects to media reception research, as traced in Chapter Three, parallels the shift in emphasis from the productionist to the consumptionist aspects of capitalism in the post 1960 period. But in making that point a proviso is required i e work continues as production while leisure is increasingly bound up with consumption In terms of the ideology of consumerism alone, it is inconceivable that television has no influence on the viewer But having said that, a sophisticated analysis of media reception has been developed by television audience researchers which offsets any exaggerated claims as to the passivity of audiences and/or the 'effects' of television (Ang,1986/Morley,1986)

This and Chapter Eight weave together and ground the theoretical strands that were introduced in Chapters Two and Three In keeping with a NDR analysis, the focus will concentrate on questions of class, gender and nationality A FHGM approach will continue to inform the interpretative process and fuse with the audience research methods outlined in Chapter Three That mode of interpretation will be applied to both the body of the text and the brief family profiles which are contained in the

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[4] Information based on a conversation with Raymond Heavy at his shop in Upper Liffey Street

[5] The term 'woven' is deliberately used and chosen in the light of John Ellis's contention that ' *The TV and its use has become the normal part of domestic life, and nightly TV viewing has become an established part of the evening's activity for most Western countries"* (Ellis,1965 160)

accompanying footnotes [6] Based on the analysis contained so far within this thesis, social class is deemed to be neither a discrete category, structure, or thing Instead it is an inter and intra relationship with economic, gender, social, cultural, historical, spatial, sexual and political dimensions

This chapter contains the following sections (i) television representations of the Irish working class men and women , (ii) an analysis of the families consumption of television 'soaps', comedy, and sports programming, vis a vis the dissertation's key research questions The latter analysis merges with research material from my M A (McGuinness,1993) to form a single narrative [7] The conclusion will contain an interpretation of the information that arises from both phases of my research in the light of the key research objectives of the current thesis

7.2. Television and Working Class Representation.

"the rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor"
Leonard Cohen [8]

Questions of representation are crucial to any discussion of contemporary Dublin working class culture In Chapter Two I quoted Rosalind Brunt as stating that a starting point in the politics of identity is the

> *"issue of 'representation' both how our identities are*
> *represented in and through the culture and assigned particular*
> *categories, and also who and what politically represents us,*
> *speaks and acts on our behalf"* (Brunt, 1990 152)

Having made the point that *"Class representations are largely constructed by mass-mediated culture"*, Stanley Aronowitz goes on to state that *"there are no more direct representations of the interactions among workers on American television"* (Aronowitz,1992 194) Those that do appear, according to Aronowitz, are the

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[6] A brief synopsis of each of the ten families is presented in Appendix F It is important to point out that more detailed biographical information on the ten families was present in my MA thesis Suffice it to say at this stage that the family members engaged in a range of activities other than that of watching television

[7] I will also draw on information contained in a paper I presented at the 'Imagining Ireland' conference which was held at the Irish Film Centre in Dublin during the weekend of 29-31 October 1991

[8] From Leonard Cohen's song the Tower of Love

representations of American workers on 'police shows' and they dominate North American prime time television.

Irish television representations of the Dublin working class, as discussed in Chapter Two, tend by and large to centre on what Helena Sheehan describes as the *"culture of chronic unemployment, criminality and social welfare dependency"* (Sheehan, 1987:236-237). Programmes such as *Tolka Row* (1964-9), *Strumpet City* (1980) and *Fair City,* are the exceptions to this rule. *Tolka Row's* importance was that it *"touched on so many basic human experiences in terms of the concrete conditions of everyday working class life"*, but in doing so it never *"produced a voice giving it a critical edge"* (Sheehan, 1987:123/125). When the workplace was represented it did not, in the words of Luke Gibbons, function as *"an economic unit but rather as a foil for the various liaisons"* of the Nolan family (Gibbons, 1996:54). For Martin McLoone, *Tolka Row* articulated the:

> *"wider ideological project of Irish television over the last two decades. This project is essentially liberal in nature and committed to the development of a more caring society through a more comprehensive welfare state system"* (McLoone, 1994:65).

RTE's coverage of 'social problems' in Dublin working class communities such as Darnale, Finglas and Sheriff Street have prompted various responses. According to Beth Lazroe a 1981 RTE 'socio-documentary' on Finglas highlighted:

> *"the dereliction of the area, crime, drugs, vandalism, teenagers who had run away from home living in burnt-out cars, school leavers with nothing to do hanging out in gangs, and a host of social and family problems, making the point that nothing was being done by the local or national government to help the situation"* (Lazroe, 1997:53).

While some commentators welcomed the programme's 'realism' Lazroe reports that the programme gave the area a reputation of being a 'no-go' area, affected 'housing exchanges' to the area and gave rise to feelings of entrapment . Furthermore, the image of Finglas that was presented contributed to apathy and a loss of pride among those who had lived there for generations. It gave the young 'vandals' who appeared on camera a prestige and a sense of 'power' beyond their importance in the local community. The programme had, in Lazroe's words *"shown contemporary problems without showing the context of a past rich in local social history, or why or how these conditions had developed"*[her emphasis] (Lazroe, 1997:53). While Lazroe may attribute an exaggerated influence to the medium of television,

her analysis highlight the importance of complementary media representations for working class self-identity

According to the Birmingham University-based Popular Memory Group (see Chapter Three), the working class and women in general have been *"robbed of access to the means of publicity"* (Johnson et al, 1982 210) Perhaps motivated by such exclusion in the Irish context, Gerry Gregg, one of the series producer of Workers' Lives (broadcast by RTE television during April/May 1991), made the following observation

> *"Working class people rarely see their peers on the screen,*
> *explaining the world as they see it, in their terms"* [9]

If modernisation is considered a beneficial trend then by the late 1990s one would expect an increase in the number of favourable or positive representations of working class Dubliners But no According to the broadcaster Joe Duffy, whose class background is working class, the *"middle classes are more represented"* in Irish broadcasting Examples Duffy gives are that news stories on mortgages are given more coverage than cuts in welfare and that the FT100 is broadcast despite its irrelevance *"to the vast majority of people in this country"* (Duffy, 1994 72) In a subsequent <u>Sunday Times</u> (10/5/1998) interview, Duffy posed the question – *"Apart from me, where is the only place you hear working class accents on RTE ?"*, and in answering the question Duffy states *"Crimeline, that's where"* Never one to hide either his Dublin working class accent or origins, Duffy has obviously been hurt and angered by the RTE organisation. But rather than single out any individuals, Duffy states, with regard to the station's dependency on advertising revenue, that *"RTE has a remit to the whole population, regardless of economic buying-power"* As for *Crimeline,* Duffy believes that its use of security video clips of young men thieving relatively inexpensive items *"gives a completely skewed picture of crime It feeds hysteria"* For Duffy the idea that an insurance company (Hibernian Insurance) sponsors a television programme called *Crimeline* is *"outrageous"*

Joe Duffy states that there is no conspiracy to keep the working class people out of RTE and if there is *"any conspiracy it is the conspiracy of our own upbringing"* (Duffy, 1994 74) Such an insight is important in that it focuses on the wider socio-economic ensemble and avoids singling out RTE alone for the existence of working class exclusion in contemporary

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[9] 'Making Workers Lives' in <u>Labour History News</u> No 7 Summer 1991

Irish society But the vague phraseology, *"conspiracy of our own upbringing"*, deflects attention from the way that RTE and other socio-economic forces contribute to the marginalisation of Irish working class people

In countering the thrust of Duffy's argument, recent programmes such as *Fair City, Upwardly Mobile* and *Making the Cut* can be listed as including representations of working class Dubliners Liam Brady's, Eamon Dunphy's and John Giles's excellent football commentaries can also be singled out

Working class Dubliners also appeared in television advertisements In 1997 an advertisement on Irish television featured a man with a Dublin working class accent musing whether he *"might be famous in a Harp ad"* Then during 1998 a television advertisement for the Lotto included a young man with a Dublin working class accent in the company of millionaires after he won the lottery Power City include red jumpered 'staff members' with Dublin working class accents to advertise and appeal to a working class public alongside images of televisions, videos etc) However, Joe Duffy, who speaks with a Dublin working class accent himself, declares that *"I am banned from doing adverts because my accent is so identifiable"* (Duffy, 1994 72) Duffy believes that in advertisements *"A whole view of the world is given to you and it's a middle class view"* (Duffy, 1994 73) Perhaps the tongue-in-cheek desire to be famous in the Harp advertisement, or the dream of winning the Lotto is as likely a possibility as a significant increase in the 'positive' representations of (Dublin) working class people on the RTE channels By 'positive' I mean representations of working class Dubliners that are true to life's contradictions and not cast as stereotypical caricatures of constantly jocose 'characters', as criminals, as victims, or as the 'upwardly mobile' one in million Such 'role models' contribute to prejudice and misrepresent the vast majority of working class people

A genre of television programming with direct relevance to a section of the Dublin working class is that which Eoin Devereux describes as *"charity television"* (Devereux, 1996) This form of television programming was inspired by *Live Aid* (1985) which, in the Irish context, gave rise to *Self Aid* in 1986 and *A Light in the Dark* in 1992 The *People in Need* telethons started in 1989 and have continued up to the 1998 Based on his research of the Telethon Devereux found that, while television had

a role to play in solving the problems of the 'deserving poor', the solution was presented in terms of voluntarism and charity while ignoring the causes of poverty. In okaying capitalist enterprises in terms of sponsorship and donations, the programme made no reference to poor pay and working conditions (Devereux, 1998:46). As part of his overall assessment of the way RTE represented poverty Devereux states that:

> "much of the coverage represents poverty as being classless and portrays the relatively powerful as being the benign helpers of the less fortunate. In this sense, the coverage offered by RTE may be said to be ideological, facilitating as it does the continuation of capitalism" (Devereux, 1996:322).[10]

Such a scenario is not confined to Ireland. While not entirely comfortable with the concept of social class, the Afro-American cultural critic and intellectual bell hooks[11] states that *"Contemporary popular culture in the United States rarely represents the poor in ways that display integrity and dignity"* (hooks, 1994:168). She argues that 'rags to riches' television programmes and films have as *"their primary theme the lust of the poor for material plenty and their willingness to do anything to satisfy that lust"*. Taking the example of the film *Pretty Woman* (1990), the modern day Pygmalion, she states that the film:

> "portrays the ruling class as generous, eager to share, as unattached to their wealth in their interactions with folks who are not materially privileged. These images contrast with the opportunistic avaricious longings of the poor" (hooks, 1994:168).

hooks concludes her discussion on the theme of 'representing the poor ' by stating:

> "Constructively changing ways the poor are represented in every aspect of life is one progressive intervention that can challenge everyone to look at the face of poverty and not turn away" (hooks, 1994:172).

As presently constituted, 'charity television' represents a continuation of charity so clearly illustrated in the work of Jacinta Prunty on the 'deserving poor' in the slums of Dublin between 1800-1925 (Prunty, 1998). One factor in challenging 'victim representations' is that local community groups have developed their own awareness of the politics of representation and refuse to be subjects when appearing before the camera.[12]

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[10] While Eoin Devereux uses the category of social class in this quotation, his references to poverty or 'the poor' are rarely contexualised in terms of a class analysis of Irish society. Having identified a lack of interest in the issue of poverty among RTE programme makers, he refrains from highlighting this serious neglect in terms of the class composition of the programme makers themselves and the dominant class ethos pervading RTE.

[11] bell hooks favours lower case lettering in the typing of her name.

[12] See Community Organisations and the Media by Barry Cullen. Combat Poverty, Dublin 1989, and Insights into the Media. A Course in Media Analysis facilitated by Women's Initiative for Creative Awareness (WICCA) at Parents Alone Resource Centre. No Publication date.

Confessional television programmes, particularly those programmes imported from North America, have a tendency to rely on working class guests and studio audiences Along with their English counterparts have have brought public confession into Irish homes in a period in which the sacrament of confession has declined among Irish Catholics Such is the competition among the rival stations that it has driven competing channels to contrive more and more outrageous revelations in what can only be described as a 'dumbing down' trend associated with late 1990s television broadcasting What is noticeable about 'confessional shows' such as *Jenny Jones, Ricki Lake, The Jerry Springer Show* and *Sally Jessy Raphael* is that the audiences invariably comprise working class North Americans of different racial backgrounds and the 'specialists' tend to be mainly white middle class Most of the encounters would be best confined to the privacy of the client/therapist relationship People's pain as television audience entertainment transforms these shows into latter day 'freak shows' The decision of the *Jerry Springer Show* to include a man who had left 'his wife' for a horse on the show along with his new 'equine partner' means that the distinction between these mainstream shows and the parodies that the genre have spawned is increasingly blurred The suggestion that a dysfunctional society has at least some correspondence to dysfunctional individuals is never explored Neither is the concept of collective class action In short the individual is left to solve his or her problem on their own or sometimes with a professional healer provided by the television company These programmes pander to prejudices against working class people and those from ethnic minorities For bourgeois/ petit-bourgeois audiences they are the 'other' to be watched, pitied and laughed at Middle class insecurities and troubles are never so openly on display

Television presenters Geraldo, Montel and Oprah Winfrey also host similarly formatted shows, but what distinguishes their shows is their willingness to confront questions of racism and intolerance within North American society. But the answers delivered are always to be found within the individual or centred on the individual's own capacity to change What these remedies have in common is that they reject the *"materialist premise that to change your life you must also change the world"* (Nichols,1981 292)

The Irish women's movement has drawn attention to women's representation in Irish television According to Barbara O'Connor, over the first 21 years the portrayal of women in Irish 'soaps' became less visible and were portrayed as playing fewer central positive roles (O'Connor, 1984) Women's organisations on a national and European level have sought to

put women 'in the picture'. At the European level the Third Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women (1991-1995) and the Charter for Equal Opportunities for Women in Broadcasting (1995) represent current thinking [13] In Ireland women's organisation have campaigned against sexist images of women in advertising and for greater visibility of women on television In 1981 a 'Women in Broadcasting' working party was established by the RTE Authority [14] Then in 1998 RTE issued an Equality Report that drew attention to the progress made during the 1980s and reported on the slowing down of the equality agenda during the 1990s This trend is made explicit in the report and it remains to be seen if the recommended 'action initiatives' will be implemented [15] Based on my examination of the relevant documentation I found no evidence of a regard for the representation of working class women

7.3.   Working Class Identity and the Viewing of Television 'Soaps'.

Before proceeding to re-examine the responses of family members [16] to questions on 'soaps', the correspondences with existing television audience research will be outlined Firstly, the appeal of realism in the representations of English 'soaps' among the majority of family members matched that of Sonia Livingstone's findings (1987) Women's emotional involvement with 'soaps' and their pleasurable engagement with the fantasy and escapist aspects of American 'soaps' in particular, broadly tallied with the audience research findings of Ien Ang (1986) and Tina Modleski (1984) Viewers responses also matched Barbara O'Connor's (1990) findings on Irish viewers enjoyment of *Glenroe's* humour and characterisation Class, gender and age in audience activity and response also tallied with the dominant trends to emerge from Barbara O'Connor's (1987,1990) and Marion Reynolds's (1990) media research

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[13] I wish to acknowledge that this information was supplied to me by the Ciara McKenna, Information Unit of the National Women's Council of Ireland

[14] Also at a national level research conducted by Dr Maria Gibbons on women and the Irish independent radio sector is indicative of the way in which the equality agenda is pursued in Ireland

[15] See Equality Report 1998 RTE for details

[16] A brief synopsis of the ten families is presented in Appendix F

Of the 33 adult family members who were interviewed only five spoke favourably about *Fair City*.[17] For the five viewers who expressed satisfaction, the serial's realism, humour and sense of community were singled out. For example, Marie McIlroy [18] related to the characters in *Fair City* because the representations corresponded to her memories of Cabra, where her husband had lived prior to their marriage. According to Marie *"the way they go on was like his mother's neighbours. I could say that's like Mrs So and So that lived next door to his mother"*. The way in which Marie's memories of Cabra and Carrigstown converge raises interesting questions on the relationship between memory and (class) identity. Marie's sense of herself was clearly bound up with her past and it is reasonable to assume that in watching aspects of *Fair City* her sense of class identity reinforced.

According to The Irish Times columnist Fintan O'Toole, *Fair City* will *"look like direct realism"* to people from the old suburbs of Dublin, an insight which may explain Marie McIlroy's identification with the sense of community that pervades the serial and which tallies with her memory of Cabra (The Irish Times 21/9/1989). The extent to which the makers of *Fair City* promote a sense of 'community' within the serial is supported by the fact that Fintan O'Toole reported that the word 'community' was mentioned at least twenty times in the first twenty minutes of the first episode. O'Toole's observations are important in so far as they draw attention to the fact that it is working class as opposed to bourgeois or petit-bourgeois communities that have experienced dislocation and fragmentation due to housing relocation, lack of amenities and the menace of heroin trade. Heroin and its related ills in various parts of working class Dublin represent one of the greatest threats to positive notions of 'community'.

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[17] *Fair City*, which was first broadcast in September 1989, is set in a corporation estate in Drumcondra, which was built in the 1930s. The fictional name of this north Dublin working class suburb is Carrigstown.

[18] Marie McIllroy is a 56-year-old mother of four who works at home. She has lived in Coolock for 25 years since moving from a city centre address. There are three televisions in the home. Marie was the only person to use the term working class to describe herself in the course of my contact with the ten families. She was also the one person to enter a 'party political affiliation', hers is Fianna Fail. Her average weekly expenditure on leisure activity is £20. Marie would like to see quiz shows on RTE for adults and children.

Younger family members also expressed a sense of recognition at the urban representations of the *Fair City*. For example, Dave O'Neill [19] thought that it was *"just what Irish life is really like - the way they go in for the Lotto"*.

For those critical of *Fair City* the portrayal of Dublin accents, the standard of acting, what was perceived to be a tendency towards dullness and a sense of unreality were the main criticisms which were mentioned. Of these remarks the issue of accent gave rise to the most negative comments, which appeared to be bound up with the viewer's own sense of identity. According to Josephine Whelan [20] *Fair City* was:

> *"hopeless...it is not true to life at all, it is not Dublin, and the kind of rough voice, we don't speak like that at all, I don't know where that came from... It doesn't work for me at all. I don't know their names...there is a fella on a motor bike I think, you know blah blah blah, I say 'Mother of God'...even the tough youngsters wouldn't go on like that...I hate the accent, because Dublin people haven't got that accent...I cannot stick it".*

By remarking that the accents were alien to their 'speech community' highlights the manner in which the majority of interviewees distanced themselves from the representation of Dublin working class life portrayed in *Fair City*. Accent remains one of the distinct badges of social class. According to the Dublin singer Frank Harte, Brendan Behan, had *"a huge effect, because he was the first one who shouted out with a Dublin accent and didn't give a damn"* (cited in Geraghty,1994:26). Over thirty years later a Dublin working accent can be tolerated in the multicultural and intergalactic world of the Star Ship Enterprise (i.e. O'Brien), while RTE news and current affairs remains off limits.

On the standard of acting Hanna Cranson, [21] a 19 year old lone parent with one child thought that *Fair City* was *"a load of rubbish, for one thing the acting is desperate. I think the plots are so silly"*. Explaining why she did not watch *Fair City*, Jane Smyth, [22] remarked *"maybe it is because it refers to your own type of life"*, adding that it was *"dull, nothing*

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[19] Dave O'Neill is a 15 year old secondary school student who with his family moved to Coolock in 1982. He is studying for his Intermediate Certificate and spends an average of £3 on leisure activities a week, some of which is spent on computer magazines.

[20] Josephine Whelan is a 52-year-old homemaker, a mother of five and actively involved in local community organisations. She has lived in Coolock since 1967. She and husband own their corporation built house. The Whelans buy The Evening Herald during the week and The Sunday Independent and The News of the World on Sunday.

[21] Hanna Cranson is a 19-year-old lone parent with one child and is unemployed. She has her Leaving Certificate and is attending a course in the French language. She is involved in a drama group in Wexford where she lives some of the time. There she enjoys horse riding. She is a member of the Church of Ireland.

seems to be happening, even in Glenroe there is laughing and joking" The lack of
unemployment and financial hardship portrayed in *Fair City* prompted Marie Whelan [23] to
remark that *"they are all doing really well for themselves"*

In the perception of the participants, *Fair City* was situated in a number of areas
throughout Dublin, with most thinking that it was on the southside Joseph Whelan [24]
located the programme in the southside because *"there are a few you know 'la de Das'*
and there is a few lads you know, the usual" As for June Sheridan [25] she

> *"couldn't see it in Coolock. I'd say it is in Crumlin* [a southside
> working area] *They are a different breed of people, they are all*
> *different My sister-in-law is from Crumlin and they are much*
> *different than the northside"*

By situating the soap in an area removed from their own community, participants were, I
believe, expressing their distance from the representations in *Fair City* It was evident from
their comments that the portrayals of a Dublin working class 'whole way of life' did not
match their own experience of day to day life As Matthew Whelan [26] said

> *"the reality or something is not there, like the difference of*
> *Strumpet City and The Boys from the Blackstuff I'd say it would*
> *be in one of the estates, I don't know where I'd put it, it doesn't*
> *seem to fit, there is something false about it"*

It is with such responses that Raymond Williams's concept of 'structure of feeling'
comes into its own, because it widens the brief beyond formal concepts of 'world-view'
and 'ideology' to include *"meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt"*
(Williams,1987 132) For Williams the concept is also about *"defining a social experience*
which is still in process" (Williams, 1987 132) That makes it ideal for interpreting the way
in which Matt measured the portrayals in *Fair City* against his own lived experiences

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[22] Jane Smyth is a 45-year-old married women with three children She has lived in Coolock (Artane) since 1969 and is a member of the Catholic Church

[23] Marie Whelan is 16-years-old student who has an Intermediate Certificate and is attending a V P T P Course

[24] Joesph Whelan is a 19-year-old factory worker who has a keen interest in sports and owns his own car He is a former national brake dance champion and is currently involved in karate and kick boxing

[25] June Sheridan is divorcee and a lone 34-year-old parent of three children She has lived in Coolock since 1986, when she moved from Finglas She has no party political affiliations but told me that she voted for Mary Robinson in the November 1990 presidential election June left school after primary school and is a Roman Catholic On some Sundays she buys The Sunday World

[26] Matthew Whelan is a 52-year-old factory worker and father of 6 children Prior to moving to Coolock in December 1967 he lived in Church Street At the time of the interview Matthew was on 'sick leave' from his job in a local factory where he worked the night shift Born in 1939, he played semi-professional soccer and was a longtime supporter of Liverpool On average he spends £25 on leisure activities One of current leisure activities is 'going for a pint'

The existence of an urban based Irish soap which broadly represents the working class experience provides a potentially valuable cultural reference point for those living in the city, as well as an insight into urban life for those of other class backgrounds and geographical location Such representations can either promote or subvert working class stereotypes Based on the responses of the majority of family members interviewed between February and April 1991 it can be stated that *Fair City* did not realise that potential for that particular group of viewers

Since concluding phase one of my research *Fair City* has grown in national popularity and frequently figures in the top ten most popular programmes According to Hugh Linehan the 'soap' had a rocky start and in its comeback in 1994 paid less attention to *"depicting modern urban Ireland"* and more to the *"basics"* In 'soap opera' terms that means *"Marriage, infidelity, separation, and parent-child conflict"* (The Irish Time 5/4/1997) So the family, rather than social class, to the key backdrop to the unfolding narrative of *Fair City* [27] As with *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders* there is a public house in *Fair City* where in a make-believe world *"people of all classes and ages mingle happily"* (The Irish Time 5/4/1997) With an emphasis on 'community', *"shopping centres, McDonalds, and the multiplexes"* seldom feature (The Irish Time 5/4/1997) Therefore the principle cathedrals of contemporary consumer capitalism are omitted However, more recently a bistro has been added to the set of *Fair City*, no doubt a tacit recognition of the prosperity derived from the Celtic Tiger (O'Hearn,1998) A murder, a robbery with a blood filled syringe and several moving scenes of three gay men dealing with the pending death of one of them to AIDS has also been featured

Interview responses to questions on *Coronation Street, Brookside* and *EastEnders* revealed an ease of identification among virtually all of the family members who followed these 'soaps' Favourable responses were mainly expressed in relation to the portrayal of everyday life and humour When asked what she most enjoyed about these 'soaps' June Sheridan said

> *"the lifestyle, the troubles they go through, and the problems they have You are just kind of living in them, you know Yes, they are fairly true to life Brookside is anyway, you know the things that*

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[27] This point is important and highlights the lack of emphasis on social class in television in general When it is presented it is in terms of *"a kind of sliding scale of social stratification as opposed to primary class division"* (Fiske and Hartely,1985 106)

> *happen, the troubles and the sorrows and happiness and the*
> *fights ".*

What Anne Dowler [28] most enjoyed about *Coronation Street* was that:

> *"It's just down to earth...it's just life y'know...it's life*
> *on the street...I suppose it's like life everywhere*
> *else...it's down to earth and it's kinda real".*

As for the humourous aspects of *Coronation Street*, Peter McIlroy [29] said that his favourite character was:

> *"Jack,* [Duckworth, the barman in The Rovers Return] *he is a*
> *great laugh, he keeps pigeons.... I used to keep pigeons as well, I*
> *gave them up a good while ago, well before I got married, it was*
> *a good pastime".*

When asked if the fact that *EastEnders* was based in London had any impact on her enjoyment of the 'soap,' Marie McIlroy said it did not and that parts of it related to her own childhood. Referring specifically to the Fowler family, she said *"I remember my dad going out to work like that and my mother like was taking over the worry of everyone's problems... parts of that now I'd kind of relate to".* Comparing the area she came from in Dublin to Albert Square Marie once again raised the importance of a sense of 'community' and of place for her, as she had done in relation to questions on *Fair City*. According to Marie *"we were a very close knit unit...something similar to it* [Albert Square]... *it was Drumcondra... they were two up and one down".*

In a view similar to that of Fintan O'Toole, the English writer and cultural critic Ken Warpole states that 'soaps' serve the:

> *"function of those lost 'organic' or 'close-knit' communities, in*
> *which our parents and grandparents may or may not have lived*
> *and yet which, ironically, we continue to regret the loss of and*
> *thus wish to resurrect"* (Warpole, 1987:81).

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[28] Anne Dowler is a lone mother of four children and has a part time cleaning worker. In 1991 she participated in a management training course in preparation for an involvement in running a local centre for one parent families. On Wednesday evenings she goes to a Ladies Club where sometimes bingo is played or the women watch a video together. The previous week they had watched *Shirley Valentine* and *"everyone enjoyed that, it was very good. Talking to the wall and all she was, it was comical, it was good"* Anne described her radio as a *"lifeline"*.

[29] Peter McIllroy is a 64 year old retired barman who retains his membership of the Licensed Vintner's Association. He is married with three children. He and his wife own their home and have lived in Coolock for 25 years. Prior to that they lived in the city centre. He reads *"cowboy books now and again"*. On average he spends £20 on leisure activities each week.

The fact that *EastEnders* is situated in London was not an issue for Claire Burke, [30] because as she said *"I can see the same problems here in Dublin although they're not out in the open enough"*

Several family members spoke of the importance of getting a balance between entertainment and the dramatic presentation of 'issues' in the 'soaps' While Josephine Whelan disapproved of the *"doom and gloom"* of *EastEnders*, she still felt that in terms of Irish television there were a lot of subjects that were taboo As Josephine said

> *"you never heard a mention of AIDS, nobody has AIDS you*
> *never hear of people in trouble, money problems or a battered*
> *wife or husband, these things don't happen in our little place I*
> *think they should"* [31]

Critical responses to English 'soaps' were mainly expressed by the male participants in the project For example, Tony McIlroy [32] said that

> *"They're all so fictional, they've got nothing really relevant to*
> *life situations that I would be involved in they're just so*
> *overblown you know, they're really ridiculous Coronation Street*
> *is so predictable There is always an affair going on, they're*
> *always in the pub No, I never take them seriously at all I must*
> *admit to watching Coronation Street for a couple of episodes to*
> *see how the plot turned out"*

The general appeal of English working class 'soaps' can be explained by the identification among many Dublin working class families with aspects of English popular culture Such an ease of identification was articulated by June Sheridan's remark about *"living in them"* when discussing 'soaps' For example, there is a tradition in many Dublin working class homes of buying English daily and Sunday newspapers as well as supporting English soccer teams That identification can also be linked to patterns of emigration among working class Dubliners and the subsequent family associations with England Other possible explanations may be the similarity of experience between Irish and English working class city dwellers, which is in turn reflected in popular culture

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[30] Claire Burke is a married with three children She works as a part time instructor on a Youthreach scheme and was attending a child care course She left school after her primary Theirs is a rented corporation house At the time of the interviews both the remote control for the television and the video were broken The Burkes are not connected to Cablelink, they receive the two RTE and BBC channels as well as Channel Four and UTV via an aerial

[31] Since making those remarks *Fair City* has introduced a gay man with AIDS, his lover and the lover's gay friend into the 'soap'

[32] Tony McIlroy is a 21 year old single man who works as a print finisher He drives a motor cycle and regularly buys <u>Perfomance Bike</u> and Q Tony spends £60 a week on leisure activities

What emerged most clearly from the responses of those who enjoyed *Glenroe* was the popularity of Dinny, Miley and Biddy, as well as the humour of the programme As previously mentioned these responses concurred with Barbara O'Connor's research findings (1990)

According to Thomas Murphy,[33] his favourite characters in *Glenroe* were Miley and Dinny The thought of Miley made him laugh, that he was

> *"the fool for himself, well he acts the fool, but I don't think he is And the father is a character, the hand behind the arm when you are around the country you do see fellas going around like that"*

For Joseph, the programme's broad appeal was its representation of *"country life"* which he considered to be *"very easy going"* Tony O'Neill [34] said that he would not miss *Glenroe*

> *"for the world, just the whole way of life is interesting to me and different Miley Byrne, his whole attitude, the way he goes on, typical Wicklow man The girl I am going out with is from Wicklow, so I spend a lot of time up there and it is true to life, the way they go on It is very good I can relate to that because I spend a lot of time down there"*

In contrast to Tony, Joseph Whelan, who at the time of the interview was also approximately twenty years of age, described *Glenroe* as

> *"Real bog land like, I mean this is 1991, it's like they are living in Tir na N'og or something, you know they are way back It's way out you know they're not with it I don't know I was never in a Wicklow village, there are just not enough of young people in it Well Miley is funny, even the way he talks, he is funny It's very distant"*

Fifteen year old, Liam Burke [35] also disliked *Glenroe*, but like Joseph Whelan said that Miley was *"good, he is funny"*

The popularity of *Glenroe* can be explained by the fact that it is an RTE flagship in terms of continuous drama and is broadcast during peak Sunday evening viewing time The distance between the majority of the ten families and the day to day realities of Irish rural life may

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[33] Thomas Murphy is a crane driver and a father of seven children He was born in 1955 and left school after doing his Primary Certificate

[34] Tony O'Neill is a 22-year-old plumber by trade who was unemployed at the time of the interview He has a Senior Trade Certificate He spends between £30 and £50 a week and while not a member of a library reads 'a lot' He buys Hot Press, Home and Studio Recording and Keyboard magazine

[35] Liam Burke is a 15-year-old secondary school student who enjoys dirt track cycling and listening to Gerry Ryan and Gerry Wilson on 2FM He buys computer magazines

also contribute to the enjoyment of *Glenroe* Not having direct experience of a rural way of life will perhaps leave viewers more susceptible to its idealised representations While in contrast, having direct day to day experience of life in a mainly working class community will give each viewer a more critical expertise, so to speak, in their consumption of 'soaps' based in working class communities in Dublin, Liverpool, London or Birmingham This might partly explain the more critical drift of these viewers' reactions to the perceived lack of realism in *Fair City*

The reasons why a predominantly working class group of individuals living in north Dublin would give *Glenroe* as an example of what they considered to be a particularly Irish programme can be explained in several ways It may well be related to the fact that notions of Irish 'national culture' have traditionally been related to idealised representations of rural Ireland, or the fact that, as Martin McLoone puts it, the *"discourse of the city"* has been marginalised in Irish culture (McLoone,1984 61) It may also be explained by the part 'land' plays in the collective consciousness and memory of many Irish people Other explanations may be due to the fact that those living in working class communities of north Dublin, are, as John Waters puts it *"outsiders in their own city"* and as such do not share a common Dublin identity (Waters, 1991 104-105) So, perhaps in the absence of sufficient positive cultural representations of Dublin working class life, there is a tendency to look elsewhere and identify with representation of rural life, where, for example, in the idealised world of the Molly Malone bar, the social classes, genders and ethnic minorities intermingle and virtually all are employed

7.4.   National Identity and Viewing of Television 'Soaps'.

The responses to the question 'which programmes do you consider to be particularly Irish?' raised some interesting points on the convergence of class and national identities Taken together they illustrated the complexity of identifying a clear understanding of what constitutes 'Irishness' The fact that *Glenroe* headed the list of answers to the question revealed how some family members saw 'Irishness' in rural terms and thereby, it could be argued, articulated a sense of exclusion experienced by working class Dubliners However, others mentioned programmes such as *Live at Three, Today Tonight, The Late Late Show, Bibi, Nighthawks, The Den*, the film *My Left Foot* (1989) as well as *Number One.*

However, in the case of the latter it was considered *"very Irish"* in a pejorative sense, because according to 15 year old Dave O'Neill *"the set seems to be very cheap"*. According to Bernadette Whelan [36] *Glenroe* was:

> *"particularly Irish 'cos I mean everybody knows someone like Stephen who hates the tinkers...the local bigot...It's not so much where it's placed y'know be it rural or urban, it's the realism of the characters and the characters in Glenroe are more real than the characters in Fair City, I would feel, so therefore the whole 'soap' takes on a more real appearance than Fair City would...for me anyway".*

For 19-year-old Hanna Cranson Glenroe was *"very Irish"* because it was *"out in the country, that is about it"*. According to Hanna:

> *"Irishness is down the country...I don't think there is much Irishness in Dublin. I just think Irish to me is more Celtic. Irishness to me is muck, the fiddle, the cap and a pint of Guinness and that kind of thing, whereas in Dublin, it's just like any other city really, like London or any where else, there is nothing Irish about it. Like you could go down a street, right, and there is an Aran wool shop or something like that, but that is all really".*

Teresa Murphy [37] considered *Glenroe* to be particularly Irish because of the *"the talk I suppose...the culchie type of talking...the humour also"*. In Ireland 'rural' influences take many forms. For example, in terms of representations of a Dublin working class culture, Martin McLoone makes the point that the RTE television production of the Dublin based 'soap' *Tolka Row* (1964 to 1968) *"looked at city life from the perspective of the country ideal"* (McLoone.1984:1984).

For Thomas Murphy *Today Tonight*, which for him brought home *"everything about Ireland. It tells us everything, different nights, different subjects, different things that are going on"*. Tony McIlroy, a 22-year-old printing worker, had a different reason for suggesting that *Today Tonight* was particularly Irish.

> *"everybody is over forty five, stiff collared. Lots of Irish politics. I think they concentrate too much on what's going on in the Dail. I think there's a lot of airheads in youth as well, but maybe they could get together and sort something out. If you take this recent thing...the condom affair. It suddenly became as big as the Gulf [war] you know. The likelihood of some of those bloody politicians even using the condom was out"*

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[36] Bernadette Whelan is a 27-year-old lone parent with one child who works as a part time sales assistant. She has an Intermediate Certificate and for five years was involved in a local community radio station. She expressed frustration at the lack of recognition which 'community radio' got from the Irish Radio and Television Commission (I.R.T.C). On average Bernadette spends £20 a week on leisure activities. The community based NearFM now serves the area.

[37] Teresa Murphy is a 36-year-old homemaker and mother of six children all under the age of 15. Her leisure activities including bingo and *"every so often"* going for a drink in one of the two public houses in Coolock village. The "odd time" she will buy/read Women's Weekly or Bella

When asked which programmes were particularly Irish, Des Smyth[38] mentioned Bibi

Baskin's talk show

> "she had the Dublin team on there the other week the whole
> Dublin team that was a bit of a laugh that was a great
> night all the folk singers were on I thought that was terrific
> yeah that's a good mix of a show y'know that's I think uniquely
> Irish"

According to Peter Teeling,[39] *Nighthawks* was "*definitely Irish without a doubt it uses a*

certain American flavour, but the wit would make it Irish" Peter's understanding of

Nighthawks can be explained by a point made by the culture and media commentator Luke

Gibbons where he states that

> "The strength of an indigenous culture does not lie in its ability to
> avoid contact with the dominant forces in the culture industry, but
> in the manner in which it appropriates the forms and products of
> the metropolitan centre for its own ends" (Gibbons, 1996 80)

50 year old Josephine Whelan mentioned *The Den* as been representative of Irishness,

saying that she loved Dustin He was

> "very funny and not only that it is topical they are very good
> at that, a little joke about ourselves but I think they [Zig and
> Zag] are a bit yuppy, to me, that is my opinion, Dustin is totally
> different, 'yer only man'!"

7.5. Gender Identity and the Viewing of Television 'Soaps'.

In general gender differences were expressed in terms of viewer activity and response In

making any statement on gender identities it is important to start by reiterating a quote that

was previously used in Chapter Two, i e that the "*sexual division of leisure clearly*

reflects the sexual division of labour" (Clarke & Critcher, 1985 224) While identification

with character and narrative were features which attracted some men to 'soaps', the

'emotional realism' with which personal and family relationships were acted out was one of

the main appeals for women While the majority of men preferred to see social issues dealt

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[38] Des Smyth is a 48-year-old stock cutter in the textile trade and father of three children He is actively involved in his soccer club and plays golf His favourite novelists include Frederick Forsyth, Steven King, Ed Mc Bain, Walter Macken, Wilbur Smith, Bram Stoker and Tolkein

[39] Peter Teeling is a single 23-year-old administrative assistant in a city centre insurance company and is a member of the Manufacturing and Service and Financial Union He has his Leaving Certificate and is doing a computer course On average he spends £80 on leisure activities and in conversation mentioned that he socialises with his 'southside' girlfriend in different social venues to that of his Artane/Coolock friends During the week he will read either The Guardian, The European, The Times or The Irish Independent On his 'Household Profile Questionnaire' Peter pointed out that I had not included questions on either the ' *extremes"* on television or its censoring by parents

with in actuality programmes, women identified with the way in which such issues were included within the narrative of 'soaps' Several women spoke openly of how issues raised in 'soaps' connected in a direct and personal way to their own life experiences Marital separation, home ownership and teenage pregnancy were just some of the issues mentioned Women also enjoyed the escapist and fantasy aspects of 'soaps' such as *Dallas* and *Neighbours*

Based on responses to a number of questions on the process of negotiating television channel and programme selection among family members, it emerged that the selection process occurred within the context of domestic power relations The clearest distinction in that regard was the way men and boys tended to monopolise the use of the remote control Evidence of the domestic power relations which mediate channel and programme selection along lines of gender, paralleled trends which emerged in David Morley's London-based audience research (1986) Domestic power relations also centred on age, with older members having the potential to exercise a dominance

7.6. Television Sport: "You don't have to be there to be there".[40]

In this section all the adult family members were asked the following questions

(i)   Do you watch any sports programmes?
(ii)   Which programmes?
(iii)   Which is your favourite television sport?
(iv)   Which channel do you watch sport on?
(v)   When do you watch it?
(vi)   With whom do you watch it?

Soccer was the most frequently mentioned television sport among both male and female members of the ten families Next was snooker, horse racing, boxing and tennis The success of the Irish soccer team in the 1990 World Cup was a predictable factor in enhancing the popularity of the game at the time of the interviews, which were conducted between February and April 1991 Des Smyth summed up that success in response to an unrelated question on 'role models for children on television' In responding, Des brought the answer around to saying.

> "the way things have changed around in the last couple of years
> for me, [once] all your heroes were over there, they were all
> English or they were Scotch or Welsh or whatever they were,

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[40] The slogan on RTE's 1998 sports poster

*right, and the kids here were all emulating them over there. Now
all the kids are emulating all our own guys, they're all in green
jerseys now rather than being in red ones or blue ones or pink
ones y'know, and suddenly now, we have this ourselves, this is
ours and the kids relate to that, all over the country".*

Des, a former soccer player and currently a trainer with a local club, is one of those Dublin
working class men who love the game of soccer and have contributed endless hours playing
the game and training young boys and youths. It is men like Des that have created the
conditions for the success of Ireland's senior and under 16s team, in 1990 and 1998
respectively.

While not referring specifically to the 1990 World Cup Michael R. Real states that such
international football competitions:

*"provide central rallying points for national identity and pride,
just as soccer and football teams feed local, regional and national
loyalties at all levels"* (Real, 1989:202).

Despite the male orientation of much television sport, it is worth noting the popularity of the
Irish soccer team among women viewers. That popularity was confirmed by Irish TAM
figures which revealed that while many men watched the 1990 World Cup outside the home,
more women than men were recorded as watching the Ireland V Romania match in the home
(The Sunday Tribune 29/7/1990).

In order to capture the spirit of what women family members said about watching the 1990
World Cup I will now present a cross section of the views expressed. Molly Cranson
"watched every single match in the World Cup" despite the fact that previously she would
not watch a football match *"if you paid me"*. Molly believed that the success of the Irish
team got her:

"into the fever of it at the time and my little girl [Amy], *she is
seven and wanted to be a footballer and maybe that helped as
well, I'll never watch another one again I'd say, I don't know
what got into me".*

Marie McIlroy's interest in soccer dates back to the days she went, sometimes in the
"pouring rain" to see her husband play for Grange United. He came from a *"really football
mad family...his seven brothers played football"*. When I asked whether she enjoyed
watching those games, she responded by saying *"Oh, I did, I loved it but now before I met
him I used to love going to rugby matches, I prefer rugby to soccer"*. She was the only

member of her family who followed rugby, her brothers *"were into Gaelic* [football]" It was a former neighbour who brought Marie to her first rugby match and *"that got me into it"* Nowadays she watched the rugby internationals on television She watched soccer on Sunday with her husband *"he likes football and I watch soccer with him now after dinner on Sunday, no matter who'd be playing I'd watch it, Man United or Spurs, no matter who it is I'd watch with him"* When the discussion moved to the topic of the 1990 World Cup Marie said that she had her *"flag hanging out the window, I got into my Ireland jumper! I had Ken* [her grandson] *dressed up as well I had the tricolour hanging out the bedroom window, a huge big one!"*

Mary O'Neill, a 19-year-old bank clerk and a aerobics enthusiast, said

> *"I loved the World Cup, that is what actually got me more interested in it than anything else I watched it because they are always watching it here and they'd go on about it for ages, the FA Cup and all They'd just sit and watch it favourite sport was soccer"*

June Sheridan, 34 year old lone parent of three children, only watched soccer matches on television when the Irish team were playing *"To see Ireland you know, I only know Packie Bonner"*

While Jane Smyth said that she didn't watch sports on television, her daughter Lauren[41] described being assimilated into a soccer culture, saying with some impatience that

> *"we can't help but watch football in this house I used to hate it really because it was on so often, but now I find myself sitting down and watching it"*

Like other women and girls Lauren was a fan of the Irish soccer team

While various interpretations can be presented on the uniqueness of the 1990 World Cup experience among the ten families, my interpretation is as follows As a sport soccer is very much entwined in the working class life of these islands and not unlike music hall, the gatherings of soccer supporters provides an opportunity for communal togetherness, singing and shouting which can be both unifying and uplifting It possesses that great attraction of mass spectacle and skilful performance that can be traced back to the Greek stadia and

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[41] Lauren Smyth is a 16-year-old student who got nine honours in her Intermediate Certificate and is currently studying for her Leaving Certificate She is interested in doing fashion design and in August 1991 was offered a university place When she can afford it she buys one or other of the following magazines Looks, Mc or Vogue

Roman coliseums It is adversarial Not unlike the public/private distinction between cinema and television, television sport confines the soccer fan to small domestic groupings The 1990 World Cup changed that relationship to the game in the way that new wide screen television allowed group viewing in public houses or special viewing venues Then, before and after the matches the streets became part of the wider arena of a television mediated event In other words, working class Dubliners moved out from in front of their individual television screens to celebrate together with Ole, Ole, Ole as the common chorus In doing so they took back part of what had been taken i.e the sale of broadcasting rights, the introduction of executive viewing suites and the abolition of the terraces in some stadiums While some of the improvements in football stadiums are welcomed by the fans, there is a widespread feeling among supporters of the 'people's game' that as business men move in the fans end up paying more for tickets, television viewing ('Pay per view') and the ever changing team kits

The transformation that has occurred in English soccer is addressed by Eamonn Dunphy in the Irish context Dunphy puts the decline of League of Ireland football down to ageing and the death of the *"awesome"* Shamrock Rovers team of the 1950s and early 60s He also lists the coming of *"Television, motor cars and Sunday lunches in hotels"* (Dunphy, 1991 154) In considering the great Shamrock Rovers Revival in 1984 he writes that when soccer is seen on television it inspires people to play the game Then in an epilogue to his article he explains the failure of the 'revival' in terms of changed times and changed culture, stating that

> *"These days the magic comes from the box in the corner of your*
> *living room It comes from Jack Charlton and his Irish soccer*
> *team with which we are now familiar, as indeed we are with the*
> *game in Britain"* (Dunphy,1991 157)

According to Dunphy soccer is a street game and youngsters now *"watch videos, go to McDonalds for their birthdays and have their own computers"* (Dunphy, 1991 157) And then in true Dunphyesque style he continues by stating that young people

> *"Don't have to invent or improvise the way we used to in the bad*
> *old 50s The consequence is that the magicians aren't bred*
> *anymore The game has died or is at least dying Old assumptions*
> *no longer hold, beauty now means something different"*
> (Dunphy, 1991 157)

As for the new sports shown on satellite channels, Joseph Whelan said that

> "I like kick boxing and all that On Sky Sport there is a lot of
> sports that doesn't be on the other channels, the likes of sports
> ski, its like a skate board without wheels, only its not"

For Smyth American wrestling "is a laugh, the way they go on" He had his doubts that it was rehearsed and preferred the American to the British because it was "far bigger" His favourite wrestler goes by the name of '4 by 2' His sister Sarah [42] mentioned that she watched wrestling by herself on Friday nights when the rest of the family was out When asked what it was she liked about wrestling she said

> "I don't know it's sort of like the way they move I don't know
> what it is, I just like it"

Her favourite wrestler was the Ultimate Warrior and she planned to see him perform in the Point Depot the following April Sarah liked him because "he's wild, he just goes mad when he goes into the ring" She found it "very set up", but that did not detract from her enjoyment because, as she said, "it is a sort of acting" She didn't buy wrestling magazines and did not favour female wrestling at all

While sports were watched in all ten households, reservations were expressed at the extent of its coverage on television, especially at the weekends For example, Tony McIlroy thought sports "got too much airplay" adding that "I'm glad they have a sports channel now and I think it should be restricted to that" For Tony, when it came to one o'clock on Saturday "you get a world of sport, Grandstand, three channels and three sports programmes on at the same time" Some women complained that the television was monopolised by some of the men in the family, particularly at the weekend The greater diversity of sports coverage has contributed to the fragmentation of family viewing

Based on the interview extracts the foregoing section illustrated some of the values and meanings surrounding television sport, particularly the game of soccer Irrespective of whether the sport was national or international questions of class, gender and nationality emerged In a society were the working class is invariably on the defensive, shared successes on the economic and political fronts are rare So against that background achievements on

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[42] Sarah Smyth is a 12-year-old student who plays basketball and runs She listed the following television comedy programmes as her favourites In Living Colour, Family Ties, Cheers, Wings, Mr Bean and Black Adder

the playing field can assume an exaggerated importance and become the cause of celebration, investing the sporting event with more kudos that the actual achievement may have merited

7.6. Television Comedy.

The next most popular genre among the ten families was that of television comedy. In this section each adult interviewee was asked the following three questions

(i)   Do you watch any comedy programmes?
(ii)   Which programmes?
(iii)   What do you like about them?

In response to the first question 20 of the 33 interviewees mentioned that they watched *Only Fools and Horses*, making it the most popular comedy *The Golden Girls, Cheers* and *The Simpsons* followed in order of preference Other 'comedy programmes' mentioned included *Alf, Are you Being Served?, Cannon and Ball, The Comedians, Dad's Army, Little and Large, The Odd Couple, Porridge, Rising Damp, Who's Boss?, The Wonder Years* and *Yes, Minister Coronation Street* and *Glenroe* were also included In writing on the subject of 'television situation comedy' Terry Lovell states that *"sitcom is defined most simply as comic narrative in series format"* and it *"share[s] in common the intention to produce laughter through the telling of a series of funny stories about characters tied together in some ongoing 'situation'"* (Lovell,1986 152/154) As 'sitcoms' were the most popular comedies among the families, that category will be considered before returning to Lovell's other categories of comedy

Responses to *Only Fools and Horses* articulated how the life experiences of a predominantly working class television audience were brought to bear on a comedy which portrays a particular representation of London working class life For example, retired barman Peter McIlroy said that he liked the character Del Boy because

> *"There would be one of those fellas in every pub That type of man is in all pubs"*

Thomas Murphy, said that *Only Fools and Horses* was

> *"the same as the EastEnders to a certain extent, it is in Peckham, and that is one of the places I used to go on my holidays, so I would kind of relate to it"*

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What fifteen-year-old Dave O'Neill enjoyed about *Only Fools and Horses* was the way *"they are always wheeling and dealing and trying to get things for cheap"* For Matthew Whelan, who was on sick leave from working the night shift in a local factory, Del Boy was a

> *"real flash guy, always on the make, same as Arthur in Minder,*
> *you can associate yourself with them They are like people you*
> *know really, they fit in with who you knew yourself"*

For others the enjoyment of *Only Fools and Horses* was articulated in more general terms Part of the enjoyment in watching *Only Fools and Horses* for June Sheridan was that it gave her *"a laugh, they cheer you up"* and for Mary O'Neill it was because *"they are real sarcastic with one another, they make you laugh"* According to Peter Smyth [43] *Only Fools and Horses* was *"a brilliant comedy so that would be my favourite comedy now"* His favourite character

> *"has to be Del Boy He's classic It's just the way he goes on Its*
> *the one line comedy gets you He comes out with it from nowhere*
> *like 'you plonker' or whatever and like he might keep saying it*
> *but its funny every time he says it And it's just the situations they*
> *get themselves into Its unbelievable sometimes!"*

When I interjected by asking if there was any feeling of distance because the programme was based in London, Peter responded by saying

> *"I don't think so, no it doesn't seem to come across that way*
> *He's a chancer he's the ultimate chancer he's just trying to*
> *make money any way and every which way he can Its not based*
> *around the community or the place they live in the place they*
> *live in is mentioned every now and again whereas 'we're living*
> *in Nelson Mandela Square' It's based around the character and*
> *the situations the characters get into and not the environment*
> *which they live in It has to be the best British comedy going"*

Peter's insightful stress on character rather than locale confirms a point made by Roddy Doyle. As part of his response to the suggestion that his novels are overly centred on dialogue Doyle stated that

> *"The point about places like Barrytown is not their particularity*
> *but their lack of particularity The people do not inhabit a place,*
> *they are a place If you've seen one motorway, one community*
> *centre, one factory pub, one corporation house, one video shop,*
> *you've seen them all"* (The Irish Times 31/8/91)

In collapsing 'place' and identity into one formulation, Doyle's analysis has parallels with a FHGM approach in so far as it takes geography 'seriously' to use David Harvey' terminology (Harvey,1989)

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[43] Peter Smyth is a single 20-year-old who works as a stock controller in the textile trade He plays soccer and is an active member of his club On average he spends between £20 and £30 each week on leisure activities

Next in order of preference was *The Golden Girls* with nine individuals mentioning that they enjoyed it In Matthew Whelan's opinion

> *"the granny is great She is out on her own, they are all great*
> *They are just sitting in a room mostly, just chatting and slagging*
> *one another and that I think they are very good Theirs would be*
> *a different humour all together, I think the Americans have a*
> *different sense of humour than the British   the likes of The*
> *Cosby Show, they are all crap to me"*

According to Hanna Cranson *Cheers* was

> *"like just everyday people, so you can relate to them as well and*
> *they have no qualms about bringing up everyday*
> *issues you know, and its the way they   there is only so many*
> *characters in it and its just the way they all annoy each other so*
> *much, and that I find it very amusing"*

Forty-three-year-old Jack Burke said he *"always make a point of seeing that [Cheers] I think the wit is great The same applies to The Golden Girls They are easily watched, dialogue rather than situation"*

According to Jane Smyth, who started a part time job in 1991 having been a fulltime homemaker, *"everybody watches Cheers, this type of thing, it is kind of a dry wit, which suits most people"* She also mentioned *The Golden Girls,* which along with *Cheers* she said *"are all foreign   we don't have any good comedy programmes ourselves, sure we don't?"*

Terry Lovell's adoption of Tzvetan Todorov's three comic modes is also of relevance to the present research Three comic modes are (i) comedies of social realism or social comedies, (ii) farce, (iii) the comic marvellous or comedies of formal disruption According Lovell *Yes, Minister* is an example of a comedy of social realism or social comedy, which is typified in the way *"solemnity and self-importance of the apparatus of state and politics"* are *"undercut by comic exposure of 'what everyone knows' or rather believes, goes on 'behind the scenes'"* (Lovell 1986 149-169)

As to the farcical comedy category, *Faulty Towers* is perhaps a good example. Indeed, Lovell states that Basil Faulty does *"not have to stand for anything except"* himself, belonging to

> *"a possible rather than a plausible world, which takes its point of*
> *departure from the audience's knowledge of the social*
> *conventions constructing the world"*
> (Lovell 1986 149-169)

Jack Burke explained his enjoyment of *Faulty Towers* as follows

> "I think that the best comedy that was ever on television was
> Faulty Towers John Cleese is such a flippin' mad man and the
> way he treats his wife He says things that we all probably say
> about our wives, you know, and then the waiter, and his wife is
> excellent the situations that are set up in the series"

The popularity of Terry Lovely's third classification of comedy as 'comic marvellous' or 'comedies of social disruption' was virtually confined to the teenage family members Several of them classified them as 'black comedy' For Lovell the *"exceptionality"* of *The Young Ones* is based on the fact that they

> "create fictional worlds in which nothing may happen except
> those things which might happen in reality"
> (Lovell 1986 149-169)

She also states that by illustrating a

> "sequence of visual/verbal jokes which run through one episode
> of The Young Ones in which characters bring into the house
> successively, phlegm, a bottle of yellow liquid, a coatfull of
> puppies and kittens as measures of the deteriorating state of the
> weather, would be out of court in a comedy of social realism"
> (Lovell 1986 149-169)

Having told me of his liking for *Black Adder* and *The Young Ones*, I asked Tony O'Neill [44] what he specifically enjoyed about both programmes His answer was

> "just the sheer lunacy of all of them and they are so unbelievably
> stupid, like that it just cracks me up Ben Elton I like
> programmes or comedies what will make fun of things that nobody
> else will talk about, that sort of thing I have all The Young Ones
> on tape and I would watch every one of them again "

Tony's sense of humour contrasts sharply to Claire Burke's, who said that she had a

> "peculiar sense of humour because everyone else here ah,
> they'd be rolling off the chairs laughing and I would still be
> trying to figure out what was funny about that And then what I
> would see as funny, they would be looking at me I mean, take for
> instance the Weetabix ad when all the soldiers are all lined up
> Now, I thought that was hilarious and yet I could be sitting with
> them looking at Black Adder [which her son Liam enjoyed] or
> whatever but eventually I did get to what Black Adder was all
> about, but I think for a long time it went all over me head and it
> just didn't appeal to me at all"

A classification of comedy not specifically included in Terry Lovell's three modes of comic narrative is that of 'stand-up comedy' In this classification family members

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[44] Tony O'Neill writes his own music and is involved with a rock band

mentioned Les Dawson, Billy Connolly, Dave Allen and Jasper Carrot as favourites. The attraction of the stand-up comics among Dublin audiences dates back to music hall gags which tie into the 'one liners' such as those used by Allen Collinge, Bill Doyle, and Michael McGovern in Chapter Five 'One liners' are a time and place bound form of humour, with only the more memorable lines or turn-of-phrases passing into general usage Included in this stain of humour is Dublin wit, a form of humour that is particularly sharp in the manner that it 'cocks the snoop' to adversary

On contemporary one liners, 17 year old John Teeling said of *The Simpsons* that

> "well everyone knows them as well, 'Eat my Shorts' and all that
> Yes I'd use them the odd time, messing"

Josephine Whelan, mother of five children, also singled out *The Simpsons*, telling me how it was "*so funny, it is so typical, its so American*" Josephine also said that

> "the family, the way the family works, it is a typical family
> anywhere, it doesn't have to be in America, you get a real family
> like that, like the baby in the supermarket, I mean you see that
> everyday the children wandering off, you don't even know where
> they are In some of them, the hair was never out of place, and the
> house was never untidy, that is what bugs me, and there is upper
> class all the time, no middle class You know, Daddy has a good
> job and a big car The Simpsons are an every day middle class
> family that they don't have a lot of money, he works in the
> Nuclear Plant, it is so funny (laughs) And the person next door is
> well off, and you don't see a lot of that, especially in a America
> The Cosby Show, a doctor and a lawyer, I wouldn't look at that, it
> is unreal, it is over the top, the way there is never an argument In
> EastEnders, Coronation Street, Glenroe, even Fair City, you have
> that, but there is none of that in The Cosby Show, you never see
> that"

Josephine's classification of *The Simpsons* as middle class in contrast to 'upper class' is particularly interesting in that she omits any reference to the working class and appears to identify herself as middle class This articulation can be understood by drawing attention to a point made by Raymond Williams where, in the British context, the linking of the working class to that of the 'lower class' meant that many 'wage-earners' identified themselves as 'middle class'(Williams,1980 345) Both she and her husband Matthew dismissed *The Cosby Show*, not on the basis of race, but along lines of social class The representation of a black middle class family where one of the sons chose to be a bellboy, having had a university education, smacked of unreality for Mr and Mrs Whelan

Overall, British comedy was considered by the majority of the family members to be the most popular. Peter Teeling, an administrative assistant in an insurance company, said that: *"I like a lot of the British comedy more so than the American. British comedy is excellent"*.

Dave Cranson, sales representative and father of two children, replied to the first question on comedy by stating that he:

> *"would have taken an interest a few years ago now in Benny Hill... dirty Benny Hill...namely because of I suppose his ways or his way of going on and that y'know?"*

When asked what he liked about Benny Hill, Dave replied by stating:

> *"I like him for... well one thing I used to like was his memory... the way he could recite things you know... hundreds of words of poetry and all that like you know... seemed to me... I mean he couldn't read it as quick as he was saying so obviously he was reciting it y'know from somewhere... but I thought that was a brilliant thing he had going for him y'know and eh.... I thought he used to bring some smashing women into it as well...you know really"*.

As for American television comedy *Cheers, The Golden Girls* and *The Simpsons* headed the list of favourites. However, there were reservations expressed about some US comedies. For example, Josephine Whelan said that:

> *"the only thing I would look at now at the moment is The Simpsons, other than that, I hate their programmes, I hate that canned laughter and that totally different type of humour that we have and I don't relate to it at all. I think they are hopeless"*.

The family members expressed mixed feelings on the subject of home produced television comedy. Josephine Whelan said that *"we can't laugh at ourselves and they can...we have this mad chip on our shoulder"*.[45] Josephine Whelan emphasised her contention by stating that:

> *"We don't have comedy, Maureen Potter was great, Jimmy O'Dea...was good. I remember going to the Queens and they were fabulous, we haven't got that, we haven't got comedy"*.

On similar lines Molly Cranson said she could not think of any Irish comedies.

In his review of the final edition of *Father Ted* the Irish Times (9/5/1998), television columnist Eddie Holt wrote that:

> *"RTE still cannot provide a comedy sitcom. And OK, the station was never offered Father Ted, so, in that sense, it did not turn it down. But because RTE, characteristically corporate and timid, has feared satire, it has suited the station's big-wigs to foster the*

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[45] Still Josephine Whelan did acknowledge that *The Den* was 'good' at having *"a little joke about ourselves"*.

notion that Irish people cannot produce funny TV comedy
drama"

Marie, third eldest of the Whelans, thought that Zig and Zag are *"brilliant Dustin is gas, he is real Dublin Zig and Zag are both the same, one wouldn't be good with out the other Ray D'arcy is good, he gets on well with Zig and Zag"* Her brother Joseph agreed, but said that while

> *"Zig and Zag were great when they first came out everybody liked*
> *them Zig and Zag, everybody were talking about them They got*
> *played out, and then Dustin came in, the vulture, and it was just*
> *the voice and the accent he was really good when you listened to*
> *him you just had to laugh Well I'd come in from work at five and*
> *usually put him on, they'd be on until six, he only comes on at the*
> *last half hour at around half five Being from Dublin, is not the*
> *reason, if he was from Cork, I'd still say the same, its the sense of*
> *humour he has, its the voice he has as well, if he had a Cork*
> *accent or what ever he'd still be the same, because he is so dry,*
> *its a style, the way he does it"*

Attempting to identify a common trend or trends within the various responses is not straightforward, particularly given the diversity and contradictory nature of the responses Several family members expressed the popularity of comic dialogue and 'one liners' As Peter Smyth said of *Only Fools and Horses,* *"one line comedy its the dialogue with the character together"* The enjoyment in *The Golden Girls* for Matthew Whelan was partly due to the *"chatting and slagging one another",* and as Jack Burke said of *Cheers,* it was the *"dialogue rather than situation".* Jack's emphasis on dialogue links back to a point made in Chapter Three about the importance of the oral aspect of working class culture and seems to run contrary to emphasis given to 'place' throughout this thesis

The popularity of *The Golden Girls* and *Cheers* appeared to be bound up with a particular discourse of the home and public house The discourse is comic and accessible, while the locations are familiar According to June Smyth the enjoyment in watching *Cheers* is its *"dry wit".* For Hanna Cranson the programme was about

> *"everyday people, so you can relate to them as well and they have*
> *no qualms about bringing up everyday issues, you know ? "*

In order to summarise such a divergence of preferences in comedy, it can be said the family members enjoyed a wide range of comic discourses These were based on comic situations that represented a norm, as well as those that departed from widely accepted norms. For those with an experience of a working class way of life, comic representations of aspects of English working class culture had a direct appeal, in a not too dissimilar as was expressed in

the responses that family members gave to questions on English 'soap' Both Mr and Mrs Whelan both expressed a dislike for *The Cosby Show* in a way that it characterised a black middle class family Their criticism was based on grounds of social class rather than race

Understanding the appeal of comedy from other locations is challenging That endeavour is complicated by the fact that what is transgressive in one (class) sub/culture is the norm in another The relationship between a shared local sense of humour (which is criss-crossed by class and gender) and that of a wider working class experience can also be extended to include the universal human condition Laughter is a complex reflex and understanding the trigger equally daunting In some cases its worth can only be fully appreciated or validated by a particular audience, even though its appeal may be far wider

So like all media messages, humour is open to different readings Because it is encoded by a comic from one particular class or subculture it may only be fully decoded by an audience that recognises the ironies and nuances of that social grouping Therefore perhaps the life experience represented in *Only Fools and Horse* appeals more directly to working class audiences

The fact that so few successful Irish produced comedy programmes have been made was commented upon by a number of interviewees Defining 'an Irish sense of humour' is difficult and requires an acknowledgement of satire and the comic aspects of irreverence towards authority figures Humour is potentially subversive in the broad sense of the term There was a recognition of this element of humour expressed by Des Smith's when he described Dermot Morgan's satirical portrayals in *Scrap Saturday* on Radio One as being *"close to the bone"*

While Maureen Potter and Jimmy O'Dea captured a Dublin working class wit and humour, no contemporary comedians were considered to be doing so [46] For some, Dustin, the turkey puppet with a Dublin working class accent on *The Den*, was the exception For Joseph Whelan the Dustin's accent could just as well have been Corkonian. Humour that is particular to the Dublin working class is difficult to define It is said to be 'dry' and quick

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[46] The interviews took place prior to *Upward Mobile* being screened by RTE, a what-would-it-be-like-fantasy of a Dublin working class family winning a large sum of money and moving to a middle class suburb Brendan O'Carroll had not achieved the popularity he currently enjoys

witted, it is often deflating and cutting of others. What makes it unique is that it is derived from a 'whole way of life' common to all working class Dubliners

7.8. Conclusions.

Merging the research findings from phase one (McGuinness, 1993) and this chapter the following trends can be singled out

- Based on information arising from interviews and time use diaries the average number of hours spent watching television was 29 4 and 20 9 hours per week, respectively While the interviews were conducted in the period from February to April 1991, the time use diaries were completed in the week ending 20th of October 1991 That explains the two different sets of figures The figure of 20 9 hours was considered by me to be the more representative of the two, because it included the children's viewing times, while the other did not as I did not interview children under the age of 13. This average weekly figure of 20 9 hours indicated that television viewing accounted for the largest share of leisure activity among the ten families It was also revealed that that figure was broadly comparable to the national trends and in fact below the average weekly television viewing hours for October 1991, which according to RTE's Audience Research Department was 23 45 hours

- BBC1 and UTV were ahead of both RTE channels in terms of the families' channel preference Levels of viewer satisfaction with the RTE channels tended to divide equally between those who spoke favourably, as against those who expressed dissatisfaction According to RTE's own research its share of 'peaktime viewing' in 1991 stood at 65%, while in 'multi-channel areas' it stood at 50% 'peaktime viewing' There was an *even "greater strain where satellite stations are also available"* (Fahy, 1992 5)

- In responses on news and current affairs there was an awareness that what was being reported was just one possible interpretation of events Documentaries were perceived to have a greater level of credibility than the news

- Responses on perceived bias illustrated how the discourses of class intersect with those of nationality, gender and religion

- While gender and age difference were articulated in terms of programme choice and audience activity, it was at the level of engagement with the various genres that men and women differed most in their viewing activity

- Besides the popularity of the Children's Channel and MTV, among children and teenagers, I found no evidence of a significant shift towards an identification with transnational culture available via the satellite channels

- Questions on the educational potential of television tended to elicit answers which equated 'education' to schooling as in Tony McIlroy's remark that *"It's like having a Teacher in our own Sitting Room"* Still no one mentioned specifically educational programmes such as those produced by the Open University on BBC2 or by RTE's educational programming which is featured on Network Two However, programmes on the arts, the environment, science and technology were watched with interest. Viewers also highlighted the educational aspect of television in relation to HIV/AIDS and pollution

- Topics that provoked discussion in the home varied considerably and gave an insight into the concerns and interests of the family members Responses revealed how programmes such as *The Late Late Show* prompted discussions on issues that may not normally have been discussed in the home For example, boys were afforded the opportunity to discuss childbirth with their mother and a young woman to express her opinions about sexism with her family

- Responses on the perceived bias of television programmes illustrated how the discourses of class intersected with those of nationality, patriarchy and religion In general the responses to questions confirmed both the openness and closures pertaining to the various readings of television texts

- If the concept of escapism was to the fore in the Chapter Five, because of the ever present nature of television within the domestic sphere, the term distraction is a more apt in describing that sense of diversion from the day to day patterns of living that television can provide

- Family members expressed a desire for more comedy, films and programmes for teenagers, while others wished to see longer broadcasting hours

- When asked what type of programme they would like to see more of on RTE, drama headed the list

RTE has had some major successes in facilitating the telling of the Dublin working class story, but according to some of the interviewees there is something missing in RTE's drama and current affairs programmes when it comes to aspects of Dublin inner city and suburban working class life That lack was most clearly articulated by Josephine Whelan [47] when she said, *"I think there is a lot of things going on in communities that they [RTE] could cover, they cover more stuff in the country than they do in Dublin"* Tony McIlroy [48] expressed a similar reservation from a youth's point of view when he said that

> *"programme makers in RTE are not in touch with what is going*
> *on Take for example all the different cultures there are around*
> *Dublin, its a crazy place Dublin with all the subcultures it has,*
> *cultures that you have to leave behind when you're twenty"*

RTE's neglect of the Dublin working class experience was, I argued in phase one, a reflection of a dominant ethos in Ireland, which has its political expression in successive conservative Governments This ethos has ensured that certain stories, in the broadest sense of the word, get told and retold, while others do not That ethos has engendered a lack of courage in dealing with class contradictions in Irish society and the way they unfold within working class communities In order that the concept of public service broadcasting does not become an empty icon there must be a political will to frequently resist that dominant ethos and ensure that stories other than the dominant ones get told, and told in their totality

Since the launch of Telifis Eireann in December 1961 the world of television has mushroomed, and from the late 1990s digital television will dwarf the available channels to the national audience If its arrival in Ireland was greeted with both welcome and concern, more than quarter of a century later it is a taken for granted part of everyday life In a retrospective examination of 21 years of Irish television Peter Feeney in *Lifting the Veil Politics of TV* (RTE) observed that the *"masses"* were outside in the street on the opening night of the station Feeney was making an important point and nearly 40 years later Irish society has not changed enough to alter that spatio-cultural relationship Joe Duffy's remarks on working class exclusion in RTE and Eoin Devereux's on the role of 'charity television' confirm that point All of the family members who participated in the research project expressed a range of opinions and suggestions on the nature of Irish television

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[47] See biographical information on Josephine Whelan in footnote 19 of this chapter

[48] See footnote 31 of this chapter for biographical information on Tony Ilroy

Creating the space for a dialogue between working class viewers and the RTE organisation (and TV3) is one way to begin a process of inclusion

In the course of this chapter I argued that representations of working class Dubliners were seldom from the mainstream of the class While rounded representations do exist, e g the Doyle family in *Fair City*, most Irish television representations of the Dublin working class are of victims, villains, the upwardly mobile or wise cracking 'character' If, as Martin McLoone states, *"the primary site for the mediation, promotion and the maintenance of collective identity"* in the twentieth century is that of broadcasting, then the inadequate, under-representativeness and 'absence' of working class people in Irish television raises serious questions on the construction and maintenance of a sense of collective working class identity (McLoone, 1991 10) In 1976 RTE's remit was redefined in terms of the 'culture of the people of the whole of the island' [49] Over twenty years later that remit has not been extended to serve the interests of the working class As an organisation RTE is shaped by the structural inequality within Irish society and the concept of 'public service' defined in terms of bourgeois/petit bourgeois ideology

The spatio-cultural dimensions of Dublin working class culture were highlighted in the responses of the interviewees to questions on 'soaps,' soccer and comedy A sense of class identity was shown to be bound up with place, whether Dublin City centre, suburban estates or similar working class locations abroad Family members appeared more self-reflective when answering questions on Irish programming Dealing with Irish television representations appeared more problematic, which can be interpreted as an expression of uncertainty around questions of identity

The importance of opening the aperture of audience research beyond that of social class, to include gender and nationality was confirmed in this chapter in the way that family members revealed dimensions of their identities other than that of social class alone When combined with the information in the accompanying Appendix F,[50] a richly textured portrait of the families emerges, a portrait very different from that presented of 'council tenants' in the work of Anthony Peipe et al(1979) as referenced in Chapter Three That information

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[49] See Broadcasting Act 1960 and Broadcasting (Amendment Act) 1976

[50] Appendix F contains a brief synopsis of the ten families

confirms that television was but one factor contributing to a sense of identity and highlights the need to extend audience research beyond a media centred approach

Together the responses of the family members provide a detailed insight into the way in which television is integral part of the day to day fabric of their lives Members of the 10 families revealed a strong enough sense of their own identities to measure the world they saw represented on the television screen In doing so each individual had his or her own threshold of belief which was actively constructed in a myriad of socio-cultural and spatial relationships, only one of which is television

Chapter Eight

VIDEOS AND COMPUTER GAMES.

*"A capitalist society requires a culture based on images It
needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to
stimulate buying and anaesthetise the injuries of class, race and
sex"* Susan Sontag (1987 178)

8.1. Introduction.

During the first and second decades of Irish television, the television set stood on its

own as a domestic mode of communication and an item of furniture in most Dublin

working class households. Then during the 1980s video cassette recorders (VCR)

were gradually introduced, changing patterns of family viewing Besides impacting on

existing power relations within the household, VCRs permitted greater choice in

terms of recording, time switching, 'fast forwarding', pausing, repeat viewing, video

ownership and rental (Lull, 1988·255) Based on his research James Lull describes

how families had to *"adapt and construct a new 'media world', where the new option*

is incorporated into existing patterns of media activity and into daily life generally"

(Lull 1988· 254).

The fact that television has become but one among the *"many domestic technologies*

providing electronically communicated information and entertainment" prompted

Roger Silverstone to move beyond the notion of a *"broadcast audience"*

(Silverstone 1991. 136/135). Silverstone had already, along with David Morley,

presented a framework for *"the redefinition and analysis of television in terms of its*

status as a domestic technology" (Morley & Silverstone 1990 51) Both media

researchers saw the need to.

> *"Refocus the problematic around the study of television in such*
> *a way as to contextualise it within a much wider and, we would*
> *claim, a more adequate sociotechnical and cultural frame"*
> (Morley and Silverstone 1990 51)

They advocated drawing in *"other domestic technologies - particularly those*

involved in the provision of information and communication -into this same

sociotechnical frame" (Morley and Silverstone, 1990 51)

The significance of Morley and Silverstone's observations are particularly pertinent to the thrust of this chapter because, among the ten families, the uses of communication and information technology included television, teletext, home computer, music centres, VCR, remote controls for VCR and television, (portable) radio, cassette recorders, record and CD players, clock radios, amplifiers, tuners, Walkmans and telephones [1]

In addition, the range of 'domestic appliances' also included kitchen, garden and other domestic technologies such as automatic washing machines, refrigerators, electric lawnmowers, vacuum cleaners, micro-wave ovens and electrical household tools Combined, these technologies have significantly altered and privatised family life into a reconstituted socio-economic and cultural matrix, of which the local shopping centre is pivotal Besides shops selling grocery, household and drapery goods, shopping centres also include off-licences, food take away, video rental stores and betting shops, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas These changes in consumer behaviour have occurred within the reconfigured fabric of suburban housing estates and, as in Britain *"those in less skilled work live an increasingly privatised existence, away from the city centres, and dependent on home-based entertainments"* (Mulgan, 1989 277)

If a sense of place was deemed to be increasingly interwoven with a sense of working class cultural identity in the post-1960s, the proliferation of new entertainment and information technologies in the late 1990s created a new 'cultural space' facilitated by the greater availability of the Internet and the proliferation of the 'digital revolution' Among the ten families whom I interviewed I know of one member who by 1998 was connected to the Internet and not only had his own scanner, but operates image manipulation packages as part of a small home-based part-time commercial venture With such technology the promise of interactive and two-way communication processes, as envisaged by Bertolt Brecht, has arrived (cited in Enzenberger, 1979) Those with the necessary resources can access a 'cultural space' which knows few boundaries and offers countless international points of contact and identification transcending the traditional working class community

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[1] At the time of the interviews which were conducted during 1991, none of the families possessed an answering service

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Eight of the ten households were connected to Cablelink, while two received six terrestrial channels (Irish, Northern Irish and English) via aerial. None of the families possessed a satellite disk. Of the ten families interviewed, seven had video recorders. In the case of the remaining three families, one had been stolen, one given away to another member of the family and one returned to the rental company as it had become too expensive to keep. Since completing phase one of my research in the early 1990s Play Stations [2] and CD-ROM computer based games have also appeared on the leisure market. Play Stations can be rented from local video stores for just short of £10 and £3 for the CD-ROM games. Together all of these entertainment and information technologies form a range of new sites of identification and as such play a part in the formation of working class cultural identity in the closing years of the 20th century.

The new technologies have entered and altered the dynamics of domestic life. As with the negotiation of television programme choice and access to the remote control reported in phase one of my research, (Mc Guinness 1993), I found that the use of the VCR was also bound up with power relations within the home. I also found age to be a factor in the hierarchy of access, with younger members of the family having less access to the VCR and the use of blank videotapes. Apropros this point Ann Gray states that:

> *"New technology in the home has to be understood within a context of structures of power and authority relationships between household members, with gender emerging as one of the most significant differentiation's"* (Gray.1987: 31).

Concern was expressed among parents as to the suitability of some rented videos, which raises questions on issues of choice and parental censorship. According to

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[2] As Play Stations (PS) were not on the market when I conducted phase one of my research I spoke to 8 year old Sean Christian Staab from the working class neighbourhood of Harmonstown about the new technology. I spoke to him during June 1998. According to Sean among his friends a PS was the present to get for Christmas 1997. Sean explained how the PC needed to be attached to a TV monitor and that most of his friends used an old set which was usually located in their bedroom. It had an option of 1 or 2 players and required a joystick. He listed the following 'games' the most popular *Resident Evil*, 1 & 2, *Die Hard*, 1&2, *Crash Banahan*, 1 & 2 and *Teken*, 1 & 2. He considered *Resident Evil*, 1 & 2, the best because there were *"more enemies to fight and more obstacles"*. He told me that friends swap and borrow the 'games' from each other. Normally the PS was used when it is *"lashing rain"* and his friends cannot go out to play. When I asked Sean does it require skill to use a PS he said *"Its fun, but you need to be quick in the head"*.

Mairead O'Neill [3]

> *"There is so many bad things with videos There are children
> getting blue movies and bringing them into the home and they
> are very, very bad. They could be brought in from England and
> you don't know really, but they are in There are parents who
> are bringing them into the home"*

I will now examine the responses of the members of the ten families to questions on

the use of video recorders In doing so I will be presenting and interpreting interview

material which was not reported upon in my MA research thesis Interviews were

conducted between February 12 and April 10 1991 Rather than exclusively following

Morley and Silverstone's stated position, a FHGM analysis will be employed to take

account of those factors which both researchers neglect David Harvey's

conceptualisations of 'historical-geographical materialism' include consideration of

the *"production of images and discourse"* Harvey believes their role to be crucial in

the *"reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order"* (Harvey, 1989 355) [4]

The starting point vis a vis an FHGM analysis is the information on each family

member presented in the accompanying footnotes It is recommended that they be

read in conjunction with the main body of text In most cases, the information

included within each profile is extended from that which appeared in the footnotes

accompanying Chapter Seven Additional information is drawn from information

contained in the 'time use diaries' which family members filled in during the week

ending October 20, 1991 In line with an FHGM analysis, information on family

members includes their relation to production, the sexual division of labour, their

geographic location, age etc [5]

As in Chapter Seven my aim is to explore the responses of the family members

with the aid of media audience research methodologies that were examined in Chapter

Three and have been incorporated within the FHGM 'trellis' The presentation of the

responses of members of the ten families to questions on their use of use of video

recorders is divided into two sections, Firstly, video recording of television programmes

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[3] Mairead O'Neill describes herself as a housewife and is the mother of three children She also has a part time job She takes an active part in her Catholic faith i c involved in an 'all woman prayer group,' the Faith Friends for Baptism and the church choir She goes to bingo on Thursday evenings with four or five of her friends According to Mairead *"I'd never win, but I would enjoy it anyway It is a bit of company and we'd chat about different things"*

[4] See Appendix C for David Harvey's extract from The Condition of Postmodernity (1989)

[5] See Appendix E for a brief biography of the ten families

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and secondly the process of renting video tapes The questions asked on the video recording of television programmes were as follows

(i)   Do you record TV programmes?
(ii)   If so, which ones do you record?
(iii)   How often would you watch these recorded programmes?
(iv)   When would you get to watch them?
(v)   Which ones would you keep?
(vii)   How many programmes have you recorded?

As with transcribed extracts used in Chapter Seven I have edited out hesitant words and utterances superfluous to the meaning of the replies While I followed my own interview schedule I departed from it on occasions, thus blurring the lines between interview and conversation To maintain the dialogue flow I have in some cases left 'follow on' questions in squared brackets within the body of the responses

8.2.   Recording from Television.

According to Claire Burke,[6] one or other of the family recorded at least one programme on average each night However, not all these were watched, either because they had forgotten or more likely because the video tape had been recorded over by another member of the family As they had only four 'blank' tapes in the house at the time of the interviews the question of recording programmes from the television was a potential source of irritation As for choice of recording Claire liked films that related to family life

> *"Whether it's things that have gone wrong with family life or*
> *whether things are going good but just once there's a good*
> *story-line through it"*

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[6] Claire Burke is a 43-year-old mother of three children, two of whom were living away from home at the time of the project She is a part time instructor on a Youthreach scheme and was also doing a childcare course She 'signs on' for the two days she is not working on the scheme She is a Roman Catholic and spends £15 on leisure activities, which normally goes on bingo The family buy either the Evening Herald or Evening Press each evening In her detailed diary Claire wrote that she woke at 6 45 on Monday morning and switched on 2FM Between 10 and 11 o'clock before going to bed she *"filled in the days events"* and covered school books On Tuesday 'chicken curry and fried rice' was the dish on a Budget Cookery Course she attended On the Thursday page she mentioned that *Counterpoint* (UTV) had dealt with the challenge to Charlie Haughey's leadership of Fianna Fail On Friday she describes going to the Northside Shopping Centre and 'rambling around' looking for fish and ending up in Superquinns Her comment was that she had *"not shopped there for months It was a pleasure So different from Dunnes Stores"* In 1997 the Northside Shopping Centre branch of Dunnes Stores was refurbished

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Jack,[7] Claire's husband, recorded *"David Attenborough or maybe a current affairs programme"*. Their 15 year old son Liam[8] recorded *"a lot of football* [even] *if I don't have time to watch it"*. He recorded concerts so he did not have to sit through all of them *"You know the type, Band Aid, where they have a lot of artists, where you can just flick through"*. Liam watched those videos when he came home from school and he was not watching *The Den*. He had recorded *"most of the Italia 90"* and *"things like the IRMA Awards"*, but they had been *"recorded over in the end"*.

The Cransons had, according to Molly,[9] *about 20 tapes, there's about 5 of those that are in use"*. Molly, a mother of two girls and a homecarer for her elderly father had *"recorded every one of Dave Allen's shows. I'm a very big fan of Big Tom and I taped him and I kept him"*.[10] Other recorded programmes included those in which the characters Rosie O'Neill and Sharon Blessed appeared. She also had:

> *"A whole tape of The Turtles and a tape of various other things that I taped at Christmas because some days Amy* [her seven year old daughter] *is not in from school until half three and Neighbours is on at half one and the first thing she'd ask me when she'd see me did I tape Neighbours"*.

If she remembered to record *Neighbours* Amy can watch it when she is having her lunch. Otherwise she can watch one of the tapes Molly has previously recorded. Normally Molly watched the programmes she had recorded for herself the next morning:

> *"If it was something I really wanted to watch and I was raging that I missed it I would be dying to get up to get my breakfast and get in and watch it all on my own. If it was something I wasn't too fussy about that I just taped it maybe for some night. I'm sorta just hoarding them for some reason or another I'd rather have something that I had taped maybe, to look forward to"*.

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[7] Jack Burke had just completed a one year Social Employment Scheme. During the week he recorded listening to Larry Gogan, Gareth O'Callaghan and Gerry Ryan on 2FM and reading a book. On Tuesday, Friday and Sunday evenings he attended unspecified meetings.

[8] Liam Burke is a 15-year-old student who plays football at school and enjoys dirt track cycling. He regularly buys the computer magazines Your Sinclair and Spectrum . During the week of the diary he entered having listened to radio, playing records and reading.

[9] Molly Cranson is a mother of two girls and cares for her elderly father who is partially sighted. Besides her television viewing she wrote in her diary that she watched a rented video called *Fine Things*. She also mentioned reading a Catherine Cookson novel The Gillyvors during the week. On Wednesday evening she attended her Ladies Club. On Friday evening after watching the *Late Late Show* she started writing a short story, Molly is a member of a local writing group

[10] According to James Lull video tapes *"can be displayed in the house like books or magazines to project the image of the owner to family members and others - a social use of the new medium and an extension of the audience member"* (Lull, 1988:256).

Hanna,[11] Molly's 19 year old daughter, still had *Witches of Eastwick* and *Urban Cowboy* which she had recorded during the previous Christmas holidays As for her father Dave,[12] he said he might use one tape a year and that would be for a *"big race now like the Grand National or something"*

Anne Dowler[13] used her VCR on a daily basis stating that

> *"When I used to watch Neighbours, that clashed with Home and Away, so I taped Home and Away, watch Neighbours, and then when Neighbours is over then rewind it and sit down and watch Home and Away, so then that'd bring me up then to Coronation Street, it's on for a half an hour, so that'd be half seven when that's over"*

When asked which video tapes she kept, Anne mentioned *Dirty Dancing* and went on to say that she watched it when·

> *"I'm here on me own at night and the kids are gone to bed I'd put it on Now it wouldn't be every night it'd be just when I'd say ah I'll watch it for an hour I'm not tired either, sit down and watch that, or I might just rewind it 'til the last ten minutes where the songs are and the dancing and just watch that, the dancing is fantastic"*

Anne described watching those last ten minutes of *Dirty Dancing* (1987) with a relish which was expressed in terms of a form of instant gratification Like Annie Byrne's memories of afternoons spent in the Palace Cinema on Pearse Street (Chapter Five) this was time for Anne herself, a space for fantasy and pleasure *Dirty Dancing* centres on the relationship between a talented working class male dancer and a young woman holidaying in the resort where he works According to Stanley Aronowitz, she belongs to a wealthy family and in the end opts for *"downward mobility"* as part of her love for the dancer Based on that relationship the story has a 'happy ending'

Dirty Dancing also portrays the 'theme of displacement' which, in Aronowitz's opinion, is an increasingly likely possibility facing American young working class males Aronowitz goes on to state that

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[11] Hanna Cranson is a 19-year-old lone parent with one child In her diary she wrote that she was *"doing up her new home"* during Monday morning and did wall papering on Friday afternoon She spent time with friends on Wednesday and Sunday afternoon She had recently read Stephen King's The Dark Half

[12] Dave Cranson is a 41-year-old father of two girls and a credit controller in a dairy company His leisure activities include horse racing and bringing his seven year old daughter Amy for a drive in the country during the summer He listens to the Gay Byrne and Pat Kenny shows (Radio One) on his car radio In his diary entries he wrote that he had fallen asleep in front of the television on four occasions during the week and that on Friday he had gone to bed between 6-7 p m

[13] Anne Dowler is a lone mother of four and a part time cleaning worker

> *"if identification is a basis for the forging of a personal identity,*
> *school and the media consort to persuade, cajole, and by the*
> *absence of representations, force working class kids to accept*
> *middle-class identities as the only legitimate option available to*
> *them"* (Aronowitz, 1992:201).

Anne's children had *"taped E.T. and Police Academy"* but they recently been taped over.

At the time of the interviews the McIlroy family did not own a VCR. Marie [14] mentioned that:

> *"We did have a video, it was lying there gathering dust, it was*
> *never used. so I gave it down to my son in Kildare because he's*
> *only the two* [RTE] *channels".*

Marie's husband Peter [15] told me that he did not miss having a video recorder except for *"one or two football matches or a good four part serial".* Before they had given the video away, he watched recorded programmes on his *"days off during the week".* When they did have a VCR their son Tony [16] used it about twice a week recording *"a lot of the MTV. Super Channel had its music programmes"* and films at Christmas. Tony brought his recorded videos *"down to a friend's house"* and watched them there *"late at night or Saturdays".* He enjoys concerts like *Pink Floyd in Pompeii* and had eight recorded tapes at the time of the interview.

If Teresa Murphy [17] was not at home to record her favourite soaps or series she asked another member of the family to record them. Having watched these recorded programmes once the video was available for re-recording. According to her husband Thomas[18] the videos they kept were those that:

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[14] Marie McIllroy is a 56-year-old mother of four who works at home. Marie was the one person to use the term working class to describe herself in course of working with the families. Her's is a purchased corporation house. In her diary she wrote that she listened to Gerry Ryan on 2FM

[15] Peter McIllroy is a 64-year-old retired barman. The McIllroy's buy The Star during the week and The Sunday World, People and the News of the World on Sundays. According to his diary entries he did 2-3 hours gardening on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. He went to the bookies four times during the week.

[16] Tony McLlroy is a 22-year-old print finisher. He spends approximately £60 a week on leisure activities. He is keen biker and buys Performance Bike and Q regularly. According to Tony's mother he only watched Beat Box on Sunday morning during the week of the diary. She said he was out most of the week.

[17] Teresa Murphy is a busy homemaker and mother of six children. In her diary she wrote that she knitted while watching television, attended a cookery course and a 'keep fit' class. On Sunday afternoon she did some baking. On Thursday evening she watched the rented video *Switched at Birth* and on Friday and Saturday evenings she went to Bingo. On the Saturday evening she was joined by her husband James.

[18] Thomas Murphy is a crane driver and a father of seven school-going children. In his diary Thomas wrote that he watched television and listened to the radio during the week. The main football that week was an Ireland V Poland soccer match. He also watched the rented video *Switched at Birth.*

> *"We record ourselves, family videos. I'd take them out now and again. Communions and Confirmations. Teresa's brother has a camera; he did the one of my two young ones making their communion together and the christening. I have two there".*

Mary O'Neill [19] had kept two 3 hour video tapes since the VCR was stolen from the house. These had:

> *"The Pop Awards, the British pop awards, I taped the episode [of Neighbours] that Charlene [the character played by Kylie Minogue] left, and the World Cup".*

When they first appeared on the market there was a trade in stolen VCR's around Dublin. Since becoming widely available that illegal trade has declined. Mary's father James,[20] said:

> *"I don't miss it really. One of my pastimes was I used to go to the cinema an awful lot, and when we got the video I looked at it a few times. No, I wouldn't miss it. If we had one I would look at it, but we haven't".*

James's eldest son Tony had mainly used the VCR to record *"comedies and music"*. When the family first purchased a VCR Tony watched recorded videos *"once a week"*. He had kept the videos with:

> *"Comedies, The Young Ones, The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy. I have documentaries on bands like Depeche Mode, which I would watch over and over again, and then just video tapes of other different bands".*[21]

As to when he would now watch videos Tony said:

> *"if I stay at my girlfriend's at night and she goes to work, I would stick on a video".*

June Sheridan,[22] who could no longer afford the rental on a VCR, admitted missing the *"films that you could get off the telly"*. One of those was *The Greatest Story*

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[19] Mary O'Neill is a 19-year-old bank clerk. In her diary she recorded spending time with her boyfriend, doing aerobics, going out with friends and on two occasions going to a disco, going to see a band. She also listed going shopping and visiting her aunt. She is regular purchaser of <u>Woman</u> and <u>Woman's Way</u>.

[20] James O'Neill is a 50-year-old unemployed Fettler and father of three children. In his week-long diary he wrote that he watched television each day, went to the cinema once, worked in the house and garden, went walking and attended Beaumont Hospital. He read both <u>The Evening Herald</u> or <u>The Irish Press</u> on several days days during the week.

[21] Tony O'Neill is a 22-year-old plumber by trade who was unemployed at the time of the interview. In the 'Household Profile Questionnaire' Tony said, *"possibly 90% of all my spare time is dedicated to writing songs, music and sound production"*. His diary contained few entries and confirmed that on five days of the week he had watched no television.

[22] June Sheridan is a lone parent of three children. Like the rest of the parents she left school after her Primary Certificate. At the time of the project she was struggling to 'make ends meet'. While she spoke well of her immediate neighbours she was not content living in Coolock where she had been living since 1986 when she moved from Finglas. While she thought, *"people were tough in Finglas people looked out for each other"*. She wrote that she listened to the radio as she did her housework.

Ever Told, a film she used as a form of religious instruction – *"The kids understand it better when they see it"*. She still had *Beverly Hills Cop* saying that the children:

> *"Loved that. I think they watched it nearly every second night. We only kept the two, because I only had enough money for the two tapes, there again that would come into it".*

Jane Smyth [23] said she tended not to use the VCR:

> *"Only just the odd thing, a good few pictures over the Christmas. I just know the basics on how to run it; I wouldn't know how to time it or anything".*

Jane's daughter Lauren[24] replied that she only recorded her favourite programmes and would watch them *"only once, if I even get to see them, later, at about ten o'clock"*. As for those she kept she said *"there is loads of them, but usually they get taped over"*. In reply to the question 'do you record TV programmes?' Lauren's sister, Sarah [25] said *"Yeah, like Sunday, if I have to go to half six Mass or something, Peter always tapes The Simpsons for me, and em, Peter usually like tapes football matches that he can't see"*. She would watch them *"that evening or the next day"*. Des Smyth [26] said that he *"very seldom"* recorded a programme from the television. But that recently he had recorded a Western series which was on Sky television:

> *"The whole series, you can get it in the video shop the Lonesome Dove, yeah, it's three videos, three full videos and you can get them off Xtravision down there. That was brilliant, it's a western about a cattle driver going up to Montana, Texas up to Montana".*

In contrast to Des, his son Peter was an enthusiastic user of the VCR, stating that:

> *"if there's band on I like I will tape the concert of the band and keep it on video... if there's nothing on television, I'll stick in the video and more or less listen to the music rather than watch it".*

His favourite concerts were those featuring U2, Bon Jovi, Simple Minds and Bruce Springsteen. He has also recorded films such as *Blind Date, The Witches of Eastwitck*

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[23] Jane Smyth is a 45-year-old mother of three who works at home. In some time periods of her 'time use diary' she included 'housework and watching television at the same time. In her diary she wrote that on Tuesday she spent four hours sewing. She listened to RTE Radio 1 and 2 as well as Century Radio. She recorded *"Deadly Pursuit"* off the television to watch later. On Saturdays she had started watching a video when friends arrived.

[24] Lauren Smyth is a 16-year-old student with a keen interest to enter a career in fashion design. In her diary she wrote that she had watched *"some of Deadly Pursuits"* which her mother had recorded off the television. During the week she was reading Silence of the Lambs and bought the magazine Looks. She listened to Barry Lang and Gerry Ryan on 2FM. The big event during her week was going to her Debs Dance and having a lie on to 2.00pm the next day.

[25] Sarah Smyth is a 12-year-old school girl who plays basketball and does running. On three separate occasions she watched wrestling which she lists as one of her favourite spectator sports.

[26] Des Smyth is a 48-year-old textile worker and father of three children.

and *The Return of the Jedi* He said that *"all those Star Wars films   were terrific, mostly action"*

Mary Teeling [27] told me she recorded *"a good comedy, wildlife, and football matches   well I have often been asked to do them   I record for the others   If I record one, I'd watch it and then wipe it clear"*   Joe, [28] Mary's husband, would record *"a concert, I think I have a good wide taste in music, U2, I enjoy Neil Diamond, I would be over the moon, Pavarotti, I was delighted with them, that type of entertainment"*   He also recorded football matches that he would not be at home to watch   As for the tapes he has kept he mentioned that

> *"I have got four tapes that no one is to record over, one is four*
> *hours long and the other is three hours long, Yes, Prime Minster,*
> *wildlife, I have three, one hour Survival programmes on it   I*
> *have a couple of Horizon programmes that I kept   They're*
> *basically the type of things that I would hold"*

Joe's son Peter [29] recorded programmes that ranged from *"Colombo to QED, with comedies thrown in there as well   And a good film that would be on the television or a good documentary"*   Peter rarely watched them more than once, but added that

> *"I did keep Amadeus, there would be more films that I would*
> *keep, I wouldn't keep them forever, I'd keep them for a while   I*
> *recorded quite a few films"*

If John Teeling [30] recorded a war film he would *"keep it or would try and keep it, videos such as Kelly's Heroes"*   Eamonn, the youngest Teeling said he used the VCR

> *"If I was going out and I remembered I'd get my Dad to record*
> *it   A match or a action film or if there was a soap opera, like*
> *Neighbours on and I'd wanted to know what was going to happen*
> *next, I'd ask him to record that for me"*

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[27] Mary Teeling is a 48-year-old mother of three boys and homemaker who since the interview has taken up a part job She enjoys walking and in her diary wrote that on Monday evening watched an hour of an unnamed rented video on Wednesday evening She watched Bibi Baskin on a video she'd recorded earlier in that evening On Tuesday morning her hairdresser called to the house to do her hair and on Friday evening visited her friend During the week her mother and a friend had called to the house on two separate occasions

[28] Joe Teeling is 46 years-of-age and is the father of three boys He is employed in a supervisory position in a pharmaceutical company In his diary he wrote that he listened to music on several occasions during the week On Monday evening and Saturday afternoon he was house decorating On Saturday morning he went shopping On Sunday morning he went to see his son Eamonn play a football match

[29] Peter Teeling is a 23-year-old administrative assistant in a city centre insurance company Peter wrote that during the week he watched the Ireland V Poland match in *"a pub in town"* and listened to music tapes On Thursday he was working late (or doing a computer course) and brought home a Chinese take-away after 11 p m He read The Irish Times, The Irish Independent, and The Evening Herald during the week

[30] John Teeling, aged 17, has recently completed his Leaving Certificate and is on a FAS basic engineering course

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As to how often he'd watch them Eamonn said *"well there is a favourite film of mine, It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, World, I've watched that about five times"* He watched them when *"nobody is in, only my Mam because John would say, it's only a video, you can watch it any time"*, confirming that power relations in the family are not solely based on gender or generation, but exist between siblings As for those he has kept Eamonn said *"I have four of them, It's a Mad, Mad World, Princess Bride, Ghostbusters, and Roxannne"* Eamonn had recorded *"roughly about eight, my Dad records them, some of them were recorded over"*

When it came to using the VCR Josephine Whelan [31] said she recorded

> *"Well interesting ones [if] there was something on Today Tonight, I would record that, in case maybe Bernadette [her daughter] would miss it, or maybe Matthew [her husband] would be out and it would be there for him, I would do that Or the news maybe there would be something going on and I would say, well I would keep that It is very handy"*

Josephine also said that

> *"We would only watch them the once or twice, and then you would lend them out, we must have fourteen or fifteen tapes It would be about say ten half ten, when it is quiet I would never record soaps or anything like that, it would have to be something topical, or maybe a good film Play On One, I taped that, it was sad, it happened in the fifties, it was good, you can have it if you like, I thought it was very sad, it reminded me of things happening when I was growing up"*

She also said that the family

> *"kept a lot of the Manchester World cup, everybody did that, we had Who Bombed Birmingham? and that went out, Dear Sarah"*

Josephine also said she regretted not having recorded *Strumpet City* and *The Boys of the Blackstuff* when they were on the television Her eldest daughter Bernadette[32] only recorded videos *"very occasionally"*

> *"I record The Simpsons or an episode of Twin Peaks that I would say, if I wouldn't be in to see it I'd record something like that or a decent film that was on BBC1 or 2 no breaks, the likes of The*

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[31] Josephine Whelan is a 52-year-old homemaker, a mother of five and actively involved in local community organisations In the course of our conversations Josephine spoke about the struggles she and her neighbours were involved in when they first moved to Coolock These included struggles to get the city centre to Malahide bus extended into the estates from its stop in Coolock village and for general amenities for the area Josephine also described how people in the area had rallied together to prevent an eviction during the 1970s and how workers left their factories to join the picket when word reached them that a family was been evicted That event rallied people of the area together and according to Josephine, strengthened the sense of community among them more than any other single event

[32] Bernadette Whelan is a 27-year-old lone parent with one child and also works as a sales assistant

> *Godfather You can record, it would cost you £12 99 to buy, but*
> *you can record it for nothing"*

As to how often she watched them Bernadette said *"probably never, I record things and never watch them, I'm terrible for that, feather brained"* If she did get an opportunity or remembered to watch them it might be

> *"Two weeks later I'd say 'God I recorded that and I never*
> *watched it' 'The likes of The Godfather I would keep y'know if*
> *it was a good film, would record it and keep it there'd be none*
> *out there* [the living room] *belonging to me that I've recorded*
> *from television and kept"*

When asked about the others in the family Bernadette responded by saying that

> *"Marie tends to record a lot of her music and keeps what she's*
> *into at the moment, then when she gets fed up of it she'd erase it*
> *and tape over it Anthony and Thomas maybe tape some of the*
> *wrestling, they'd tape The Simpsons Marie would tape 21 Jump*
> *Street When me father was in hospital we taped the World Cup*
> *We taped some of the matches for him to watch when he got*
> *home, so it's handy for things like that"*

Speaking for herself Marie [33] said she that

> *"Would record 21 Jump Street, skate board programmes, music*
> *programmes or a film, like The Lost Boys, I recorded that, that*
> *was on just after Christmas"*

Marie watched them when *"there was nothing on during the day or at the weekend"* and would not let anyone record over them. She also kept videos of the bands Faith no More and The Four of Us Matthew Whelan [34] said he would record some television programmes and films like *The Godfather, "well, you would just have them, and you'd just say put The Godfather on, just like that"'* Joseph Whelan [35] recorded *The Simpsons* and *"the likes of a*

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[33] Marie Whelan was sixteen-years-old at the time of the interview and was on a vocational training course She was involved in the Dublin Youth Theatre and has had poems published in a local community magazine called <u>Free Press</u> She was a fan of heavy metal music (Faith no More, Red Hot Chillie Peppers and Slayer) and said *"people talk about heavy metal as devil worshipping and all that, its all stupid it doesn't influence people at all Like if you are going to do something, you'll do it anyway"* Marie also enjoys horror books and comics In her diary entries she said she watched the video *Heathers* on Monday afternoon and later on that evening *The Untouchables*, and *Ferris Bullers Day Off* On Friday evening she went to *Terminator 2* in the U C I Cinema in Coolock From Monday to Thursday she listened to the Chris Barry Show on Rock 104 On Thursday afternoon she bought <u>Just Seventeen</u> and <u>Sky Magazine</u>

[34] Matthew is a 52-year-old factory worker and father of six children At the time of the interview Matthew was on 'sick leave' from his job in a local factory where he worked the night shift Born in 1939, he played semi-professional soccer and was a longtime supporter of Liverpool One of current leisure activities is 'going for a pint' In my conversations with Matthew and Josephine I got a strong sense that both of them valued their city centre roots and that the notion of family heritage mattered to them

[35] Joseph Whelan is a 19-year-old factory worker who has an active involvement in marital arts In his diary he wrote that on Tuesday evening he went to his Karate Club and later went swimming On Wednesday he went to see the new Omni Shopping centre in Santry ('crap'), had a car crash and then went for a 'stiff drink' with his girl friend Normally he does not drink or smoke On Friday evening he collected his girlfriend at 7 30 p m , then went to the Roundabout pub, then to a disco Between 1-2 a.m he wrote *"fall out of good time Charlie's, don't remember anything else*

film, say a Bruce Lee film, I'd make it my business to get that, action movies"
Joseph only kept

> *"Action movies really, sports cars, and all that Well I kept them*
> *and people have taped over them again You tape something and*
> *you keep it and someone tapes over it"*

Overall the television programmes that were the most recorded were in order of preference, films, series, concerts and comedy programmes Following those categories approximately the same number of family members mentioned football, 'soaps' and current affairs, documentaries and science programmes

The frequency with which members of the families recorded programmes from the television varied For example, on the one hand Anne Dowler used her VCR on a daily basis, while Dave Cranson said he might use one three-hour tape in a year In general the teenage sons and daughters used the VCR more often than their parents The number of blank tapes available in each home also varied e g the Cransons (20), Tony McIlroy (8), the Burkes (4), and Mary O'Neill (2) Several interviewees mentioned that frequently when they sat down to view a recorded programmme it had been taped over The lack of blank tapes was a source of family friction For June Sheridan it was a financial issue, she could only afford to have two blank videos One father mentioned hiding recorded videos so that his son would not record over them Another expressed a parental authority in expressing his desire to retain valued video tapes Some family members said that they simply forgot to watch videos they had recorded Times at which recorded programmes were viewed differed among the participants For Molly Cranson it was next morning For Ann Dowler it was just after watching a 'soap' on another channel and after her children had gone to bed

A favourite time for school children to watch a recorded video was after school when the television/VCR was not being used by older members of the family According to Thomas Murphy *"family videos"* such as those featuring communions and confirmations were taken *"out now and again"* Thomas's brother-in-law had a video camera, and it was he who *"did the one of my two young ones making their communion together and the christening I have two there"* When portable video cameras came on the market originally some commentators recognised the empowering potential of this media technology in terms of agitprop and for use in 'grass roots' politics However, despite the greater availability of lightweight video cameras among non-professional users, they are

seldom used to record pickets, protests or to make social documentaries. Their use tend to be confined to what Thomas Murphy described as *"family videos"*

The convenience of VCRs was mentioned by several of the interviewees. For example, according to Bernadette Whelan when her father was in hospital during the Italia 90 the family recorded some matches for him. The word 'handy' was used twice to describe the convenience of VCRs. The majority of the woman interviewees were familiar with the workings of the video recorder. I say 'majority' because one or two women (e g Jane Smyth) had difficulties with the pre-recording facilities of their VCRs. This contrasted with the findings of one of David Morley's research projects where none of the women operated the VCR for themselves (Morley 1986 159) Due to the influence of Morley's research I never considered inquiring whether the male family members were fully proficient in their operations of their VCRs [36]

8.3.   Rented Videos.

In order to investigate the possible impact of rented videos, I asked the adult members of the ten families the following questions

(i)   Do you hire videos?
(ii)   How often do you hire videos?
(iii)   From where do you rent the videos?
(iv)   Are you a member of a video club?
(v)   Whose name is the video club membership in?
(vi)   How would you choose a video?
(vii)   Who in the household would normally rent the video?
(viii) How many videos would you hire at a time?
(iiix) When would you hire a video?
(x)   Do you swap videos with friends or neighbours?
(xi)   Which is your favourite type of video?
(xii)   During the past month what rented videos can you remember watching?

The tables below contextualise the video and film preferences of family members in a general popularity context which sets their choices against the most popular videos and films in the week of October 14 –20, 1991, according to information supplied by Xtra-vision Head Office and UCI, Coolock

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[36] On that score, I admit that I had to get my brother to connect up my television and VCR as the accompanying booklet left me totally confused

Table 8 1 Videos

	Ten most popular rented Videos	Videos rented by families
1	Kindergarten Cop	Absolute Strangers
2	Misery	The Big Picture
3	Sleeping with the Enemy	Filofax
4	King Ralph	Fine Thing
5	Awakenings	Heathers
6	Highlander 2	Switched at Birth
7	Look Who's Talking Too	The Untouchables
8	Filofax	
9	Ghost	
10	Millers Crossing	

Source Xtra-vision (figures from unspecified Xtra-vision Dublin outlet)

Table 8 2 Films

	Ten most popular films	Films attended by family members
1	The Commitments	FX 2
2	Jacob's Ladder	Robin Hood
3	Robin Hood	Terminator Two
4	Terminator Two	
5	Regarding Henry	
6	FX 2	
7	New Jack City	
8	Toy Soldiers	
9	Harley Davidson & the Marlboro Man	
10	Rock-A-Doodle	

Source Mr Liam Maher, Manager of UCI, Coolock

At least one member of each family had been a member of Xtra-vision (Coolock village or the Northside Shopping Centre) at some stage Other video rental outlets included other video stores in the city centre and local newsagents It was suggested to me by one of the wives that her husband sometimes rented 'blue videos' from another local source During the interviews I also discovered that a door-to-door video rental services operated in the Coolock area. While satisfaction was expressed in terms of the cheaper rental rates, three or four family members expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the tapes, indicating that the tapes were pirated Claire Burke thought that the counterfeited tapes which her husband rented were a

"load of rubbish" because of their print quality While the video stores charged £2/£2 50, the mobile service cost £1/£1 50 for three days rather than overnight as with stores such as Xtra-vision. Those who used the service tended to rent three at a time due to the lower cost

Choices of videos were based on the following factors reading the 'blurb' on the video cassette container, scanning the new releases section in the video store, trailers at the start of video films, known directors, film review in the evening papers or by Barry Norman (the former BBC television film reviewer) and the recommendations of friends

As with the previous section, responses to the above questions on rented videos start with the Burke family. Claire Burke [37] answered the question on her choice of rented video as follows

> *"Well, when I'm talking about war films, I'm talking about*
> *documentary type film about Vietnam that one Mississippi*
> *Burning that appealed to me Murder In Mississippi was in the*
> *trailer so I thought I must watch out for that, that type of film*
> *appeals to me, something with a little bit of truth running*
> *through it"*

During the month prior to the interview Claire had watched *The War of the Roses* on video even though she had already seen it in the cinema Jack, Claire's husband described his favourite type of video as *"anything with good acting"* He was not impressed by *"these special effects things I like actors to carry a film"* In the last month Jack said the family had *"watched a lot, Mississippi Burning, that stands out, in the last month I must have watched about twenty five films and I can't remember them, they had no effect on me"*

Their son Liam, said he sometimes got the choice to rent a video As he said *"sometimes if I wanted to see a film that had just come out on video I ask them* [his parents] *when they're going down to see if it's there"* His favourites were *"probably action videos and some other videos like Dead Poets Society That was a very good film"* Liam thought the latter was *" very, very, very good and it was very moving"* When asked what was its impact on him as a student he said

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[37] In addition to the information on Claire Burke in the earlier biographical footnote in this chapter, Claire also enjoys bingo and playing table tennis

> *"You can sort of identify with bits of it Mostly very small bits of it 'cos it's mainly about college It was a very dramatic film, probably the teacher, y'know Robin Williams, the way he identified with all the pupils, that was very good, they were all very snobbish at the start and they turned out very emotional at the end and the death of the boy at the end"*

When I encouraged him to expand Liam said *"I think it was more the way of, d'you know about people's ambitions, I think you can identify with that and everybody can in some way"* Liam also singled out *Die Hard* [38] which he had seen during the previous month In doing so he said that *"I think everybody tends to identify with the hero of the action movie and it's just that it's very exciting Die Hard kept you on the edge of your seat and it was a very good film I don't like some of these Schwarzenegger films"* [Why?] *"They are very shallow"* [Do you think those films over rely on special effects ?] *"Yeah, I think so, but in Die Hard where Bruce Willis's acting isn't all that good, they made up for it with some very imaginative scenes"* He then went on to say that he remembered some films for the *"wrong reasons, like totally stupid, like some of the Schwarzenegger films like, can't remember Terminator and Predator and they all sound the same really, but I can't really remember the names!"*

In recalling her favourite videos Molly Cranson said

> *"Well we got one last week, it was Pretty Woman, that was very good, there was another one with John Travolta, Look Who's Talking, that was very good em I got out another one that I watch years ago, it was a two part thing Roses are for the Rich or something like that one of the best seller things that were on telly, that was very good"*

In the month before the interview Molly's daughter Hanna said that

> *"I seem to have taken out a lot lately that I've seen about three times already before The ones last week now I got my three favourite films out, Betty Blue, it is a French one, The Cook the Thief, his Wife and her Lover, I saw that one last year in the cinema and it is just out now so I got that one out Sex, Lies and Videotape, that's my favourite film, I love that film"*

Asked what she enjoyed about these films Hanna said

> *"I thought it was just such an unusual story, like it was so normal it wasn't, There was nothing over the top about it And what I liked most about it, it was very conversational*

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[38] In his interpretation of *Die Hard* John Fiske identifies the sites of resistance against corporate capitalism represented by the Nakatomi Corporation and the lone hero who was *"equipped only with a handgun, his physical prowess, and his ingenuity"* (Fiske, 1993 5) But rather than struggling against corporate capitalism the lone hero (played by Bruce Willis) is there to rescue his wife

> *programme It was mainly just people sitting down talking to*
> *each other The idea behind the guy taping the women was very,*
> *I thought that was great, I'd never heard of something like that*
> *before You'd want to be a bit strange to do something like that,*
> *but the idea was good, I thought The fact that a married couple*
> *and the husband was having an affair with her sister, the way*
> *they portrayed one sister to be nice and the other to be a bit of a*
> *tart like that But it was really good and very enjoyable I tried*
> *to get my mum to watch it but 'What are you watching that for',*
> *you know, she couldn't understand, but there were a lot of good*
> *lines in it Very witty as well"*

On his choice of video, Dave Cranson said *"I'd look for a near true to life film, romantic, family, Kramer vs Kramer That kind of thing"*

Dave O'Neill [39] said he liked the *"action ones, Arnold Schwarzenegger"* Those he remembered watching in the month prior to the interview were *"Die Hard, which is my favourite, Total Recall that is very good The special effects are fantastic The plots are pretty exciting, you just want to be in there involved in it"*

June Sheridan said that when she had a VCR *"the children got a load of children's videos, you know like Home Alone, all them sort of things, E T, and Moonwalker"* She gave the children turns in choosing them *"like one Saturday night it would be the little girl and then the next Saturday night it would be the boys They did want to pick all over 18's I let then see Robocop, it was very violent, in parts of it, I'd get one once a month* [they also] *got E T, Moonwalker, Home Alone, Uncle Buck What else They got all the Rocky 1,2,3 and 4"* June's own favourites are *"love stories, I got the Love Story I got Beaches that was very good Mostly them now I wouldn't get murder or anything like that"* She also rented *Good Morning Vietnam,* saying that she enjoyed it while adding that *"it is not my scene, but I enjoyed that one"* [Anything else about the VCR ?] *"I just miss the video"* (Laughs)

Jane Smyth said that·

> *"Some weeks I would get about two pictures, at the weekend*
> *Now I asked my mother in law would she come up tonight, there*
> *was a picture that she wanted to see, if she comes up I will try*
> *and get that picture"*

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[39] Dave O Neill is a 15-year-old school boy who had recently passed his Intermediate Certificate On Monday Dave wrote in his diary that he played computer games for an hour on Monday - *Leaderboard and Emlyn Hughes Soccer* On Tuesday he played *Bubble Bobble, Red Comp Mag-Zapp* for an hour

Jane also mentioned she had enjoyed *The Seventh Sign*, which was *"about a child that was born without a soul"*, adding that she was not *"a real romantic type of person at all"* In the month before the interview she remembered watching *Total Recall* which she thought was *"very cruel, it was a picture about the future, people living in Mars"*

When asked how often she rents videos Lauren Smyth said

> *"Once every six Saturday evenings, if I was going baby-sitting*
> *and I knew there would be nothing on, I would get a video Or if*
> *my cousin comes up, we go to the cinema a lot together"*

In the course of speaking about her favourite type of video, Jane's daughter Lauren said

> *"I like the action packed ones as well, but the blood and gore*
> *can get to me sometimes And all the bad language There is no*
> *need for it I like horrors as well, and comedies of course"*

Videos that she remembers watching in the month prior to the interview would include *Total Recall, Die Hard 2* and *Pretty Women* [40]

Sarah Smyth's favourite videos were *Look Who's Talking, Beaches, Fright Night 2, Pet Cemetery* and *Child's Play 1* [41]

When asked about his favourite videos her father Des Smyth said

> *"I like watching good films A good thriller Plenty of action A*
> *good psychological thriller maybe Or else a courtroom case,*
> *something y'know tense and exciting Anyway I like plenty of*
> *action in a movie If there was a good western there's very few*
> *of them now I would certainly go and get it out cos when I saw*
> *them making Young Guns I said ah, I gotta watch that, I'm*
> *gonna go and watch it on the movies in town but sure that never*
> *happened And the minute it came out on video then I said ah,*
> *I'll get that They went down and got it, brought it up and I*
> *couldn't look at it, I was doing something, so then it came on the*
> *tape and I still haven't looked at it, but certainly now that's the*
> *type of film I would go for, or else comedy Very good comedy"*

In the month before the interview Des he singled out *The Untouchables* and went on to say.

> *"See can I remember now, films we saw, that was Sean Connery*
> *yeah and Kevin Costner wasn't it [The Untouchables] That was*
> *excellent I seen most of the movies I'd say Pretty Woman Em, I*

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[40] See references to *Pretty Woman* in Chapter Six

[41] Sarah Smyth also listed the rented videos she remembers seeing in the previous six months on her 'Household Profile Questionnaire' The were *Die Hard 2, Look Who's Talking, Nightmare on Elm Street, Young Einstein, Flight Night 2, Ernest Saves Christmas*

> can't think of the name top films that were in town, six months
> ago or whatever The videos are coming out now very quick
> We'd get to see most of them"

Des's son Peter said his favourite rented videos are· "action type pictures, they're entertaining Comedy pictures though there's not as many good comedies as there would be comedy programmes on television" In the month before the interview Peter could remember the following videos

> "We had the Gremlins 2 the other night, and a film called
> Manhunter which we heard a good review of, that's why we got
> that out We haven't hired that much, Indiana Jones, normally
> just pictures we've heard are good from other people Normally
> the newer pictures that are out we hire, if we want a film we'll go
> down and see what's there"

When renting videos Mary Teeling "goes for a true story" In that regard she singles out *Sweet Dreams,* the story of the North American singer Patsy Cline Mary sometimes watches a video with a friend Describing their choice as

> "Like what they would call a women's video, and her and I
> would look at it here or in her house It would be like the ones I
> said Another one I looked at was A Cry for Help, Joe [her
> husband] didn't want to look at that, so I brought it to her house
> I like love stories and happy endings I loved Falling in Love,
> that type of film, I would love" [42]

When I asked her son Peter about memorable moments in videos he picked

> "The scene of The Godfather II, his brother is being taken out to
> the lake to be shot, and it shows him standing there and he
> realises that he has completed everything that he wanted, total
> control and total power It was almost like his kingdom, like you
> sit there and see this man, he has everything but yet he has
> nothing It was powerful enough to make you stop and realise the
> extent a man can go to"

Memorable rented videos for Peter included *Highlander* and *Platoon* Besides mentioning his choices he also mention that he didn't hire as many as used to because of the price "I used to get 3 or 4 at the weekend but I just cut down" His brother John's favourite videos were

> "Comedy, I suppose, I like thrillers and comedies as well The
> war videos out now like they are all just special effects like Red
> Scorpion and all that kind of stuff, Paratrooper, I never bother
> watching them I thought Apocalypse Now was a great film, I
> remember seeing it, it is a good while ago since I've seen it"

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[42] In response to the same question Mary Teeling went on to say that "*If I was reading, it would not be so much a love story it would be I like Catherine Cookson, and Barbara Taylor Bradford, they tend to go back years in England in the mining villages I am not into heavy reading at all I wouldn't read Stephen King now I did read A Women of Substance, and Hold that Dream,' and one or two Jeffery Archers"*

When asked which rented videos he watched during the month prior to the interview John said *"Dick Tracey, let me see, I can't remember videos"* As for favourites rented videos in general he mentioned

> *"Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, was a great film Highlander, I thought that was great, Dick Tracey, I didn't actually like that it just sticks in my mind, I thought it was really boring, Batman I watched, I thought it was really good"*

Josephine Whelan said that she was not *"into women's films"* because she thought that they not *"well made"* In her opinion *The Burning Bed* *"wasn't real"* and as for *Love My Children* she *"wasn't into that at all"* She is not *"into romantic ones at all"* because she thinks most of them are "soppy" During the previous month she had seen *Down and Out in Beverly Hills, Roxanne, Parenthood, Deerhunter, Platoon, Good Morning Vietnam* and *Full Metal Jacket* Her favourite rented video during the last year was Shirley Valentine Saying how she could relate to Shirley's character, Josephine went on to state that

> *"I often say if I won the Lotto, I would just fly off to America and I wouldn't even open my mouth You can get into that sort of situation, you know The dinner is on the table at 6 o'clock, I wouldn't be like that, I hate routine Some people say I hate the mid term break or the summer holidays I like them because it breaks the monotony You don't have to call the kids at 7 o'clock, they can lie in bed all day if they want to"*

Bernadette, Josephine's eldest daughter, listed the Monty Python films *Life of Brian, The Meaning of Life* and *The Holy Grail* as favourite videos which she had either rented or bought Others included *The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Bladerunner, Pretty Woman* and *Internal Affair* She did not like depressing films because she believed that *"life is depressing enough without renting it on video"* Marie Whelan's favourite videos are those with teenagers in them like *The Lost Boys"* According to her it is a *"horror comedy, it is all about vampires, but they are all teenagers it is excellent it is meant to be horror, but it is comedy as well"* Matthew's favourites were westerns When asked which he remembered during the past month he said *"they just go through your brain there was very few I was interested I was looking at The Turtles yesterday!"* His son Joseph was also a fan of action films, but in his case it was kung-fu and karate films with Bruce Lee and Claud Van Damme starring in them According to Joseph, who is involved in martial arts himself, the Bruce Lee film *The Last Dragon* is his favourite *"I could tell you the script off"* As well as watching such videos Joseph uses them for training purposes

"so many people on the scene, they've done karate, then they done kick boxing, Chinese and Japanese there is a difference in them. I've trained in three of them. I'd pick up, I'd say that's a good move and rewind, I'd find that educational, because I am educating myself".

While Joe tended to buy videos of his favourite marital arts films most of the family relied on the mobile service mentioned at the start of his section. According to Bernadette he called twice a week and had the latest releases.

As in Chapters Five and Seven I will now interpret the responses of the family members. As before, the challenge is to explore, as David Morley expressed it, how *"individual readings are patterned into cultural structures and clusters"* (cited in Staiger, 1992: 72). No overtly class-related questions were asked in this section, and few decidedly class specific responses were articulated. Those that were tended to be confined to questions of economics, i.e. being able to afford the rental on a VCR, replacing a stolen video, having the disposable income to purchase blank video tapes or to rent videos. What was most clearly expressed in the responses was the desire to be entertained, to see a well acted narrative with varying degrees of colouration. Linking the content of the answers back to the individual biographies and classifying them in terms of a specific working cultural identity is a more daunting challenge than that faced in Chapter Seven. In general the main drift of the responses confirmed that watching recorded and rented videos has become a taken for granted part of working class leisure activity. What is particular about the readings in the previous section is the universality with which the respondents identified with the portrayals of adventure, action, ambition, conflict, fantasy, heroism, horror, humour, love and sex. Female family members tended to single out human interest videos while male family members gravitated towards videos with a high 'action' factor. While most choices were from the 'Top Ten' video charts, exceptions included the more art house cinema choices of Hanna Cranson i.e. *Betty Blue, The Cook the Thief, his Wife and her Lover* and *Sex, Lies and Videotape*.

As in Chapter Five the question of memory arose. Jack Burke, John Teeling and Matthew Whelan had difficulties remembering the videos they had watched in the month prior to the interview. Jack Burke could only remember *Mississippi Burning* out of the 25 videos. This can be explained in terms of poor concentration,

engagement and recall But perhaps the most likely interpretation is that *Mississippi Burning* was the only memorable video for Jack and that the others were lost to memory amid the concerns and distractions of everyday living As he said himself *"they had no effect on me"* In his discussion of video/experimental video Frederic Jameson draws attention to the absence of memory in contemporary culture Jameson contrasts this phenomenon with instances in the cinema going experience by stating that *"nothing haunts the mind or leaves its afterimages in the manner of the great moments of film"* (Jameson, 1992 70-71)

Besides watching videos with other family members rented videos were viewed with friends, in-laws, girlfriends and while baby-sitting In one case renting a video was described in terms of a 'treat,' which elevated the experience above that of simply watching television According to James Lull's research on family use of VCRs a rented or purchased video

> *"Has greater status as a viewing event than does regular television This has many connotations, including who is responsible for choosing the material to be played, how will it be paid for, when will it be played, and how will it be integrated into television viewing and the use of other media"*
> (Lull, 1988 256)

However, a decade later that sense of 'status' has receded as the use of VCRs has become a commonplace form of domestic leisure But to say that it has receded does not mean that renting a video and watching it with a few 'cans' has lost its significance as a social event among family, relatives and/or friends It was obvious from the way Joseph Murphy spoke of the 'family video' of the children's communion and confirmation that these videos represented something of value within the family

In highlighting the media and information choices available within the domestic context it is important to resist any exaggerated claims as to consumer or citizen control in the face of Hollywood's movie global saturation There is an illusion of choice, but it is within the dominant paradigm and Irish made films and independent productions remain a tiny minority within the sphere of commercial video and computer software distribution Within global capitalism it is the media transnational corporations that largely determine the content of the information flow Arguments on the neutrality of technology remain important and at the very least suggest the possibility of a cultural space for alternative narratives to those produced by the 'culture industry'

8.4. Computer Gaming.

Seven of the ten families had the facilities to use computer games Atari and Sinclair were the most common systems As with the existence of a second or third television in the home, the availability of computer games contributed to a fundamental change in the notion of 'family viewing'. Computer technologies impacted on family dynamics in the way that children or younger family members had alternative source of entertainment/education which occurred at separate sites within the home Familiarity with the new technologies mirrored the age profile of each family and whether contributing or not to a 'generation gap' had opened up the users to a new world of audio-visual entertainment and information Since the early 1990s the growth in the use of e-mail and the Internet have further altered the Irish domestic entertainment and information sector

In counteracting what he sees as the flaws in Herbert Marcuse's concept of 'one dimensionality' Paul Piccone puts forward a concept of *"artificial negativity"* which he presents as a post-one dimensionality analysis (cited in Luke, 1990 160) Piccone's general argument is as follows arising from the various forms of resistance to one-dimensionality from within mainstream capitalism, the system creates/fosters its own negativity in order to overcome crisis and to survive In developing Piccone's analysis Timothy Luke makes a number of points that have particular relevance to the current research According to Luke

> *"Instead of a culture industry rooted in the totalising logic of central broadcasting, reified reproducible aesthetic experiences, and the passive acceptance of media-borne values and needs, the age of artificial negativity has witnessed the revival of individualised craft production, interactive electronic media with software- video cartridges, and decentralised media broadcasting and production, with a competitive proliferation of software and hardware producers"* (Luke, 1990 175)

So by implication the greater availability of interactive electronic media technologies and the privileging of media reception over content/message/ production arises out of the system's own need to negotiate crisis in a period of restructuring capital, such the 1980s

During the 1990s interactive entertainment and information technologies have transformed the landscape of domestic leisure while remaining firmly within the global

economy A programme such as 'Select MTV' has become a commonplace form of entertainment/leisure straddling the public and private spheres with great ease 'Select MTV', which has been described as 'an interactive juke box', involves telephone callers conversing with a presenter who addresses the caller to camera, transforming what is normally a private mode of communication into a public one

The insertion of the new computer technologies into the lives of a group of working class Dubliners can be illustrated in the following interview extracts The replies are in response to one question 'Do you use computer games?' In addition I asked unspecified follow up questions My decision to only list one question in the interview schedule on 'computer games' was a reflection of my own lack of knowledge on the topic and non-awareness of their widespread use at the time In research terms it was an example of the interviewer being 'surprised' [43]

Once again starting with the Burke family, Liam said that computer games have got to be *"exciting to hold your interest, so it's gonna be something like Robocop or Total Recall even though I don't like the films"* Asked if they had any educational value Liam replied by saying

> *"No, they wouldn't come straight out of educational like, but*
> *there's be sort of underlying things like, there's some things,*
> *there's a lot of strategic games where you have to have a lot of*
> *maths to work things out, you have to have a good imagination*
> *because it gives you, eh, sort of a battlefield plan, it's maybe like*
> *chess, you have to make decisions   Such games would include*
> *Back to the Future 3, Gremlins, Italia 90 Lots of games like*
> *that, yeah, a lot of soccer games"*

While Tony McIlroy did not own a computer he did use his girlfriend's in her house There he played maze games such as *Voodoo Castle, Lord of the Rings*

Lauren Smyth said she played computer games when her older brother got a Sinclair, but only at first At that stage she played *Bomb Jack* and adventure games She said that her brother Peter had *"hundred's of games and loads of football games"* Lauren's sister Sarah also used her brother's computer She said that *"sometimes I get so annoyed with them I just leave them"* When she was younger she had a

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[43] In his "Notes on Method" Paul Willis (1984) writes of being 'surprised' by the material that emerges in the course of undertaking ethnographic research On that point I wish to add that I was constantly being surprised in the course of my research in both phase one and phase two of this project

Wizzkid, "*it was just a little case that you pulled up and it was sorta like basic maths, geography, general knowledge*" Peter, the Lauren's brother, confirmed that he had

> "*Sporting games and, action type games but then I like strategy games where you are the manager you are the director or whatever and you go out and pick your team, play the game, try the part of the manager rather than just wiggling the joystick, so I like them*"

Peter Smyth used the computer

> "*Just a few hours maybe during the week, it's slackened off more I found myself playing it more when I was in school when I had the time rather than at the moment, seems to have slackened off, maybe once a week, twice a week, for a few hours at night, I enjoy playing it, it's nice*"

Peter Teeling said "*I've not a great interest in computer games, I'd play them out of curiosity until I'd get frustrated*" When I asked his brother John whether he used computer games he said "*I had one but I don't use it any more The games like Commander and all that, racing games I don't play them anymore, no*" The youngest Teeling boy, Eamonn, said he had

> "*A computer upstairs but the joystick is broken, I don't like to use the keyboards, so I don't use it I have a grandstand game, just stick in a game and two lines come up and a little square and you can play all different games But most of the games I'd play would be next door in my friends, I'd play adventure games, and action games, shooting down planes and racing games*"

As for Bernadette Whelan, she told me in an exasperated voice that

> "*I can never get past the second level and they do me head in so I don't bother! Drive you mad! I'm hopeless at them*"

The growth of interactive information and entertainment technologies prompted Shirley Turkle to explore their impact on forms of identity within the context of new transnational 'virtual communities' [44] With a specific focus on Multi-User Domains (MUDs) she argues that with users adopting different identities in their exchanges earlier notions of relatively stable identities are no longer adequate In a 'culture of simulation' those participating in cyberspace can assume any identity they choose In making her observations she asks whether a 'culture of simulation' is contributing to what Frederic Jameson calls the "*the flattening of affect in post-modern life*"

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[44] McKenzie Wark's links the growth in 'virtual geography' to a 'media memory,' the implication being that if does happen in the media it does not happen <u>Virtual Geography Living with Global Media Events</u> Indiana University Press Bloomington and Indianapolis USA 1994

(cited in Turkle, 1996 254)

Hermann Bausinger distinguishes three stages of identity formation emanating from what can be described as western pre-modern, modern and postmodern periodisations These he lists as follows

(i)   a *"fairly stable identity"*
(ii)   an identity *"secured or at least supported by ideological concepts"*
(iii)   a *"floating identity"* respectively (Bausinger,1983 33)

Part and parcel of the shift away from what Bausinger calls *"fairly stable identities"* of class, gender, nationality and religion is the articulation of a multiplicity of new (subcultural) identities (Bausinger,1983 33) These identities are partly tied into the relentless process of capitalist commodification of fashion, image and music As teenage dance venues shift from youth club discotheques to raves and city centre dance clubs, re-mixes and re-releases are accompanied by a parallel (retro) fashion trend, look and mood While popular culture crosses class boundaries, class distinctions remain For example, bouncers outside Dublin clubs with a predominantly middle class clientele can read the signs of social class in a dress code at a glance [45]

For those excluded or resistant to formally organised leisure activities the 'drop-out' option has meant a combination of sub-cultural activities centred on cider parties, 'glue-sniffing,' horses, 'joy riding' and graffiti Dublin working class gangs or sub-cultures paralleled those in England and North America These changes include the shift in youth sub-culture from skinhead to suede heads and the 'trackies' in the 1990s [46]

While adults carry a cultural heritage in their heads a young generation is growing up with less of a sense of cultural continuity than their parents In a conference on the contemporary nature of 'Protestant identity' held on the Shankill Road during

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[45] According to the north inner city community activist Mick Rafferty, there is one item of clothing that raises particular hackles at the entrances to Dublin dance venues As Rafferty puts it *"Bouncers look down and say no you are not getting in because you are wearing white socks"* (Rafferty, 1994 92)

[46] An example of how consumer goods become part of the process of identity formation and image has been illustrated by Miriam Lillis in a post graduate research project on working class youth cultures in the Finglas area of Dublin Based on post-graduate research, conducted during 1991, Lillis revealed how consumer products such as nylon track suits, Reebok trainer shoes, etc , were essential elements in the construction of specific youth sub-cultural identities and how consumer choices were made on the basis of media images As such the young people involved were susceptible to market forces They were also invariably curtailed by the dichotomy between product availability and affordability

October 1994 a speaker from the floor made the point that he felt that the culture of the 'Protestant working class' was

> *"A common culture let's ask ourselves where we actually live*
> *I'm sure a great many people here have teenage children who*
> *are interested in Nintendo or Manga animation or whatever*
> *they're not hung up on the question of their Protestant identity -*
> *they're citizens of the late capitalist world"* [47]

However 'typical' such an observation is in the current rethinking taking place within working class Loyalism the point is an important one and has relevance to an understanding of contemporary Dublin working class culture Perhaps 'Nintendos or Manga animation' and Play Stations are as much part of today's working class culture as 'hooleys' (with their strong sense of continuity), were to an older generation But there again being *"citizens of the late capitalist world"* does not mean the relinquishing of one's class identity As has been stressed repeatedly throughout this thesis class is just one of number of identities, albeit of significant importance Furthermore, the argument that the emergence of new identities, sub cultures and a greater degree of individualism nullifies the category of social class is unsustainable

In a world in which the distinctions between the 'real' and 'representation' are increasingly blurred, the notion of personal and collective identity becomes less grounded and more illusory However, irrespective of these shifts in consumer culture, there is little evidence that these changes in sensibility have fundamentally altered the material conditions of working class day to day life An example of what I mean by 'material conditions' can be surmised from an extract from Roddy Doyle's The Commitments Jimmy Rabbitte is giving one of his 'lectures' on the capacity of soul music to liberate the Dublin working class Natalie interjects by saying *"Not in the factory I'm in There isn't much rhythm in guttin' fish"* (Doyle,1988 38)

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[47] Form <u>Beyond the Fife and Drum</u> Island Pamphlets Belfast No 11 pp 20-21

8.5.   Conclusions.

The domestic availability of new entertainment and information technologies has altered the nature of Dublin working class culture and fragmented traditional notions of home-based leisure activities. In the late 1990s a vast proportion of human communication is electronically/digitally mediated with international communication organisations patterned on capitalist relations of production. Such an international hierarchy of power corresponds to the prevailing concentration of media ownership on a national scale. Such is the nature of the capitalist economy with its *"everlasting uncertainty and agitation"*(Marx & Engles,1977:36).

Interpreting the range of responses of the ten families requires a number of caveats. Enjoyment and interest in recorded or rented videos depended to a large degree on whether a family member made the choice in recording or renting the video, or was involved in either decision. Other factors include whether s/he was agreeable for the television to be used as a video monitor or whether the rented video was in keeping with his/her personal taste or not. VCRs were mainly used for 'time-shifting' i.e. taping programmes to view again. The most recorded were in order of preference, films, series, concerts and comedy programmes. Next in order of preference was football, 'soaps' and current affairs, documentaries and science programmes. Based on their research in Britain during the 1980s, Mark Levy and Barrio Gunner found that VCRs in the were home were mainly used for 'time-switching' and the most recorded programmes were films and 'soap operas'. They also found that few of those they interviewed had built up a library of videos (Levy & Gunter, 1988).

According to the families' responses, recording or renting a video no longer possessed a 'status' value, to use James Lull's term (Lull, 1988:256). But having said that rented videos had not completely lost their special attraction. Indeed they were described in terms of a 'treat' and associated with sharing time with family, close friends and in-laws. Rented videos were used both while baby-sitting and as a form of child minding. While Mairead O'Neill expressed concerns about 'blue videos' being seen by children, June Sheridan used a video of *The Greatest Story Ever Told* for religious instruction with her children. Despite all the claims made for the new technologies, the Murphys were the only participants to use the technology to produce their own audio-visual narratives.

A taken for grantedness of VCR use was partly confirmed by Jack Burke's answer that in "*in the last month I must have watched about twenty five films* [videos] *and I can't remember them, they had no effect on me*", and John Teeling's remark that *"I can't remember videos"* This inability to remember might be explained by the cumulative effect of hours of watching television and videos resulting in a low attention span, with only the exceptional item capable of been recalled According to David Harvey *"Excessive information is the best inducement to forgetting"* (Harvey,1989 351) Jack's responses is a direct challenge to any exaggerated claims on the 'effects' of a 'dominant ideology'. But it can be also be argued that it is cumulative effect that is the most influencing and impacting aspect of domestic television and video Television occupies the viewer and promotes the current most pervasive ideology i e consumerism

While unable to contrast the relationship between working class and middle class audiences to domestic information and media technologies, my sense of the Dublin middle class domestic environment is as follows I believe that middle class children participate a greater range of educational, cultural and recreational activities As for adults my understanding is that they tend to watch more documentary and discussion programmes and tend to have a greater range of alternative leisure options, e g concerts, eating out, entertaining at home and theatre [48]

Based on the responses to questions on the use of computer games, evidence emerged on a decline in interest once the novelty diminishes and/or the user is unable to purchase the latest games and equipment It remains to be seen whether Play Stations and the Internet will retain their popular appeal, or whether the technologies required to enter the system will be relegated to attics and the tops of wardrobes along with the growing list of discarded new technological consumer gadgets and toys of the 'information age' What is clear is that the introduction of new domestic entertainment and information technologies has altered the nature of media 'flow' as theorised by Raymond Williams(1979) and strengthened John Ellis's (1985) argument on 'segmentalised' flow with its connotations of breaks and disruption due to the use

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[48] Such contentions are highly speculative and are tentatively suggested To the best of my knowledge no comparable audience research project has focused on middle class families in the Irish context, so as of now no comparative study can be undertaken

of other technologies

As for identification with working class peers in contemporary films and videos Stanley Aronowitz's point on their 'absence' is important in any discussion of the relationship between class/cultural identity and the electronic media (Aronowitz, 1992 201) However, if the categories of family, gender and age are rendered more visible in contemporary film and television that does not mean that social class has ceased to be of social significance The decline in emphasis on social class identified in the media research of David Morley and Janet Staiger (Chapter Three) is perhaps reflection of the increasing absence of complementary representations of working class people in film and television, rather than the demise of social class per se That lack of emphasis in David Morley and Janet Staiger's research might equally be explained by the influence of conservative notions of postmodernism and poststructuralism which partly cohere around a critique of Marxism Based on the information contained in the interview responses and the accompanying footnotes in this and the previous chapter there is amble evidence as to the continuing reality of social class within the Irish context

It is worth repeating in both the context of forgetting, 'effects' and 'absences' that viewers bring to the encounter with domestic media technologies previously formed identities As with members of other social classes, working class people are confirmed in their identity by relations to production (work) and reproduction (family) So they possess the knowledge and repertoires gathered from all of life experiences when engaging with audio-visual texts When taken together these media and information technologies only form part of a totality within which working class cultural identities are formed VCRs and computer games have altered the way in which leisure is pursued within the home They have changed both the use of time and family interaction They have also changed identity in the way they have drawn the user further into the matrix of consumer capitalism and away from more collective forms of cultural production commonly associated with working class culture in the past

CHAPTER NINE

WORKING CLASS CULTURAL PRODUCTION.

> *"Story is the strongest vehicle or language Story means
> storehouse If you get into that house it feeds you The stories
> themselves teach"* Michael Meade [1]

9.1.   Introduction.

This chapter contains one central theme That is an exploration of past, present and
future Dublin working class cultural production It will be explored in terms of existing
Dublin-based 'community arts' debates/ practices and then widened to include an
overview of Marxist aesthetics and its application in various international contexts My
justification for including the latter is that that tradition is the most conducive to the
working class story, albeit with provisos In Chapters Four and Six I investigated the
Dublin working class tradition of 'bread and roses' and how that tradition of cultural
production has been weakened due to its virtually exclusive association with the male
industrial/manufacturing working class In Chapter Six I argued that the latter's
economic base had been transformed over the past 30 years In Chapters Five, Seven
and Eight I argued that the collective working class story was either distorted or
marginalised in terms of its audio-visual representations. It is against the grain of that
claim that the possibilities for the development of a contemporary working class
cultural production is now explored The motivation for that exploration is contained
in a point I made in the conclusion of phase one of my research The point was, with
slight modification to the original, that

> *"In order that the concept of public service broadcasting does
> not become an empty icon, there must be a political will to resist
> the dominant ethos and ensure that stories other than those are
> told"* (Mc Guinness, 1993)

In pursuing my investigation into forms of working class cultural production in
general, I am strongly influenced by David Harvey's assertion that *"Aesthetic and
cultural practices matter, and that the conditions of their production deserve the*

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[1] Cited in "True Life Stories" by Joe Armstong in <u>Cafe News</u> Vol 11 No 5 September/October 1997 Dublin
Reprinted from <u>The Big Issue</u>

closest attention" (Harvey, 1989:355).[2] That investigation parallels a FHGM analysis of the Irish NDR,[3] which is further explored in Appendix E. The principle reason for its inclusion is that the telling of the working class story is dependent on a significant extension of existing bourgeois democracy. Ultimately it depends on a fundamental transformation of the existing relations of capitalist production, exchange and consumption.

9.2. 'Community Arts' and Dublin Working Class Culture.

Working class Dubliners have a long tradition of artistic/cultural expression ranging from street songs to marching bands, from the Donnybrook Fair to the household hooley, from their use of colloquial slang to their characteristic wit. The links between the lived every day life of the Dublin working class and forms of artistic/cultural expression have seldom been the subject of cultural and sociological study. This contrasts to the 'source material' that working class Dubliners have provided for literary, dramatic and cinematic representations by Brendan Behan, Dermot Bolger, Robert Collis, Roddy Doyle, Deirdre Dowling, Lee Dunne, Gerry Gregg, Johnny Grogan, Maura Laverty, Joe Lee, Heno Magee, Sean O'Casey, James Plunkett, Jim and Peter Sheridan and many others.

With the relatively recent increase of home-based leisure activities centred on audio-visual entertainment and information technologies, leisure activity is increasingly bound up with consumption, rather than cultural production. A visit to any of the large Dublin shopping centres will provide an insight into what clothes, cosmetics, DIY, dress making, drink, food, gardening, hairstyles, hobbies, knitting, music, reading, toys that working class people buy to sustain and *"reproduce themselves"*, to give their lives meaning and to express their creativity and cultural identity/identities (Harvey, 1989:100).

With work contrasted to 'play' and consumerism promoted over that of production, the creative role of labour (both in the home and elsewhere) is seldom celebrated. In

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[2] See Appendix C for David Harvey's extract from The Condition of Postmodernity (1989).
[3] See Appendix F for FHGM analysis of the Irish NDR.

neither capitalist nor former societies of 'existing socialism' is the creative, life fulfilling potential of the labour process realised Indeed, the link between the labour process and art seem increasingly to be an anachronism While the skills developed by those working with cloth, food, glass, paint, plants, steel, stone, timber and other materials used in the work and homeplace still exist in working class communities, even in those that have been ravished by unemployment, they remain at the level of commodity and craft and are seldom employed in artistic creation. It is circumstances such as this that prompted the Russian cinema and theatre innovator Vsevold Meyerhold (1874-1942) to state *"The proletariat must completely fill the ditch that an outworn class has dug between art and life"* [4]

While the concept of 'culture' as a 'whole way of life' has been investigated in previous chapters, the term 'Art' has yet to be addressed According to Michael D Higgins 'art' is *"the symbolic made manifest"* (Higgins, 1996) In reading about the subject of 'Art' with a capital 'A' I have come to realise that it is bound up with communicative, temporal, spatial and power relationships Therefore I favour a multi-layered understanding, rather than a definition of 'art' with a small 'a' So with an understanding informed by the concept of totality, I would include the following elements

(i)   Its expressive potential in regards to the material of lived culture

(ii)   Its embeddedness in the world of economics and employment

(ii)   Its ideological aspect vis a vis existing power relations

(iii)   Its political dimensions within social hierarchies

(iv)   Its aesthetic aspects vis a vis form and content

(v)   Its magical and spiritual qualities for both collective and individual forms of expression

The 'world of art,' broadcasting, film and video making in Ireland are reflective of existing power relations In the working class suburb of Coolock 54% of those who have completed their formal education did so by the age of 15 and the percentage of

[4] Cited in <u>Left Curve</u> No 2 Fall 1974 San Francisco
[4] Based on figures released by the Northside Partnership in 1991 The Northside Partnership was established as part of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress to combat long-term unemployment and social exclusion

those who are experiencing long term unemployment in the area is estimated at 45-55% [5] So if Michael D Higgins's conceptualisation of 'art' is applied to a class divided society such as Ireland it is clear that access and participation in 'making' the symbolic manifest is not enjoyed by every citizen on equal terms To make art requires giving form to creativity and imagination That requires time, aesthetic knowledge, skills and materials

A number of the questions raised so far within this section have been addressed by those associated with 'community arts' and so it is now opportune to investigate that artistic and cultural phenomenon, focusing exclusively on the Dublin working class scenario, as opposed to a more general discussion of 'community arts' In any exploration of the potential of 'community arts' for the aesthetic expression of working class stories, a number of questions need to be addressed These include questions on the nature of 'community', the potential of 'community arts' in telling the working class story, aesthetics and the concept of 'reification'

'Community' is virtually always represented as something positive, and its break up or decline something to be regretted Writing about his experience of growing up in a Welsh village, Raymond Williams captures a sense of neighbourliness, which despite contradictions, involved

> *"a level of social obligation which was conferred by the fact of seeming to live in the same place and in that sense to have a common identity"* (Williams, 1989a 116)

It is against that background of relationship and 'common identity' that Williams celebrates the importance of community But he also suggests that such a favoured notion ought to be treated with suspicion because if it *"reflected reality then we'd be living in a world very different from this one"* (Williams, 1989a 113) With the shift of socio-economic and political 'decision making' to the centres of power, be it to the European Council of Ministers or the board rooms of transnational corporations, the local has become the site of what John Fiske names as *"localising power"* This he counters to *"imperialising"* power (Fiske, 1993 11) The 1960s slogan 'acting locally thinking globally' still has value in the late 1990s In some quarters, it has become the

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focus of resistance, renewal and re-imaginings So, once again, the importance of geography to any critical analysis of the working class experience comes to the fore and further reinforces the case for its inclusion in a feminist-historical materialist analysis

Moving on to the concept of 'art' in the 'community art' twinning, Owen Kelly argues that its

> "Chief purpose is to bestow an apparently inherent value onto
> certain activities and the products resulting from these activities,
> while withholding this value from certain other similar activities"
> (Kelly, 1984 54)

Creative Activity for Everyone (CAFE) is the umbrella organisation for 'community arts' groups and activists throughout the thirty-two counties It was established in 1983 arising from an initiative by the Dublin north inner city based City Workshop [6] At the first all Ireland National Conference of CAFE in 1984 Jenny Harris, a 'community arts' worker from England, stated that what

> "Cultural democracy is about is learning to tell your own story
> on an equal footing with all the other stories It's discovering
> ways of giving expression to your own values and heritage and
> joining with others to do this in some sort of action"
> (Seminar Report 1984 8)

In a similar vein Peter Sheridan recounted a story that was told by a young woman during a session of the City Workshop According to Sheridan, the young woman produced a box with a glass eye in it explaining how it had belonged to her grandfather who had lost an eye in WW1 as a member of the British army Having had his damaged eye replaced with an artificial eye he had waited from 1916 to 1924 to get a replacement that finally matched the colour of his good eye For Sheridan the story was

> "A very important and potent manifestation of the fact that there
> is a folklore, a heritage there among the working class that
> needed to be explored" (Seminar Report, 1984 5)

The value of such an experientially centred approach is that it starts out from people's lived cultural experiences - their own stories It proudly declares that working class

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[6] According to a CAFE policy statement *"CAFE is committed to achieving social and cultural equality through creative action C A F E recognises the importance of collective creative action as a means of achieving social change C A F E aims to promote the use of the arts as of means of education and personal and community development"* (cited in Bowles, 1992 101)

people have a culture and are not waiting for aesthetic/cultural missionaries to arrive with the latest version of stringed coloured beads, which is in effect a pre formed package of artistic/cultural ideas and practices developed by artists etc and then inputted into a working class community

A worthwhile point of entry into the debate on the function and potential of 'community arts' is contained within two separate articles which appeared in issues No 67 & 68 of Circa Art Magazine during 1994 Knowledge of the contents of these articles is useful in addressing some of the questions raised so far within this chapter The first article by Tom Duddy (University Galway) is entitled "The Politics of Creativity", and is to all extents and purposes a *"devil's advocate"* style critique of Jude Bowles's Developing Community Arts (1992) [7] At the heart of Duddy's article is a questioning of what constitutes 'community arts' vis a vis the *"official art world"* While supportive of the aims and ideals of community arts, he identifies a naivety in the way the advocates challenge what Jude Bowles describes as

> *"The conventional exclusive relationship between the arts and*
> *the social elite and the conventional definition of what constitutes*
> *the arts"* (Bowles, 1992 3)

What is at stake in this debate, according to Duddy, is the need to acknowledge

> *"not only the relations of power that exist within the art world*
> *itself but also the relations of power that obtain in the larger*
> *society"* (Duddy, 1994 29)

Duddy believes those power relations are largely 'sussed' by people living in *"regional or inner city communities"* (Duddy, 1994,30) and that if a

> *"Community arts project is to proceed it must tackle the ideology*
> *which sustains such relationships and try to break the links*
> *between the arts and the distinction-making uses that are made of*
> *them by those who reside on the right side of a divided society -*
> *an enormous task, involving nothing less than the revolutionising*
> *of society as a whole"* (Duddy,1994 31)

In regard to the *"arts and the distinction-making uses that are made of them"*, Duddy refers to Pierre Bourdieu's analysis on the role of art and cultural consumption in fulfilling the *"social function of legitimising social difference"*, whether articulated

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[7] Jude Bowles's Developing Community Arts (1992) is primarily an evaluation of CAFE's National Arts Worker Course that was run in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, during 1991/2

positively as 'good taste' or negatively as 'poor/bad taste' It is clear to Duddy that there is

> "No expression of taste or 'culture' that is not motivated by the
> urge to mark the difference between one class and another, or
> between one fraction and another"
> (Duddy 1994 30)

So the arts and cultural activities can be used by sections of the Irish bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie as a badge of difference, elitism and exclusivism, rather than one of inclusiveness and shared enrichment Duddy also rejects *"a new kind of paternalism"* which he sees reflected in Jude Bowles's Developing Community Arts (1992) and argues that its

> "Language and imagery suggest a new type of missionary or
> ideologue moving in on working class communities in order to
> save their creative souls, to convert them to a sense of their own
> creativity" (Duddy, 1994 31)

Duffy concludes his challenging article by presenting a choice between

> "Either an openly radical politics of creativity which seeks in the
> long term to democratise society through and through, or a more
> pragmatic, reformist, piecemeal approach which is grounded in
> critical social history of art and in critical sociology of culture"
> (Duddy, 1994 31)

In the following issue of Circa Arts Magazine (No 68 Summer 1994) five 'community arts workers' including Jude Bowles responded to Tom Duddy's article In general the responses were defensive of existing practices within 'community arts' and resisted the substantive argument in Duddy's article, especially as it pertained to power relations vis a vis the 'official art world' In response to Duddy's article Jude Bowles states that the 'community arts movement' is a far more diverse phenomenon than Duddy acknowledges Then having stated that *"community arts and establishment arts are compatible, not contradictory"*, Bowles goes on to state that *"art is a political tool which can be used either to preserve or to challenge the structures in which we live"* While Tom Duddy drew on Pierre Bourdieu's writings on art's role in legitimising social distinctions, Jude Bowles references the concept of *"cognitive mapping"* as employed by Frederic Jameson In doing so she quotes Jameson's discussion of forms of 'political art' which can assist in grasping

> "Our positioning as individual and collective subjects and
> regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present

neutralised by our spatial as well as our social confusion"
(cited in <u>Circa Arts Magazine</u> No 68. p.45).

By choosing concepts that deal with mapping and space, Bowles highlights the importance of a sense of place in defining culture and which is so crucial to an understanding of working class community.

Jude Bowles's <u>Developing Community Arts</u> (1992) and the articles in No. 67 & 68 of <u>Circa Art Magazine</u> are valuable source materials that reflect recent debates on the dynamics of 'community arts'. However, one is left wanting more, a more engaged exchange of views moving on to a more theoretically informed arts practice. While Tom Duddy addresses the relevant power relationships, somehow his revolutionary/ reformist choices facing the 'community arts movement' lacks a political clarity and rootedness. For example, does the idea of democratising society *"through and through"* mean a transformation of capitalist relations of production which maintain the subordination of the working class or is it a social democratic analysis that seeks changes within the existing power structures of Irish society? These questions are important in the light of previous discussions (Chapter Two) on the revolutionary role of the working class in transforming the existing social relations of production. It is in that regard that Istvan Meszaros refers to the *"repressed energies and potentialities"* of the working class (Meszaros, 1995:984).

Jude Bowles's <u>Developing Community Arts</u> (1992) and the <u>Circa</u> articles reveal an insight into the contemporary 'community arts movement'. However valuable, they lack a rigour when discussing the actual power relationships that pervade Irish society and the need art fulfils in peoples' lives. Terms such as 'cultural action,' 'community/ personal development'[8] and 'social change' within CAFE policy statement remain strangely ill defined by Bowles. Her point that *"community arts and establishment arts are compatible, not contradictory"* is to say the least, problematic given the

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8 An example of 'community arts' linked to 'community development' is the EC Horizon Initiative funded pilot programme which was launched by Combat Poverty along with CAFE. In September 1993. With the aim of enhancing *"community arts practice and to identify ways in which community arts can be used to tackle poverty and disadvantage"* the programme involved the provision of information and service at a national/regional level and the establishment of three local projects. These were Parents Alone Resource Center (PARC) in Coolock, Dublin, the women's drama group The Balcony Belles from Sheriff Street, Dublin, and the cultural promotion group Pleararca Teo based in Rosmuc, Connemara.

prevailing power relationships If it is compatible why is the 'community arts' phenomena largely separate from the 'official art world'

Boles reference to Jameson's concept of *"cognitive mapping"* is particularly apt in the context of this thesis, as Jameson describes *"cognitive mapping"* as a 'code word' for 'class consciousness' Such a form of consciousness envisages an awareness of contemporary global capital and spatial politics (Jameson, 1991 418) Jameson's understanding of 'mapping' is crucial to working class people because the mapmakers have seldom come from their social class People who have been raised to 'know their place' need their own maps to envisage new scenarios beyond the existing socio-economic hierarchies and cultural-spatio bourgeois restrictions which many have 'sussed' Throughout this thesis I have suggested that FHGM is the best gyrostatic compass and that the NDR is the most appropriated historical line from which to take directional readings

An example of an arts project involving working class women and the 'official art world' is that which evolved into the Unspoken Truths exhibition The project started with two groups of predominantly working class women from Dublin coming together to explore issues of gender and class They did so with the support of the Education/ Community Programme of the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) and the direct involvement of the artist Ailbhe Murphy, who at the time was on an IMMA's Artists Work Programme After fifteen months working in collaboration with Murphy and other artists their artworks were put on display in an exhibition in IMMA during 1992 Collectively known as Unspoken Truths, the group employed a variety of artistic media in the process of giving an artistic/cultural expression to their lived experiences The 'art objects' included pieces on depression, loss, love, memory, personal pain, place, religious life, struggle, tenement housing and work According to Declan McGonagle, IMMA's director, the project is a

> *"crucially important part of creating new relationships which
> are inclusive and participatory, and which reverse the one way
> flow of cultural power"* (cited in <u>Unspoken Truths</u>, 1996 85)

Working within a framework comprising of their local community organisations and the IMMA Education/Community programme the women's artwork marked a new departure vis a vis 'community arts' and as such raised a series of interesting questions

on the relationship between 'community based arts', the museum, and artistic evaluation The questions include why were the exhibits not shown in the communities in which the women lived? Does the decision to include exhibits by working class Dubliners in galleries simply mean petit bourgeois validation of 'working class art' ? In answering those questions the case can be made that IMMA is situated in the same neighbourhood as one of the groups of women reside So it can be argued that the exhibition was shown in their community and that the very act of showing it is part of the process of building a link with people in working class communities John Berger argues that the reason why the vast majority of people do not go to art galleries is because *"they believe that original masterpieces belong to the preserve (both materially and spiritually) of the rich"* (Berger, 1981 24)

While I have seen some impressive work rendered in association with 'community arts' projects I get a sense that many of the contradictions involved in the working class experience are not engaged The fact that educational and cultural neglect has been the experience of many working class peoples' needs, at some stage in the process, to be openly acknowledged Such an acknowledgement would be an important political statement to make for those involved in the process An approach that avoids the contradictions and power relations that percolate the politics of aesthetics and divorces art making from the daily lives of most working class people is incorrect Furthermore it limits the growth in aesthetic awareness and consciousness for those involved An openness to these questions among the facilitators and organisers of 'community arts' allows for the growth of working class self-activity, to enter the process rather than taking the participants on a ride for the duration of the project or until the funds run out The later point is important because continuity is essential Without continuity the participants in 'community arts' projects remain part of someone else's project, within someone else's vision and dependent on someone else to fund the project In other words they retain a walk-on part rather than eventually taking over the stage to tell their own story Telling stories involves exercising power, so therefore the power relations must be identified and unmasked These are some of the truths that must be spoken if working class people are to negotiate the power relations that criss-cross the art world, in their own interest

While the experience of Unspoken Truths may be described as one of pushing an open door, in issue No 68 of <u>Circa Arts Magazine</u> Eamonn Crudden discusses the harsher realities of the 'community arts movement' Crudden starts by describing the importance of Community Employment (CE) schemes in giving unemployed people an opportunity to get off the dole, to learn new skills and to contribute to the development of a number of arts/media organisations However, Crudden also highlights the low wages paid to those on the schemes and the frequent turnover in staff which he believes inhibit scheme workers organising themselves Crudden quotes Sue Richardson of CAFE who makes the point that in the partnership between the state, 'community arts development' and the working class there is a form of 'co-option' with the state controlling funding and *"people more or less told what they can and cannot do"* [9] Richardson also makes the point that many cultural/ heritage projects around the country could not survive without the labour of those employed on CE schemes

9.3. Bread and Roses.

The 'bread and roses' tradition of the labour movement, as was investigated in Chapters Four and Six, is given scant attention by those associated with 'community arts' projects based in Dublin working class communities An important staring point is the legacy left by labour leaders such as James Connolly, James and Delia Larkin and John Swift who considered 'cultural activities' to be an integral part of working class politics.

If, as Herbert Marcuse argues *"All reification is a forgetting"* then remembrance has a potential de-reifying capacity in terms of art, forms of cultural expression and (capitalist) relations of production Besides linking memory to the process of reification, Marcuse also suggests that when the act of recollection is linked to a forward looking comprehension of de-reification, that it becomes a form of class consciousness According to Marcuse

> *"Remembrance spurs the drive for the conquest of suffering and*
> *the permanence of joy But the force of remembrance is*
> *frustrated joy itself is overshadowed by pain Inexorably so? The*

[9] <u>Circa Arts Magazine</u> Summer 1994 No 68 p 32-35

> *horizon of history is still open If remembrance of things past*
> *would become a motive power in the struggle for changing the*
> *world, the struggle would be waged for a revolution hitherto*
> *suppressed in the previous historical revolutions"*
> (Marcuse, 1990 73)

The importance of Marcuse's analysis for working class Dubliners cannot be minimised, because in the words of arts/cultural critic and author John Berger

> *"A people or a class which is cut off from its own past is far less*
> *free to choose and to act as a people or class than one that has*
> *been able to situate itself in history"* (Berger, 1981 33)

For that reason alone Berger argues *"the entire art of the past has now become a political issue"* (Berger, 1981 33) The lack of awareness of the Irish 'bread and roses' tradition is perhaps understandable given the fact it is largely unwritten and that today's trade unionists seem to have, by and large, let it go by default

A combination of 'economism' and 'workerism' has meant that the aesthetic/artistic and the cultural domains have been relegated to the bottom of the agenda in virtually all Irish trade union/communist/socialist organisations The influence of patriarchal thinking has ensured that when the stories are told they tend to be those of the male industrial worker According to Margaret McCurtain, without women's stories

> *"We would be void of memory, of reasons for celebration We*
> *would not find our place in the present and sadly we would*
> *remain without anticipation for the future 'Her' story is part of*
> *the story telling community"* (McCurtain, 1991 6-7)

In a time of *"transnational corporate cultural domination"* (Herbert Schiller), the earlier forms of working class cultural expression employed by the labour movement (bands, banners, badges, concerts, plays, poetry, songs etc) appear outdated (cited in Morley & Robins, 1995 13) Perhaps it is question of re-envisioning those aesthetic/cultural initiatives in the context of new media and information technologies and in doing so learn from what was dynamic and integral to that 'bread and roses' tradition

The 'earnest minority', who ought to know that the bourgeoisie *"cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of productions"*, are often the most conservative in responding to new socio-economic scenarios and their possibilities

If, as argued by Richard Collins (1990), 'cultural communities' are constituted horizontally as much as vertically across and within national boundaries, that is nothing new to those who are familiar with the early internationalism of the communist movement (Marx & Engels, 1977 77) Irish socialists have in the past been responsive to the possibilities of new forms of media technologies The fact that Robert Noonan (alias Robert Tressell), the Dublin born author of the socialist literary classic The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist, included a passage on the Pandorama in his book is evidence that he and his contemporaries were willing to experiment with new modes of communication (Tressell, 1979 298-305) [10]

Another example of innovative response to new communications technologies is that of James Connolly's description of the commandeering of the Irish School of Wireless Telegraphy at the corner of O'Connell Street and Lower Abbey Street during the 1916 Rebellion In an order (written on 25/4/1916) issued to the *"Officer in charge"* of the post, Connolly, as Commandant General, instructs the officer that *"The main purpose of your post is to protect our wireless station"* [my emphasis] [11]

If the Irish trade union and revolutionary movement of the early 20th century had the capacity to organise a range of cultural events, the contemporary trade union movement has even more resources to expand its existing programme of cultural activities (i e. its membership, its halls and its buildings). What appears to be lacking is the political will and vision to imagine new cultural perspectives that are not solely centred on the role of the male worker The idea of vision is crucial because a working class cultural blossoming is inconceivable in isolation from the struggle of trade unionists to take ownership of and ensure the independence of their organisations One of the great weaknesses of 'community arts' has been its failure, to a large extent, to integrate its projects into the everyday lives of working class communities The

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[10] Robert Noonan was born in Wexford Street in Dublin in approximately 1870 He later went to South Africa as a foreman signwriter and having probably sided with the Boers traveled back to Hastings, England, with his daughter Kathleen in 1902 Shortly after his arrival he founded South Coast Amusement Company with his friend Gower According to F C Bell *"Robert's scheme was to give lantern lectures at which Gower would supply and operate the lantern and he would supply the 'lecture' They first hired a set of slides entitled 'A Trip around the World and decided to do the job in style"* (cited in Mitchell, 1969 11) Noonan also designed and made posters and labour banners On one occasion proposed to Gower that they should hire a hall to show 'moving pictures' (Mitchell, 1969)

[11] For copy of the 'order' see The Rebellion in Dublin April 1916 Eason & Son, Ltd Dublin and Belfast No date of publication

flowering of cultural expression or facilitating the creativity of trade unionists could contribute towards ending the divide that has grown up between the trade union movement and working class communities The struggle for human well-being and control of the wealth creating resources is weakened by separation

Working class community groups and activists have also adopted the use of community radio, film and video In the late 1980s and early 1990s Irish Co-op Films made a serious attempt to develop a democratic media practice involving video production and with suggestions for the use of other media technologies These idea were outlined in a booklet entitled <u>Making Media Work</u> (1991) which centred on the co-ops experience in making *Whitefriar Street Serenade* (1990) The film, made in association with the Whiterfriar Residents' Association, dealt with the struggle of residents to improve their living conditions In addition, its aim was to motivate more active working class participation in media production The members of the Irish Co-op Films were committed to facilitating an audio-visual working class cultural production While the co-op possessed the will to develop an independent media organisation, question of costs, screening venues and distribution militated against them

While Irish Co-op Films was a short-lived venture, the experience holds valuable lessons Not least among these is the group's challenge to a culture that virtually excludes the working class story As part of the contents of <u>Making Media Work</u> (1991) references are made to Augusto Boal (1993), the British documentary movement, Soviet film and the theoreticians of 'Third Cinema'

Regarding such international cultural references, I wish to make the point that the development of cultural policies conducive to the interests and needs of working class Dubliners requires a familiarity with 20th century (revolutionary) aesthetics This is an area of critical thinking that has been largely neglected by Irish socialists/communists with the exception of written contributions by Leslie H Daiken, Mike Kelly and Eoin O'Murchu, all of whom were at some stage associated with the Communist Party of

Ireland Also included are articles that have appeared in various Irish 'left wing' newspapers and journals

9.4. An Overview of Marxist Aesthetics.

*"Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing
the consciousness and drives of the men and women who could
change the world"* (Herbert Marcuse,1997 32-33)

Neither Marx, Engels or Lenin succeeded in developing what might be called a Marxist theory of aesthetics But what they did write formed the building blocks that other Marxists developed. Lenin, (like Marx and Engels) extolled the virtues of 19th century Realism in art/literature In 1913, Lenin applied historical materialism to an analysis of 'culture' In doing so he argued that in every *"national culture"* there are *"elements of democratic and socialist culture"* (as opposed to the dominant bourgeois culture) even if only in *"rudimentary form"* and that the combination of those *"element[s]"* when taken from each national culture formed the basis of international, rather than a national working class culture (Lenin, 1982 91) Such an analysis resonates with Raymond Williams's concepts of the 'dominant', the 'residual', and the 'emergent' forms of culture (Williams, 1987)

The Bolshevik Party lacked a clear cultural policy and following the October 1917 Revolution pursued a pluralist approach for a number of years Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Peoples' Commissariat for Public Enlightenment (NARKOMPROS) with responsibility for the arts, culture and education in the new revolutionary government particularly favoured such a policy A film section under Nadezhda Krupskaya's administration was set up as part of the education department and soon the work of Russian film makers such as Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov and Dziga Vertov, reached the cinema screens, in converted railway carriages, and on whitened walls and sheets throughout Russia Radical sections of the Russian modernist avant-garde also allied themselves to the revolution In the words of one of their leading representatives, Kazimir Malevich, the Suprematist artist

*Cubism and Futurism were revolutionary movements in art,
anticipating the revolution in the political and economic life of
1917"* (cited in Bowlt, 1991 xxxiii)

When a number of artists who had associated themselves with the previous bourgeois/ aristocratic ruling class fled Russia, an opening existed for a group of avant-garde artists to fuse their creative and dynamic energies with the revolutionary process These included Alexander Rodchencko, Vladimir Tatlin, Natham Altman, Osip Brik, Marc Chagall, Alexi Gan, Wassily Kandinsky, El Lissitzy, Kasimir Malevich, Vladimir Mayakavosky and Vsevelod Meyerhold It was from such circles that the agit-trains and ships were designed and decorated Not only did members of the Russian modernist avant-garde ally themselves with the Russian Revolution, they sought a revolution in 'content' as well as in 'form' Such experimentation, which had parallels with the wider European avant-garde later faced critique, rejection and charges of Formalism. In some cases it led to exile, suicide and 'disappearance' thus ending what Camilla Grey called the 'experiment' in Russian art (Grey, 1986)

Lenin was critical of the Russian modernist avant-garde for both cultural and political reasons Leon Trotsky, one of the most prolific writers on art and literature in the leadership of the Menshiviks/ Bolsheviks shared similar views to Lenin on the question of 'proletarian culture' Trotsky questioned attempts to build a 'proletarian culture' in the immediate post-Revolution period because he believed that the conditions for such a cultural expression had not developed because of the experience of backwardness among Russian workers Instead of the notion of 'proletarian culture' he advocated the concept of 'socialist culture,' a culture that would emerge in the course of building a socialist society Unlike Lenin he had a close, albeit at times critical, relationship with members of the modernist avant-garde Later when in exile in Mexico, Trotsky wrote a text on art/literature in collaboration with the Mexican mural artist Diego Rivera and Andre Breton, the leading French Surrealist In it they wrote

> *"In the realm of artistic creation, the imagination must escape*
> *from all constraints and must under no pretext allow itself to be*
> *placed under bonds To those who urge us, whether for today or*
> *for tomorrow, to consent that art should submit to a discipline*
> *which we hold to be radically incompatible with its nature, we* '
> *give a flat refusal and we repeat our deliberate intention of*
> *standing by this formula complete freedom for art* " [12]

For a period Clement Greenberg, the North American art critic, was politically aligned with Leon Trotsky For Greenberg the modernist avant-garde had a rear-guard, which

he described as kitsch According to Greenberg, kitsch was the *"culture of the masses"*, and was highly amenable to propaganda He believed that by supporting the growth of kitsch, totalitarian governments ingratiated themselves with *"their subjects"* (Greenberg, 1961 30) Greenberg's inclusion of Germany, Italy and Russia in the same group of countries put him, like Trotsky, outside the fold of the 'international communist movement' During the 1930s, Greenberg held the view that, short of socialism, the notion of *"art for the masses"* in capitalist countries was a form of *"demagogy"* (Greenberg, 1961 30)

Proletcult, the Proletarian Culture organisation established in 1906 by Alexander Bogdanov and Anatoly Lunacharsky was committed to the development of a proletarian culture linked to industry. It ran its own university and had the support of leading avant-garde artists such as Osip Brik It was autonomous of the Bolshevik/Communist Party and NARKOMPROS However, Lenin was critical of Proletcult for its rejection of the cultural heritage which pre-dated 1917 and its position on 'proletarian culture' In October 1920, during a speech to the Russian Young Communist League Lenin made his reason clear by stating

> *"That only a precise knowledge and transformation of the culture created by the entire development of mankind will enable us to create a proletarian culture"* (Lenin 1982 93 &152)

In 1920 Proletcult was subordinated to NARKOMPROS

While the concept of Realism held various meanings among Russian revolutionaries prior to the 1930s, a specific formulation was developed and named, i e Socialist Realism (SR) in 1934 As a theory of aesthetics it was to become dominant throughout the international communist movement It was inspired by the writer Maxim Gorky, whose novel <u>The Mother</u> typified the style It was promoted by Andrey Zhdonov (Minister of Culture) with the full support of Joseph Stalin It was Stalin who called the writers of the new state 'engineers of human souls' SR owed much to 19th century Realism e g the work of the French artist Gustave Courbet and French author Emile Zola With SR 'form' remained virtually unchanged, while the 'content' shifted from representations of the Russian aristocracy and the Russian bourgeoisie to that of

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[12] From the 'Manifesto Towards a free Revolutionary Art" <u>Partisan Review</u> New Park Publishers 1962

the working class and peasantry The aims and objectives of Socialist Realism were summed up in the following paragraph from the Charter of the Union of Soviet Writers, which was presented to the First All-Union Congress of Soviet in 1934

> "Socialist Realism, as the basic method of Soviet artistic
> literature and literary criticism, requires of the artist true,
> historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary
> development In this respect, truth and historical concreteness of
> the artistic depiction of reality must be combined with task of
> ideological transformation and education of the workers in the
> spirit of socialism" (cited in Bowlt, 1988 297)

By the 1930s, a decade of great aesthetic/political dynamic, the greater part of the international communist movement had embraced the principles of SR as outlined most succinctly at the Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934 John Swift, the Irish socialist and a friend of the Soviet Union would have identified with the aesthetic of SR and the cultural policies and practice, which grew from it SR also had a significant influence on Mao Zedong whose Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art (1942) took as one of his points of departure a quote from Lenin's "Party Organisation and Party Literature"(1905) In that document Lenin had stated that party literature should *"serve the millions and tens of millions of working people"* (cited in Mao, 1967 10) Mao believed that *"all the fine things"* in Chinese literary and artistic heritage, ought to be critically assimilated and used as examples for contemporary work by Chinese artists and writers Mao made no distinction between party and non-party literature (Meszaros, 1995) In the most quoted extracted from the publication he stated that

> "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to
> definite classes and are geared to definite class lines There is in
> fact no such thing as art for art's sake, art that stands above
> classes or art that is detached from or independent of politics
> Proletarian literature and art are part of the whole proletarian
> revolutionary cause, they are, as Lenin said cogs and wheels in the
> whole revolutionary machine Therefore, Party work in literature
> and art occupies a definite and assigned position in Party's
> revolutionary work as a whole and is subordinated to the
> revolutionary tasks set by the Party in a given revolutionary
> period" (Mao, 1967 25)

During the 1950s Mao promoted the policy of 'Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend' which was also inspired by Lenin's 1905 article During the 1960s the Cultural Revolution (CR) was launched by those in Communist Party aligned to Mao Their target was the residue of capitalism and those who were attempting to restore it Following the death of Mao in 1976 the 'Gang of

Four' were arrested and held responsible for aspects of the CR despite the fact that they, with the exception of Chiang Ching had the support of Mao The CR was a class struggle with a strong cultural dimension Its weakness was primarily due to the fact that its leadership was not in the hands of the Chinese working class In the end the socialist position lost out [13]

As has been illustrated so far, not all communist/socialist artists and writers were advocates of SR Indeed, its limitations in capturing the dynamic process of production/reproduction of life stood in contrast to that of the artistic method of montage associated with cultural modernism. Montage is best illustrated in Sergie Eisenstien's 'montage of attractions,' the photomontage of John Heartfield and Alexander Rodchenko and its use in drama productions by Erwin Picador

Rather than opt for the term Socialist Realism, the Austrian Marxist Ernest Fischer favoured the term 'socialist art' In The Necessity of Art, which was first published in 1959 he wrote that the term *"clearly refers to an attitude - not a style - and emphasises the socialist outlook, not the realist method"* (Fischer, 1978 107) Having presented examples of *"different artistic concepts Within the fundamental framework of Marxism"* he illustrated the difficulty of arriving at a definition by contrasting the works of Gorky to Brecht, Mayakovsky to Eluard, Makarenko to Aragon, Sholokhov to O'Casey In making those contrasts Fisher was questioning which style, which method typified 'socialist realism' and 'socialist art' (Fischer, 1978 110) Rather than assuming an either/or definition, Fischer believed that

> *"This new socialist attitude was the result of the writer's or
> artist's adopting the historical viewpoint of the working class,
> and accepting socialist society, with all its contradictory
> developments, as a matter of principle"* (Fischer, 1978 110)

Fisher also argued that the *"essential function of art for a class destined to change world"* was one of *"enlightening and stimulating action"* (Fisher, 1978 14) In contrast to Tom Duddy's proposals for the 'community arts movement' which involves *"an openly radical politics of creativity which seeks in the long term to democratise society"*, for Fisher, the transcendence of existing social relationships

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[13] For an analysis of these events see Monthly Review Monthly Review Press July-August 1978

required a socialist strategy Fisher also believed that a 'socialist art' is that which

envisages a new social order In that regard he quoted Walter Benjamin as stating

> *"It has always been one of the most important functions of art to*
> *create a demand for a complete satisfaction of which the hour has*
> *not yet struck"* (cited in Fischer, 1978 205)

Georg Lukacs, who stood between SR and 'cultural modernism' turned to the

tradition of realist literature during the 1930s Taking as his starting point the

reification of everyday life, Lukacs argued that art had a defetishising capacity due to

its potential to present a totalising perspective, which could in turn reconstitute lived

experience For Lukacs the

> *"Effect of art, the immersion of the receptant in the action of the*
> *work of art, his complete penetration into the spatial 'world' of*
> *the work of art, results from the fact that the work by its very*
> *nature, offers a truer, more complete, more vivid and more*
> *dynamic reflection of reality than the receptant otherwise*
> *possesses"* (cited in Johnson, 1984 28)

Members of the 'Frankfurt School', who incidentally considered Lukacs's <u>History and</u>

<u>Class Consciousness</u> (1923) as a key text, differed from Lukacs on questions of

aesthetics They, while differing among themselves on points of emphasis, believed

that cultural phenomena could not be adequately analysed in terms of (i) the Marxist

'base/superstructure' model, (ii) ideological representations, (iii) individual creativity,

alone For them art was not reducible to an ideological representation of class interest

Neither could be judged to be a *"bourgeois swindle"*, to use Martin Jay's words

(Jay, 1996 179) According to Max Horkheimer *"Art since it became autonomous,*

has preserved the utopia that evaporated from religion" (cited in Jay, 1996 179)

They accepted that art was an expression/reflection of social tendencies and that art

could offer a 'true' foretaste of future society in its *"harmonious reconciliation of*

form and content, function and expression, subjective and objective elements" (Jay,

1996 179) Both Theodor W Adorno and Max Horkheimer believed that an increase in

reification found its expression within the 'culture industry,' a term they contrasted to

a 'culture' that emerged from 'the people,' namely 'folk culture' Both Adorno and

Horkeimer believed that 'mass culture' had a controlling and manipulative aspect

under monopoly capitalism They also believed that commodification of cultural

goods led to standardisation

Their research coincided with the period of greater regulation of 'leisure',

Hollywood's global expansion, and the rise of fascism, which they argued, could not

be divorced from the reality of monopoly capitalism Horkheimer and Adorno

defended avant-garde artists and composers such as Pablo Picasso, James Joyce and

Arnold Shoenberg because they believed their work was subversive of bourgeois

norms They also believed such work was resistant to the commodification of the

'culture industry' and was capable of withstanding assimilation Their understanding of

the 'culture industry' was largely adopted by Clement Greenberg (1939) in North

America and by Richard Hoggart (1971) in England

Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School, summed up orthodox Marxism

aesthetics and provided an alternative analysis Marcuse's summary of orthodox

Marxist aesthetics was as follows

(i)   Art has a *"definite connection"* to the totality of relations of production, it
       can either *"lag or anticipate social change"*,
(ii)   There is *definite connection between art and social class"* Authentic art is the
       expression of an ascending class It expresses its consciousness,
(iii) There is bond between *"the political and the aesthetic, the revolutionary
       content and artistic quality"*,
(iv)   There is an obligation on the writer to express the interests of the ascending
       class,
(v)   A declining class can only produce a *" 'decadent' art"*,
(iv)   Realism is the most *"adequate"* and *" 'correct' art form"*
       (Marcuse, 1990 2)

Besides stressing the centrality of social relations of production in any understanding

of the function and potential of art, Marcuse also believed that art was largely

autonomous due to its aesthetic form He also argued that 'art' can transcend social

relations/class and be subversive of dominant consciousness thereby revealing the

suppressed and distorted He also promoted the idea of *"repressive tolerance"* as a

way to explain how resistance is accommodated within capitalism In articulating an

analysis of a 'affirmative culture' he argued that bourgeois or (pre-bourgeois) art can

either affirm or negate

In 1970 Hans Magnus Enzensberger brought the electronic media back into the frame

of socialist analysis In updating Bertolt Brecht's analysis he highlighted the

'emancipatory use of media' which he contrasted to their repressive use Enzensberger

singled out the following 'emancipatory' features of the media decentralisation, transmission, mobilisation, interactiveness, collectivity, as well as their pedagogic and social control aspects In many respects Enzensberger's article foreshadowed the interactive advances in media technologies which are in common use in the 1980s and 1990s (Enzensberger, 1979)

According to Pauline Johnson(1984), the central concern of Marxist aesthetics is to determine the basis of the emancipatory impact of a work of art This she links to an investigation into the sources of an enlightened consciousness within every day life This had been the central core of the theoretical work of Georg Lukacs and those associated with the Frankfurt School (Anderson, 1976) For Johnson the work of those intellectuals was not a detour from revolutionary engagement, as argued by Perry Anderson, but instead a vital search for the source of an enlightened consciousness Rather than invest hope in the radical potential of popular culture (e g youth culture), Johnson argues (with some reservations) that it is *"essential that a modern leftist culture theory should consider itself, in the broadest sense, the inheritor of the general concerns pursued by the mainstream of Marxist theories of aesthetics"* (Johnson, 1984 148)   That means unmasking exploitative and oppressive relations as much as imagining a world where each and every individual can fulfil their human potential

In his contribution to Marxist aesthetics Ernst Fisher makes reference to the Dionysian aspects of art, and in doing so raises the important question of play It was Friedrich Shiller who stated that *"For it must be said once and for all that* [wo]*man plays only when he* [she] *is a* [wo]*man in the full meaning of the word, and he* [she] *is fully human when he* [she] *plays"* (cited in Lukacs, 1971 139)   While my purposeful inserts slows the reading it cannot suppress the sense of joy and fullness of humanity in this quotation 'Play' in the Dublin context can be identified in the tradition of carnival/fiesta as embodied in the Donnybrook Fair which can be traced back several hundred years until its suppression in the 1860s (D'arcy,1988, O'Maitiu, 1995) The Fete de l'Humanite, organised by the French Communist Party for many years is a European example of festival with a popular political input In the 1990s the fete involves arts and cultural activities, commemorations, performances, music, solidarity

stalls and dancing In drawing attention to the fete, I am expressing a discomfort with the Dublin labour tradition of marches ending with speeches outside the GPO to the largely 'converted' As for those events, I wish to draw attention to a point made by a German socialist, Hans Magnus Einzensberger i e *"Marches, columns, parades, immobilise people"* (Enzensberger, 1979 100) In directing attention to Enzensberger's insight I am consciously drawing attention to the transgressive aspect of carnival and bodily pleasure in order to envision a labour movement infused with a sense of energy and joy

In Chapter Five, Tom Byrne a retired cross-channel dock worker made reference to 'bread and circus' metaphor in describing the diverting potential of cinema among his workmates during the 1920s In 1996 Michael D Higgins described the same metaphor as

> *"A process of pacification, a reduction of citizenship from an
> active role to a passive role Shallow and superficial spectacle is
> used at best as a distraction form public issue, at worst to rob the
> vast majority of us of the will and capacity to engage with any
> issue others than those which personally affect our lives"*
> (Higgins, 1996)

Having referred to the 'bread and circus' metaphor as that *"ancient and well-tried formula for social control"*, David Harvey then argues that 'spectacle' can also be *"an essential of revolutionary movement"* In that regard he quotes Lenin as describing revolution as the *"festival of the people"* and then in more contemporary terms singles out anti-racist and anti-war demonstrations, riots, uprisings and counter-culture events (Harvey, 1989 88) In a similar vein Hans Magnus Einzensberger points to the *"mobilising power"* of the Woodstock Festival, Isle of Wright and Altamont in California which the *"political left can only envy"* (Enzensberger, 1979 115)

Offering an alternative to the profane and rediscovering the spiritual in a time when millions in 'the west' are turning their backs on hierarchical/ patriarchal religions is also vital to the 'life blood' (to use Liam Weldon's earthy metaphor) of any renewed socialist-feminist vision So rather than accepting the seduction of consumer capitalism with its large quota of boredom and failure to satisfy, working class people can strive to develop the conditions for the development of their own creative expression Once again I repeat my contention that the resources exist within working class networks

throughout Dublin and other Irish cities Furthermore, in order not to isolate the flowering of a popular socialist-feminist consciousness these forms of cultural production ought not be confined exclusively to working class organisations and communities

A new vision of creative forms of cultural production is an essential ingredient in the unfolding of the working class story According to Augusto Boal (1993) theatre started out as *"free people singing in the open air The carnival The feast Later, the ruling class took possession of the theatres and built their dividing walls"* as in the case of the restructuring, refurbishing and renaming of Dublin's Star of Erin in 1897 (Waters & Murtagh, 1975 171-172) For Boal, the task of the 'oppressed' is to make the *"theatre their own The walls must be torn down, the spectator starts acting again"* (Boal, 1993 119) Arts/ cultural projects provide the opportunity to break down the distinction between actors and spectators and release the individual's potential to act as opposed to being exclusively the consumer and spectator

Questions of aesthetic and cultural expression cannot, in my belief, be divorced from the NDR in either its 'national democratic' or 'socialist-feminist' phases At present the vast bulk of the world's resources are in the hands of a relatively small number of powerful multi/transnational corporations whose relentless pursuit of profit endangers humanity, world peace and the eco-system Imagining otherwise is not simply utopian Neither is a re-envisioned policy of 'Bread and Roses' which aspires to liberate work and art from the alienation of commodification So with an eye on the future, but enriched by the past, I suggest the following necessities required for the development of a contemporary vision of 'Bread and Roses' Along with a critical grasp of existing debates and practices within 'community arts' an understanding of the following factors is also required

(i)   A theory of culture which puts at its centre working class peoples' *"whole way of life"* (Williams, 1980b 63)

(ii)   An adequate theory of power with regard to aesthetics, social class, gender, the state and national/transnational capitalism

(iii)   A knowledge of aesthetics which takes into account the debates surrounding Socialist Realism and the modernist avant-garde

(iv)   A clear understanding of the relationship between art, (socialist-feminist) politics and working class consciousness

(v)   An understanding of 'feminist historical-geographical materialism' and its application to the 'national democratic' and 'socialist phases' of the NDR.

9.5.   Conclusions.

In this chapter I have gone on the offensive, as it were, arguing against the notion of TINA [14] because it represents the continuing subordination of the working class. Rather than confine the dissertation to working class cultural consumption this chapter has pursued the accounts of working class cultural self-activity in Chapters Four and Six in order to seriously address the elements of a working class politico-cultural project.

Throughout this thesis I have argued for a NDR analysis of modern Irish history. The analysis envisages a programme of action in which each social class and socio-cultural formation can determine its role within it. So rather than having sections of the petit bourgeoisie strive to provide a leadership to the working class, the challenge is for the middle class to provide its own leadership within each phase of the NDR, doing so from its own class interest and situation. The challenge for the working class is to define its own agenda in both phases of the NDR and to do so in an authoritative and unifying manner with its own organisations.

By foregrounding feminism I am acknowledging that 'women hold up half the sky'. I am also highlighting women's importance in any struggle for national democracy or socialist-feminist transformation. At the heart of both phases of the NDR is a question of democracy and in that regard it is worth quoting Lenin, who stated that:

> *"Just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces*
> *complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare*
> *for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many-sided*
> *consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy"* [15]

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[14] TINA, was according to Istvan Meszaros, the nickname for Margaret Thatcher who regularly advocated that 'There is no Alternative'(TINA). (Meszaros, 1995:xvi)

[15] Cited in L.Harry Gould's <u>Marxist Glossary</u> Proletarian Publishers San Francisco. No Publication date.

In addressing some of the socio-spatial aspects of working class culture I have 'taken seriously' the question of space (Harvey, 1989) In this chapter I have suggested a reconfiguration of the trade union/working class community relationship as part of a re-envisioned socialist-feminist politics and that process be understood in terms of the current 'national democratic' phase of the NDR Questions of democracy for working class people include democratic control over their unions, residents association, and sporting and women's organisations

As in previous chapters, the concept of 'totality' continued to be crucial I used the concept of 'totality' to avoid being the frog in the Chinese tale told by Mao Zedong In the story the frog can only see the sky as a circle, because it is in the water well In my 'use' of the concept of totality I am aware that I am at odds with much current social and philosophical thinking, namely postmodernism and post-structuralism But in response to that possible charge I would argue that both postmodernist and post-structuralist theories are underdeveloped and resistant to the concepts of Marxism, class struggle and social class

In section to and three of this chapter it was argued that one of the great weaknesses of 'community arts' has been its failure to integrate into the everyday lives of working class people and to situate itself within a working class cultural heritage In addition I would also stated that a flowering of working class cultural expression could only occur if the years of exclusion from aesthetic debates and practices was openly acknowledged Otherwise those entering that domain would be patronised and the great aesthetic traditions of various cultures across time and space belittled

The five recommendations and other pointers in the chapter are advanced in the belief that the arts have a central role in the struggle for human well-being and majority control of wealth creating resources Forms of cultural expression are weakened by a lack of clarity and separation from the world of work, home, community and leisure

Chapter Ten

FIN

10.1. Introduction.

Discovering the extent to which audio-visual media consumption was, and continues to be, a factor in the formation of Dublin working class cultural identity is the central research question of this thesis That investigation has been conducted in tandem with an examination of other socio-cultural relationships that are relevant to the formation of Dublin working class cultural identity. They include the changing patterns of 20th century work, housing and forms of leisure other than those of cinema, television etc So the central research question was one of discovering the extent to which media consumption contributed to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity as against other specified socio-cultural relationships My investigation was conducted in two time frame i e 1920 –1959 and 1960 to the 1990s In addition to exploring the media and non-media factors in the formation of cultural identity, I have included a parallel investigation into Dublin working class cultural production

This, the concluding chapter, starts with a synopsis of the changing patterns of work, housing and leisure among working class Dubliners from the turn of the century to the 1990s Against that background I report on my audience research with the project participants and their encounters with cinema, television and other domestic communication technologies The focus includes both the text and the context of viewing Sections three and four will focus on working class representations and storytelling among working class Dubliners A final, four point, review ends the chapter

10.2. Patterns of Work, Housing, Politics and Leisure.

Having played its part in the struggle for national independence the southern working class was marginalised in both the Free State and, subsequently, the Republic Working class Dubliners who participated in that struggle did so in the belief that it would advance their interests, either in terms of national or social emancipation But

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with the loss of their best political leaders and a new alliance comprising the Irish bourgeoisie, sections of the petit bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church hierarchy, a new hegemony replaced the old colonial/unionist bourgeoisie. While a revolutionary mobilisation had occurred among sections of the Dublin working class during 1916-21 and for a short period during the 1930s, neither the conditions, the necessary leadership, or class alliance, existed to see through a revolutionary transformation of Irish capitalism. However, class struggle continued to break out around issues of wages, working conditions and housing in both the pre and post-1960 periods. Solutions to those struggles were invariably sought within the existing socio-economic structures. That confinement was/is ideologically supported by the bourgeoisie and its political parties, sections of the petit bourgeoisie, the hierarchies of the main churches, social democratic parties and trade union organisations.

In the class struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie, the petit bourgeoisie always vacillates, and in the absence of a politically strong working class becomes the principle ally of the bourgeoisie. Such is the case in Ireland where sections of the petit bourgeoisie are directly involved in the ideological reproduction of capitalism through their role in the arts, advertising industry, broadcasting and education. But members of the petit bourgeoisie have a choice. That choice is to form an alliance with the working class against the Irish and international bourgeoisie to bring to an end capitalist exploitation and the relentless pursuit of financial profit. The NDR provides a political framework for a progressive realignment of the Irish petit bourgeoisie in order that they can play a positive role in bringing about a fully fledged national democracy.

The policy of economic and cultural nationalism during the 1930s, 40s and 50s created a unity around national objectives, which partly diverted attention away from questions of social class. Even when Fianna Fail's policy of populism sought to include working class interests, those interests remained subservient. With the penetration of international capital and culture from the 1960s, both economic and cultural nationalism was largely superseded by an openness to foreign capital and cultural penetration, developments which significantly transformed Irish society.

Post-1960s Ireland also witnessed the rise of the social movements and self help organisations, which challenged the once privileged socio-economic and cultural categories of nationality and social class. Since the late 1960s the women's movement has had a significant influence and while the patriarchy still exists real advances have been made in terms of the 'equality agenda' between men and women. In the same period travellers, gays, lesbians, lone parents and people with disabilities have through their own organisations articulated their interests and needs in terms of civil society. In doing so they have broadened the concept of social categorisation beyond that of social class and gender.

The place that a class (member) occupies in the relations of production is, as was discussed in Chapter Two, the key determinant to both their social class and class identity. Questions of 'cultural capital', prestige and status, tend, by and large, to follow on from that key determining factor. While the centrality of class has receded within the discourse of communication and cultural studies it *"remains essential to the understanding of our social condition"* (Crompton,1998:229). The manner in which some leading cultural, communication and media studies researches have dropped the concept of social class in recent years smacks of intellectual indecency. There is little doubt that this loss of courage is directly related to the growing intrusion of the market economy into the academy and the resulting loss of a critical autonomy. Such has been the 'retreat' from the concept of social class that in writing this thesis I found myself having to think against the grain to resist the current intellectual fashions such as postmodernism and poststructuralism which have all but ditched the concept of social class.

In the absence of a heightened class struggle arising from 'economic crisis' it was at times difficult to identify discrete categorisations of people in terms of social class. Over the past 30 years the shift from industrial to services industries and the convergence of life styles discussed in Chapter Seven have subtly altered the lines of economic, socio-cultural demarcation which contribute to defining social class. Stressing differences can result in the neglect of the many similarities across social classes. Working class men, women and children share many common characteristics with their peers in other social classes. For example, environmental issues may transcend the traditional socio-political divides. But with capitalism so pervasive in

today's world it is unlikely that any 'natural resources' will escape the relentless process of commodification and by extension be drawn into a class matrix While many of the participants in the research project revealed/expressed a fairly stable sense of class identity (particularly those who participated in the cinema going section of the research), problems of demarcation and clear lines of distinction emerged For example, if the place of the father within the relations of production situates the family's class identity, then his lack of paid employment did not, in my belief, disinherit him or the family from that social class Neither did the dependency of a lone parent on state welfare disinherit her (or him) from their social class As for lines of class distinction I found myself asking whether changing his job from butcher to that of credit controller altered Dave Cranson's (Chapter Seven) social class Did Joe Teeling's supervisory position place him in the category of 'management'? Will Mary O'Neill and Peter Teeling (Chapter Seven) retain their membership of the working class even though she works in a bank and he works in an insurance company? Whether those positions will eventually lead to a change in class situation is yet too early to call When Mary's mother married she left paid employment and when her father started to train as a fettler third level education was not an option for the sons and daughters of working class families But while education provides the most important conduit to upward mobility, in their study of social mobility among Irish social classes Richard Breen and Christopher T Whelan state that *"it is among the working-class that striking levels of intergenerational stability can be observed"* (Breen & Whelan, 1996 27)

None of the parents in phase one of the study, with the exception of Molly Cranson (Chapter Seven & Eight), had educational qualifications beyond that of the Primary Certificate Molly had returned to school and completed both her Intermediate and Leaving Certificates As such Molly is an example of the educational possibilities offered by 'life long' or Adult Education, which to date have not been availed of to the same extent by working class men Mairin Johnston (Chapter Five) worked in a textile factory and is the author of several books Anne Dowler's (Chapter Seven & Eight) involvement in a management training course in her local lone parent centre is another example of the opportunities which women are availing of in their communities Working as a part time youth instructor Claire Burke (Chapter Seven & Eight) works inside and outside the home, a pattern that is increasingly common

among working class women The trend represents a change from the previous generation when married women with families tended not to work outside the home after marriage

Workers' labour power continues to be largely sustained by unpaid domestic labour, which is expended almost exclusively by women working in the home The women who identified themselves as 'housewives,' in Chapter Five, Seven and Eight of this dissertation did so with confidence as to their contribution to family life 'Family life' was extended to include care for an elderly parent Besides their preoccupation with domestic chores several woman with children in their late teens found that with 'time on their hands' they could also take on a part-time job These jobs included work in a supermarket, cleaning, and with Youthreach In most of these cases the option of working outside the home when the children were younger was not feasible given the lack of alternative, adequate and affordable childcare

If Coolock, the location of phase one of the research, is by and large a working class suburb, within that suburb there is a range of socio-cultural differences in terms of housing types and employment patterns Differences extend to leisure pursuits and material-cultural aspirations But while differences in terms of what Richard Breen and Christopher T Whelan (1996) describe as 'life chances' and 'life style' can be detected within the working class, those differences are minimal when compared to both the petit bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie If social classes are groups of people sharing similar places within the relations of production of contemporary capitalism, then there can be little doubt that the greater majority of those who participated in the project could be considered to working class That claim can me made irrespective of the individual's self-identity and the position they might adopt in a struggle between classes, be it economic, ideological, political or cultural

The lives of most of those I interviewed in phase two of my research (i e on cinema) parallel major changes in working class Dublin For example, Tom Byrne has memories of extreme poverty and illness associated with slum conditions that are now long gone In health terms slum housing represented the greatest blight on the lives of the Dublin working class and its eradication one of the worthiest achievement of the Irish State But in the process of re-housing families from slum dwelling the internal

fabric of the Dublin working class was fragmented and weakened. While a sense of dislocation and trauma was experienced in the various phases of re-housing to the suburbs, once the move was made a new sense of belonging was created. The gradual increase in population since the turn of the century has meant that 'Dublin' is now defined in terms of the Dublin region, which spans into the three adjoining counties. A third of the population of the Republic now live in Dublin (Smyth, 1991:97).

Consciousness of social categorisation was mainly articulated in terms of an 'us' and 'them'. For most of the participants being working class seemed to be accepted as a matter of fact. In the course of the research several of the participants articulated aspects of a what John Fiske and John Hartley (1985) describe as a *"common identity"* which they believe springs from a *"common experience"* and is akin to the Marxist concept of *"class for itself"* (Fiske et al,102:1985). Articulations of a socialist consciousness, i.e. a consciousness which envisages the possibility of a social system other than that of capitalism, were confined to three individuals at most. But having said that, no specific questions on the matter were asked and only a couple of the participants could be linked to the 'earnest minority'. Consciousness of social categorisation was articulated by family members in the way they identified television representations of a working class way of life that did or did not seem 'true' to them. As for relationships with other social classes, differences were expressed in terms such as those used by Tony Whelan when he classified certain characters in *Fair City* as 'la de das'. If 'class struggle' manifested itself it did so in general conversation around issues of wages, salaries, unemployment receipts and expressions of not getting a 'fair' share. In the absence of a collective 'culture of change', class consciousness other than that of an ease of identification with 'one's own' tends to be limited. The 'family' appeared to transcend social class in terms of collectivity. In the absence of a strong collective sense of class within society and the media, the family appeared, in most cases, to be, for most participants, a 'safe space'.[1]

Social concerns that were expressed centred on employment, education, drug dealing, parent/teacher relationships, the lack of state support for elderly people and 'community policing'. Anger was directed against politicians rather than an

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[1] In making that observation it is important to point out that so much film and television drama representations are centred on the family, rather than social class (Ellis,1985:136)

identifiable bourgeoisie Interviewees made no references to bourgeois profit and wealth No direct criticism was made of those whom I have described as petit bourgeois gatekeepers For those who were receiving assistance from the social services, the support was accepted as a need

The combined ensemble of socio-economic and related cultural changes over the past 30 years has fundamentally changed the nature of Irish society Developments in capitalist productive forces have transformed Dublin's economic base, leading to a significant realignment in patterns of working class employment While notable changes and improvements have occurred in the lives of working class Dubliners in the post-1960 period, some areas of life remain unchanged

The changes have included
- A shift in emphasis from the production to the consumption aspects of capitalism
- A gradual improvement in living standard and housing
- A convergence of life styles between the working class and petit-bourgeoisie
- A greater liberalism in terms of sexual matters
- A rise in the influence of feminism.
- The emergence and broad acceptance of new identities
- The shift away from the concept of 'narrow nationalism'
- A decline in the influence of the Catholic Church in social and sexual matters

The constants include
- The subordinate positions of the working class within the capitalist relations of production which structure Irish society
- The 40 hour week
- The sexual division of labour in work and leisure
- The lack of childcare facilities
- The working class experience of exclusion in cultural, democratic, educational, legal and spatial spheres

The 'women's movement' has ensured that questions such as sexism, reproductive rights' etc be included in any social, political and/or political analysis I believe that, while social class remains the principle social definer, it overlaps with other socio-

cultural identities and they can no longer be simply left out of the equation Gone are the days in which struggle between classes can be limited solely to the workplace, the economic sphere If production matters, so too does consumption and the associated ideology of consumerism, which has become crucial to the perpetuation of capitalism

10. 3. Envisaging a Socialist Feminism.

> *"the task of a successful socialist movement will be one of feeling and imagination quite as much as one of fact and organisation"*
> Raymond Williams [2]

Rather than accept the absence of positive representations of Irish working class people, a case for the socio-economic and cultural emancipation of the Irish working class has been suggested at various stages throughout this thesis It is posited on the development of a transformative political vision in terms of the two phases of the Irish NDR and a privileging of socialist feminist analysis In any contemporary discussion of socialism-feminism it is worth considering a comment made by the British Labour Party M P Tony Benn, that in

> *"The 20th century we've seen two types of socialism develop, communism which forgot democracy and died, social democracy which forgot socialism and died"* [3]

The importance of this quotation is the insistence on linking democracy to socialism and the implication that socialism is an extension of, rather than regression from, bourgeois democracy In the light of my understanding of socialist-feminism I would extend Benn's critique to include the failure of both socialism and social democracy to fully take account of the woman question [4] Applying the contents of Benn's quotation to the Irish context I would paraphrase it in the following way The Labour Party and what was once the Democratic Left have turned their backs on socialism, and in their exclusive focus on social democracy and parliamentary politics have reneged on the

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[2] Terry Eagleton, (1989) <u>Raymond Williams Critical Perspectives</u> Polity Press Cambridge/Oxford

[3] *William Morris - The Earthly Paradox* A BBC Production

[4] See Istan Meszaros's (1995) investigation on socialism's failures in terms of the woman question

founding principles and revolutionary heritage Together they pose no fundamental threat to patriarchal-capitalism[5] Irish Republicanism, in its pursuit of a United Ireland, has stood up to British imperialism and reactionary Unionism However, it lacks a clear understanding of the phases of the NDR and how to provide political leadership to the widest number of people within the 'national democratic' phase of the NDR That was most evident in the period in which the 'military wing' assumed hegemony As a result of its failure to understand the two distinct, but interrelated phases of the NDR the Republican Movement confuses the 'national democratic' and 'socialist-feminist' phases, thereby wavering between traditional petit bourgeois nationalism (as opposed to the non-sectarian politics of Republicanism) and forms of 'leftism'

In drawing attention to the question of socialism in the late 1990s Dublin I am consciously challenging TINA, the notion that 'there is no alternative,' as promoted by Mrs Thatcher (cited in Meszaros,1995·xvi) I do so as part of a refusal to accept the continuing subordinate position of the Irish working class within the capitalist mode of production I do not believe that the present socio-economic arrangement in Ireland is 'as good as it gets' Rather than put the struggle for socialist-feminism on the long finger, the NDR analysis recognises that its current phase centres on national independence, sovereignty and the struggle for a range of democratic rights for men, women and children The 'national democratic' phase includes all those struggles against imperialist and neo-colonial economic and cultural penetration in both the north and the south, the decision whether or not to join to the Common Market, NATO or the Partnership for Peace In includes those democratic struggles which are sometimes pejoratively referred to as the 'liberal agenda' In a nutshell it includes all the democratic demands and issues that can be achieved within the framework of capitalist society It is as much a struggle 'for' as it is 'against'

In developing a popular democratic and non-sectarian programme with the objective of extending democracy beyond its current bourgeois-democratic limitations, socialist-feminists can openly advocate their political programme in the knowledge that it is a prelude to the struggle for a new form of democracy, i e a socialist-

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[5] But having said that no democratic could find fault with the aspirations contained in their 'Agreement on the Union of the Labour Party and Democratic Left' document which was agreed in late 1998 A strong social democratic led government would represent an advance over traditional bourgeois led party political alliances

feminist democracy In Ireland today there is an absence of political leadership for that struggle. However, the need for a revolutionary analysis that is rooted in the day to day lives of Irish people and creates a popular narrative of transformation is particularly required in the late 1990s It is required because of the dangers inherent within international capitalism and the fact that cultural, economic and social prosperity is not extended to all (O'Hearn,1998)

Based on his analysis of the weaknesses of communism/social democracy, Benn advocates a return to the inspiring figures of early British socialism such as William Morris Indeed, there is a pantheon of inspiring figures whose writing and lives can inspire those in pursuit of both 'national democracy' and socialist-feminism etc There are the political writings of James Connolly, Franz Fanon, Gandhi, Antonio Gramsci, Alexandra Kollantai, Mao Ze-dong, Karl Marx, Istvan Meszaros, Sheila Rowbotham, Raymond Williams etc Then there are the poems of Bertolt Brecht, Leroi Jones, Nazim Hikmet, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Pablo Neruda, Alice Walker etc and the song writing and singing of Ewan MacColl, Woodie Guthrie, Luke Kelly, Huddie Ledbetter, Christy Moore, Pete Seeger etc all of whom possess(ed) both political insight , passion and inspiration for the struggle ahead Combining the political, the artistic and the cultural is crucial to a merging of the cerebral and the spiritual in its broadest sense Engagement in political struggles against patriarchal-capitalism changes those who participate in them in potentially fundamental ways and so is directly related to questions of class and forms of cultural identity It was Marx who stated in <u>Capital</u> that the *"By acting on the external world and changing it,* [wo]*man at the same time changes* [her] *his own nature"* [6] The very act of <u>refusing to be a subject</u> and organising to change the circumstances which brought about that subjugation is empowering in a real and meaningful way One possible starting point on that journey is for working class people and their organisations to challenge TINA or notions of the 'end of history' and ideology (Fukuyama, 1992) and in doing imagine a different future to that promised by the bourgeoisie So even if at this stage it is largely confined to the imaginary domain and the prospects seem *"rather bad"*,

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[6] Cited in <u>Left Curve</u> No 2 Fall 1974 San Francisco USA.

to quote David Tezlaff,[7] that work of the imagination is an important start, because as Ellen Meiksins Wood states the

> "*universality of capitalism is not grounds for abandoning the socialist project, as capitalist triumphalists would like to believe*"
> (Meiksins Wood,1996 38)

If it is the case that each person acts out of his or her perceived best interest,[8] then the 'earnest minority' need to re-discover the 'individual' and to extend the concept of citizenship and 'free will' that emerged with the birth of bourgeois society

That pursuit is important because as John Fiske states

> "*traditional Marxism made the error of conflating individuality with bourgeois individualism, and thus yielded 'the individual' as a political terrain to capitalism*" (Fiske, 1993 66)

Deciding one's fate rather than having it decided by others is in itself a significant act of empowerment Doing so in conscious solidarity with others for clear socio-political objectives (national democratic or socialist-feminist) is an even more empowering act In this regard it is timely to repeat Eric Hobsbawm's statement that the "*political project of the Left is universal it is for all human beings*" (Hobsbawm, 1996 43)

10.4.   Screen Encounters and Dublin Working Class Cultural Identity.

The attractions of cinema for Dublin working class audiences from its commencement in 1909 to 1959 were as follows its escapist qualities, its various pleasurable 'larger than life' aspects, its representation of sexuality, its low cost in relative terms, its geographical accessibility, its convenience in terms of peoples' leisure time vis a vis work, both domestic and other, the warmth and communality of the buildings Then there were the specified favourite genres, stars and cinemas For married women cinema was a place apart where for a few hours it was 'their time', a time and space beyond the 'duties' of mother and wife. The worlds portrayed in Hollywood films

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[7] David Tetzlaff "Popular Culture and Social Control in Late Capitalism" in Culture and Power A Media and Society Reader Edited by Paddy Scannell, Phillip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks Sage Publications London, Newbury Park and New Delhi (1992 71)

[8] I wish to acknowledge Jack Webb of San Francisco for this use of the concept of 'interest'

were in stark contrast to the inadequate housing conditions, basic working conditions, unemployment and the marginalisation experienced by working class Dubliners within the southern state during the first 50 years of this century. It is in that context that cinema compensated for a lack in the lives of working class Dubliners.

Together, these factors were examined to ascertain the meanings that were derived from the encounter and how they contributed to a sense of Dublin working class cultural identity. The investigation of the relationship between cinema going and Dublin working class cultural identity was based on interviews with individuals who had particularly close associations with cinema between the 1920s and 1950s as well as the writings of Dublin working class authors. Rather than simply focus on the relationship between audience and that which appeared on the screen, the research was conducted in terms of the particular use that Dublin working class audiences made of cinemas as cultural venues, the cost of entry, audience profile and frequency of visits.

So how did the cinema going experience contribute to a sense of personal and collective class identity among the Dublin working class audience prior to 1960? While it is problematic to take the responses of the few working class men and women whom I interviewed as being representative of the Dublin working class, when the views of other working class Dubliners who have written accounts of cinema going are also taken into the picture, so to speak, then I believe that a broad and coherent profile emerges. There can be little doubt that cinema going prior to the 1960s was an integral part of a Dublin working class culture. Contextualised within the wider socio-cultural ensemble of relationships, cinema going in the pre-1960s era can be seen to have dovetailed with the economic and gender divisions of labour and the housing environment. The actual cinema buildings formed part of the spatio-cultural dimension of city centre and suburban working class communities.

The importance of cinema in the lives of working class Dubliners can be further illustrated by the fact that in each decade from the 1910s to the 1950s its central position was celebrated in popular memory and in print. The significance of this fact is that cinema is associated with happy memories, pleasure, and the escape from the drudgery of every day life. Cinema represented the dreams of working class Dubliners

for a better life The issue of memory was crucial Between those I interviewed and the Dublin working class writers that were quoted, childhood, rather than adult memories came to the fore Cinema-goers remembered the anecdotes, the buildings, the smells, and the cinema staff more so than the actual film narratives that they saw When set against the descriptions of 'forgetting', of escape from Dublin slum housing conditions, the grind and routine of work, of unemployment, unending domestic labour or the confines of an Irish Industrial School, Richard Dyer's (1995) concept of 'utopian sensibility' becomes fully realised Cinema represented an escape, but not an alternative to the material conditions of every day life in working class Dublin

It is only with an understanding of the range of socio-economic and other forms of inadequacies experienced by working class Dubliners prior to the 1960s that the true nature of the escape into the frivolous and alternative modes of consciousness can be understood Escaping from the consequences of class exploitation and patriarchal (and indeed national) oppression in the world of cinema obviously had its attraction and if film gave rise to a utopian 'yearning' (hooks, 1991) that, I believe, is a positive factor But unless the awareness arising from cinema was channelled into a viable political outlet for change, the response could equally have been one of frustration and illusion Cinematic representations portrayed the 'ideal' male and female, while working class people were portrayed as decent and hard working, the 'salt of the earth' But in centring the individual Hollywood never countenanced a collective working class political action capable of transforming the capitalist relations of production

Both the project participants and other Dublin working class writers frequently singled out the communal aspect of cinema-going for mention The communal bond of queuing, sitting, watching, laughing, crying etc were all part of cinema's collective experience and in popular memory it is those recollections that endure as much as favourite film stars or genres A 'sense of belonging' to an audience was a distinguishing feature of the cinema-going experience and contributed to a sense of heightened collective consciousness, of common identification The experience of cinema going linked into the distinguishing characteristics of Dublin working class culture i e its collectivist nature, its tendencies towards solidarity etc Meanings were not only derived from the immediate encounter with the screen representations, but

also in later conversations and retellings This confirms the well established contention that meaning is derived in a socio-cultural encounter with others, that culture is communication.

On the last night of 1961, Josephine and Matthew Whelan, two of the research participants, were part of a crowd of Dubliners outside the Gresham Hotel enjoying the festive atmosphere surrounding the launch of Telifis Eireann. Almost 40 years later that insider/outsider aspect of Irish television continues to be shaped by the wider economic and socio-cultural forces that operate in Irish society Today that socio-economic reality is inextricably bound up with the ideology of consumer capitalism.

In Chapters Seven and Eight the relationship of ten Dublin working class families to domestic audio-visual media was explored It was done so in terms of the uses, gratifications, viewing patterns and meanings derived from television and other domestic media technologies Their use of television was analysed in terms of their viewing of 'soaps,' sports and comedy programming In addition I examined their responses to questions on video recording and video rental Together they give insights into the way that television and other domestic communication technologies have become part of the everyday fabric of working class families

In the responses of family members to questions on 'soaps,' sports and comedy programmes, the spatial dimensions of work, housing and leisure among Dublin working class culture were highlighted Most family members expressed a desire and expectation for verisimilitude in 'soap operas' that were based in working class communities In responses to questions on 'soaps', *Fair City* was judged against the viewer's own knowledge of the spatio-cultural aspects Dublin working class 'whole way of life' On that basis the series was found wanting in terms of the portrayal of Dublin working class accents, it location and the lack of hardship experienced by those with the series

In recent years English and Irish soaps have dealt with a range of 'issues' in a manner comparable to current affairs coverage in the degree of depth and pathos Both the level of acting and the sustainability of the dramatic narrative means that 'soap

operas' cannot be simply dismissed as 'light entertainment' Women viewers were attracted to their representations of 'emotional realism' and the exploration of issues that related to their families and other everyday concerns The sexual division of labour was reflected in a sexual division of leisure as expressed in the way that women working in the home dovetailed their housework with their viewing of television and video

Male action heroes and the physical prowess of sportsmen stood out in the choice of the male members of the families But if it did it co-existed with other representations of masculinity Some men expressed concerns as to the increasing commodification around the game of soccer and long term supporters of the Irish team resented not been able to get tickets for home matches Those views echo Michael D Higgins's (1996) concerns on television sport and broadcasting rights The celebration around the 1990 World Cup appeared to resurrect the communal aspects of the game for a number of the research participants

Probably the most important point to emerge from Chapter Seven is that despite the virtual absence of positive representations of Dublin working class people on television a consciousness of class identity was articulated in many of the responses of family members In the absence of such representations on the RTE channels, the television viewers who participated in this research project expressed an ease of identification with representations of English working class culture

The computer games that the younger member of the ten families used represent the increasing proliferation of domestic information/media technologies in Irish homes They have impacted on forms of Dublin working class media consumption and altered the way family members interact They, combined with the use of the Internet etc , may contribute to the emergence of a *"floating identity"*, which Hermann Bausinger links a postmodernism condition (Bausinger, 1983 33) But if the engagement with cyberspace results in a new sense of identity, there is as yet no evidence that it nullifies the more stable identities of the non-simulated world, such as those derived from social class and gender

Assertions on the transformative potential of the audio-visual content of domestic communication technologies can be misleading in that they shift the focus of political change away from collective struggles of (working class) people themselves. However, foregrounding the concept of struggle does not deny the central cultural and ideological role television has played in post-1960s Ireland. The fact that its most positive influence is that of liberalism and social democracy ought not to be belittled, especially given the conservatism of pre-television Ireland.

In John Hartley's opinion, for those who work in television, the audience is, among other things, *"unknowable"* (Hartley, 1992:97). Perhaps that is true in all cases and the desire to know is suspect if not carried out in open consultation with that audience, particularly as license fee payers are effectively part owners in the service as well as being the consumers of the product.

What could be described as a 'crisis' within the field of audience research, is partly derived from the fact that researchers are frustrated by the lack of progress arising from their endeavours in the face of cinema and broadcasting 'ratings wars'. Perhaps that frustration is partly a consequence of divorcing interpretation from politico-cultural visions and practices of change that one can detect in the 'revisionist' trend within communication research (Curran,1990).

When taken together, the brief profiles of the ten families presented in the footnotes of Chapters Seven and Eight and the accompanying information in Appendix F [9] provide a textured insight into contemporary Dublin working class culture in terms of patterns of employment, education, housing and leisure activities, across both age and gender. Combined with their responses to a series of questions on television, video and computer games, the overall profile is further enriched. Not only do their answers give insights into aspects of contemporary class/cultural identity and class/social consciousness, but include articulations of gender, age and locational self-awareness.

But before continuing I wish to draw attention to an important point made by Raymond Williams that is relevant to the foregoing paragraph. According to Williams

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[9] Appendix F contains brief biographical and other information about the ten families.

"It is foolish to interpret individuals in rigid class terms, because class is a collective mode not a person" (Williams, 1961 313) Williams's point is an important proviso against any misleading generalisations For me it is read as a salutary warning against making exaggerated or misleading interpretations and as result failing to give due regard to those who initially provided the information

10.5. The Politics of Representation.

If image has become one of the main sites of identification and identity formation in the closing years of the 20th century, then it is clear that the growth in audio-visual communication technologies have been crucial to that development Throughout this thesis the process of de-reification was deemed essential to understand the working class story That telling was directly related to the democratic unfolding of the Irish NDR That point is crucial to this final review, because it effectively shifts the emphasis from within the existing structures of Irish broadcasting, where the immediate prospects of a change in working class representation etc are poor, to a wider political arena In a world in which positive working class representations have receded amid the proliferation of visual imagery, the development of a strong sense of class identity is in question Based on the current research it can claimed that working class Dubliners do watch representations of a their class with interest, be it in comedy, sport, drama, current affairs etc That reinforces the argument that the politics of representation are important to them

While Joe Duffy claims that there is no conspiracy in RTE to 'keep out' the working class, there is range of evidence on their exclusion The absence of working class voices and representations in the Irish media, other than that of the 'criminal minority' and the wisecracking character was examined in Chapter Seven Knowing that there is a strong tendency to stereotype working class people has not prevented the continuation of that practice (Sheehan, 1987) While there is no conscious bourgeois conspiracy to enact a policy of exclusion, there is in operation a bourgeois/petit bourgeois hegemony that distorts and marginalises the working class experience and naturalises capitalist relations of production and the sexual division of labour That hegemony is at its most effective when it masks (fetishises, reifies) the millions of

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hours of labour power expended across the country by Irish workers, and the economic reality that their surplus value is the basis of wealth creation in Irish society. It works by promoting an image of working class people as being responsible for their own exclusion, which is expressed in remarks such as 'they've only themselves to blame' or 'its not that the jobs aren't there'. At times it promotes a representation of working class people as deviant. Disunity is foregrounded in the knowledge that a united working class is the most powerful threat to the continuation of the *'capital system'* (Mezaros, 1995).

While drawing attention to the dominant hegemony, I also acknowledged the counter hegemonic potential of artistic, cultural/media, economic, ideological, literary, musical, pedagogic, political and spatial processes whereby working class people tell their own stories.

10.6. Story Time.

In Chapters Four, Six and Nine I included a parallel strand which examined aesthetic and cultural self-activity among sections of the Dublin working class. The motivation for that inclusion was to foreground the importance of those practices as a measure against which utopian aspirations arising from mainstream audio-visual entertainment technologies could be measured. Chapter Nine investigated forms of artistic/cultural expression that have the potential to resist bourgeois hegemony and facilitate the development of non-commodified forms of artistic and cultural expression. Identifying the carnivalesque and oppositional in working class culture was one of the main objectives of that exploration. In the exploration of aspects of Dublin working class aesthetic and cultural self-activity, I have stressed what makes it unique and in doing so paid less attention to the similarities with the working class of other cities and other social classes. In that regard I am mindful of the danger of stressing difference rather than commonalities.

Chapters Four and Six examined the cultural activities that were organised by the trade union and socialist movements. In doing so I identified a decline in such practices during the post-1960 period as the nature of work changed and the general

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material prosperity of working class Dubliners improved.[10] That improvement was reflected in the greater variety of leisure and recreational facilities that are available to them. While cultural projects by trade unionists/socialists continue to be pursued, the context has changed. At present the continuation of that tradition of aesthetic/cultural expression lacks both vision and a popular appeal among working class Dubliners. The future of independent trade union pedagogy is also under pressure given the incorporation of the trade union movement and the range of alternative courses and accreditation now on offer to those who had hitherto been denied access to secondary and third level education.

In his response to a question on the impact of cinema on his peers during the 1920s, retired dockworker Tom Byrne referred to the 'bread and circus' aspect of the 'culture industry'. Today that trend in tabloid journalism, cinema, radio and television is primarily driven by a blatant pursuit of profit to the detriment of the media's potential to enrich the reader/viewer. In contrast the 'bread and roses' analogy is associated with enriching forms of aesthetic and cultural expression. Exploring working class aesthetic/cultural and pedagogic self-activity is to explore the possibilities of a collective counter-hegemony and active agency. In doing so I am conscious that spaces for creativity and imagination are limited due in part to the attack on the public service ethos driven by the growth of commercial enterprises which consider broadcasting, cultural and sporting events etc. primarily in terms of commodities. But that is no reason to conclude that the spaces do not exist.

10.7. So, Finally.

To summarise, the final conclusions are set out under four points:
(i) While patriarchal capitalist relations of re/production were the key determinants in the formation of the Dublin working class, underdeveloped processes of economic and socio-spatial massification in the early part of the century resulted in a correspondingly weak sense of a class identity. That weakness was further reinforced by an active policy of corporatism pursued by the Irish bourgeois/ petit bourgeoisie in alliance with the Catholic Church, which masked the class nature of Irish society and

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[10] An exception to this trend is the production of the CD entitled 'Songs of Irish Labour' by Bread and Roses Production Ltd. Dublin 1998.

actively diffused political opposition from a ideologically weak labour and communist/socialist movement During the 1950/60s the decline in traditional industrial/ manufacturing employment and the process of incorporation and suburbanisation were further inflictions on the collective identity of the Dublin working class A collective identity is also formed by what the working does not possess i e. collective financial wealth and political power With the failure of the 'industrialisation by invitation' to proletarianise the Dublin workforce and the gradual rise in cultural/leisure practices centred on consumption, detecting a distinct Dublin working class identity has remained a difficult task Not only have the elements of working class identity receded, but new identities have emerged, within and across social class, to challenge the once privileged position of class as a social definer Despite these undermining factors, Dublin working class cultural identity is part of a continuum which has a history that reaches back into the 19th and 18th century and forward beyond the year 2000

(ii) The transition from Dublin music hall to home-based entertainment (and information technologies) parallels a shift in leisure activity from the public to private sphere and a greater commodification and commercialisation of culture and leisure. Concentration of the ownership and control of the culture and information industries by a handful of transnational corporations has ensured that discourses and images that threaten the basis of capitalist accumulation are rare Positive representations of collective working class action are also absent from the 'culture industry' That in turn weakens a sense of working class cultural identity

A bourgeois/petit bourgeois hegemony operates in the major international culture and media industries and while naturalising capitalist relations of production and the sexual division of labour those industries can also accommodate a range of dissenting voices as long as they do not threaten the basis of capital accumulation In Ireland a bourgeois hegemony operates within advertising, arts, cinema, education and television, with the direct compliance of the petit-bourgoisie If cinema/television has contributed to an em(petit)bourgeoisement, it has done so because the same message is directed at each member of the national audience contributing to an ideological consensus and a convergence of consumer patterns, rather than an actual shift in class situation of working class people

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The absence of positive representations of working class people means that that bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie are unequally valorised In addition to a bourgeois/ petit bourgeois hegemony within the broadcast, cultural and media sectors in Ireland, working class people are faced with questions of access and training in the audio-visual sector These problems are compounded by the control over the system of distribution that favours what I have described as 'top ten culture' 'Culture' is central to class/identity struggle and not something that can be affixed as an addendum It carries the meanings and ideologies that form the cement of society Working class audiences start from a different point of departure confirming the class nature of culture, leisure, media and play in a capitalist society However, working class Dubliners derive countless hours of amusement, entertainment, identification, information, laughter, pleasure and relaxation from cinema, television etc Their engagement is both complex and diverse Whether visiting a music hall, the cinema or engaging with any of the home-based information and media technologies working class Dubliners 'arrive' at the encounter with their class and other identities already formed Therefore exaggerated claims on the influencing potential of audio-visual media are tempered by the realities of the day to day lives of working class people No amount of audience research can negate the inequality at the heart of the Dublin (and indeed the Irish) working class experience

Levels of audience engagement vary from casual attention associated with 'distraction' to an active process of readings that can constitute an individual act of refusal informed by the viewer's own discourses, knowledge of life and repertoires Because the working class relationship to the media is largely in the sphere of consumption due to their virtual exclusion from the production process, it can be safely said that the media ensemble fuses with working class consciousness and so is a key factor in the formation of working class cultural identity

(iii) A fundamental reversal of bourgeois hegemony can only come about as part of a collective working class struggle It is my belief that that process is best conducted when it integrates the aesthetic, cultural, socio-economic and the pedagogic in the spirit of totality guided by a FHGM analysis in the context of the Irish 'long revolution,' i e the NDR. Working class men and women require their own analysis, organisations and scouts to become their own emancipators in solidarity with their

counterparts around the world and the Irish petit bourgeoisie They can only benefit from alliances with those working on the environmental, gay, lesbian, and youth fronts I also believe that the task of a re-envisioned 'Bread and Roses' perspective of cultural production must be one which is inclusive of the totality of working class experience and open to wider artistic/cultural forms from both the past and the present Such a perspective of cultural production ought to be infused with a sprit of carnival, fiesta, hope, imagination and transformation Terms such as 'alternative' or 'oppositional' ought to be avoided, because they confirm rather than negate the actualities of working class exclusion Re/constituting the working class story involves recovering working class cultural heritage and telling those stories in all the available mediums These include cinema, radio, television, local newsletters, and writers groups That process involves re-configuring working class socio-economic and spatial sets of relationships into an organic whole Divided, marginalised and silenced, the working class remains weak United and communicatively active they can become citizens in the full sense of the term Working class people can become key players in working towards a post-capitalist, post-imperialist, post-patriarchal society in which they can fulfil their human potential

(iv) The research findings are embedded throughout the thesis and embodied in the words of those who participated in the research project These are voices which are seldom heard in the 'public sphere' and in the case of this thesis are foregrounded in a conscious act of validation Any attempt to reduce the diversity of those utterances does both a disservice to the participants and validates exclusivist modes of research The participant's words were mediated by a selective research process, which strove to retain the authenticity and spirit of the original interviews and encounters

Highlighting the co-existence of media consumption and the worlds of work, community and non-media forms of leisure helped to avoid an overemphasis on either the 'ideological' or the 'economic' When guided by the concept of totality a further safeguard was introduced In his understanding of both the 'ideological' and the 'economic' Stephen Hill, paraphrasing Karl Marx, states that *"the stability of capitalism rests primarily on the dull compulsion of the economic relations of everyday life"* (Hill, 1990 3) Hill's statement does not preclude the 'ideological', but correctly privileges the material conditions of everyday life in the perpetuation of

capitalism. For those engaged in boring and humdrum work, leisure time can amount to 'escape' or 'distraction' rather than enrichment Without the artistic/cultural choices available to other social class, entertainment offered by cinema and domestic media/information technologies is the cheapest source of entertainment and information for working class people

Investigating cultural consumption/production across two time frames revealed that that the space for critical distance has receded In that regard the shift from mucic hall/cinema to television has been crucial In assessing levels of critical engagement by the viewer, the question of memory must be included in the equation 'Escapism' was seen to be a specific rather than a general characteristic of the working class relationship to cinema It was largely an escape <u>from</u> the exploitative and oppressive aspects of working class experience, rather than an escape <u>to</u> a richer life of the imagination and spirit It is perhaps noteworthy that the notion of 'escapism' was almost entirely associated with cinema, confirming the lack of distance between individuals and their attention and engagement with domestic media Domestic entertainment and information technologies are no longer an event and are virtually impossible to excise from the fabric of every day life As has been expressed by some participants it is a form of cultural and leisure activity that is easily forgotten

If the process of living gives shape to cultural identities, then the consumption of electronic media is also a component part of identity formation There is a truth in the notion that 'we are what we consume' Since the completion of phase one of my research, interest in questions of working class cultural identity has receded with the realisation of the politico-cultural exclusion of working class people in Irish broadcasting Discovering the nature of working class cultural identity is now secondary to the practicalities of naming and reversing the processes that exclude a major section of the population from full participation in the cultural life of the society I believe that the thesis contains a thorough exploration of that theme

By choosing two time frames I could investigate long-term trends within Dublin working class culture I found that when media consumption was read against the lived culture of working class Dubliners misleading or false representations of a working class way of life tended to be rejected But in making that assertion it has to

be acknowledged that the collective bonds that constitute the Dublin working class have been weakened That has occurred in terms of the spatial reconfigurations pertaining to work, housing and leisure, as well as the changing spatial relationship to forms of cultural consumption and production

While a consensus existed in terms of English representation, a conflict of opinion was expressed on television representations of Dublin working class culture This indicated the troublesome nature of class and cultural identity for the participants in phase one of my research, which centred on television/video viewing De-reification of more global socio-economic processes was more difficult to achieve on the basis of day to day life This is largely due to working class exclusion in terms of economic life, education, housing etc , combined with their lack of direct engagement with forms of cultural/media production

The foregoing point is important given that working class viewers measure aspects of media representations against their own lived experiences A weakening of the basis of that experience can only result in a weakening of the capacity to critically interpret Another safeguard, a cordon sanitaire so to speak, against uncritical acceptance of media messages, is the process of information overload and forgetting That points to television's voracious consumption of time with its resulting pacifying and demobilising potential

In the closing years of the 20th century, Irish broadcasting organisations have a choice to make They can continue to collude in the marginalisation of the working class in both Dublin and other locales or they can put in place policies that challenge the hegemony that cements Irish society and ensures the continuing subordination of the working class It is my belief that those choices will be decided/acted upon by working class people telling their own stories in whatever media they choose As in the past, some will be narratives of everyday life, love and solidarity Others will be narratives of revolutionary hope and transformation

APPENDIX A

Extract from 'Preface to
A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy'

"The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies, can be summarised as follows In the social production of their existence, men enter into definite, necessary relations, which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production corresponding to a determinate stage of development of their material forces of production The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process in general It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, but on the contrary it is their social being that determines their consciousness At certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or - what is merely a legal expression for the same thing- with the property relations within the framework of which they have hitherto operated From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetter At that point an era of social revolution begins With the change in the economic foundation the whole immense superstructure is more slowly or more rapidly transformed In considering such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic, in short, ideological, forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out"

From Karl Marx <u>Preface and Introduction to A Critique of Political Economy</u>
Foreign Languages Press Beijing 1976

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Appendix B.

Extract from C.S.Andrews's Dublin Made Me

"At the bottom of the heap were the have-nots of the city, consisting of labourers,
Dockers, coal heavers, shop attendants, messenger boys and domestic servants Even
those who had regular work were seldom far above the poverty line and very many were
below it There was no security of employment and great number of them had no work at
all They sent their children to the National Schools for as short a time as possible and a
great many emerged from these schools illiterate and remained so Their housing
conditions were as bad as the worst in Western Europe They had scarcely any
amusements outside the pubs or an occasional soccer match at Dalymount Park or
Shelbourne Park In summer they walked to the strands at Dollymount, the Shelly Banks,
Sandymount and Merrion to bathe and sometimes went to Howth by tram or train on
Sundays Sometimes they went to the Phoenix Park to hear the band playing in the
'Hollow' they could not afford the price of entrance to the zoo They supplied the rank
and file of the Dublin Fusiliers, known in the British Army as 'the Dubs,' and kept the
Artane Industrial School supplied with pupils They had no interest in and took no part in
politics Their main concern was to provide food and lodging for their children, they
frequently failed to do either Among them trachoma and rickets were endemic They
were religious on Sundays, and no matter how small their possessions they was always a
statue of the Blessed Virgin, the Sacred Heart and perhaps the Infant of Prague on the
mantelpiece They accepted their misery as the will of God and in the certainty that their
fortitude would be rewarded in the next life They had abandoned hope in the here and
now until Larkin, the great Labour leader and agitator, emerged to proclaim the dignity
of the working man This was the working class and there were among them subjects of
destitution terminating in the 'lumpen proletariat' whose sign manual was rags"

The Mercier Press Dublin and Cork 1979 P12-13

Appendix C.

Extract from David Harvey's

The Conditions of Postmodernity

In <u>The Conditions of Postmodernity</u> (1989) David Harvey argues that it takes *"a properly dynamic conception of both theory and historical materialism"* to comprehend the transition from Old to New Left as well as shifts in terms of political economy, state functions, cultural practices, and social relations vis a vis time-space dimensions which have occurred across several continents since the late 1970s He then goes on to single out what for him have been the four *"areas of greatest development"* in relation to both *"theory and historical materialism"* (Harvey, 1989 355)

1 *The treatment of difference and 'otherness' not as something to be added on to more fundamental Marxist categories (like class and productive forces), but as something that should be omni-present from the very beginning in any attempt to grasp the dialectics of social change The importance of recuperating such aspects of social organisation as race, gender, religion, within the overall frame of historical materialist inquiry (with its emphasis upon the power of money and capital circulation) and class politics (with its emphasis upon the unity of emancipatory struggle) cannot be overestimated*

2 *A recognition that the production of images and discourses is an important facet of activity that has to be analysed as part and parcel of the reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order Aesthetic and cultural practices matter, and the conditions of their production deserve the closest attention*

3 *A recognition that the dimensions of space and time matter, and that there are real geographies of social action, real as well as metaphorical territories and space of*

power that become vital as organising forces in the geopolitics of capitalism, at the same time as they are the sites of innumerable differences and otherness that have to be understood both in their own right and within the overall logic of capitalist development Historical materialism is finally beginning to take its geography seriously

4. Historical-geographical materialism is an open-ended and dialectical mode of inquiry rather than a closed and fixed body of understandings Meta-theory is not a statement of total truth but an attempt to come to terms with the historical and geographical truths that characterise capitalism both in general as well as in its present phase

From David Harvey's <u>The Conditions of Postmodernity</u>
Basil Blackwell Oxford, England Massachusetts, USA 1989

Appendix D.

An Interview Schedule on Cinema Going.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF CINEMA GOING

What age were you when you started going to the cinema?

When was that?

What are your memories of the 'rushes'?

Who did you go with?

Which cinemas did you visit?

Which were your favourite types of films?

Which were your favourite actors?

Was it different for boys and girls?

ADULT MEMORIES

As an adult how often did you go to the pictures during the 19-s?

Once[ ] twice [ ] or more times a week [ ]?

Which were the most popular nights?

Did you go to the matinees?

Who did you go with?

Which cinemas did you visit?

Which were your favourite types of films?

Which were your favourite actors?

Which your favourite films British [ ] or American [ ] ?

What newsreel stories stand out?

How did you choose the films you went to?

Did you ever buy film magazines or posters of film stars?

What memories do you have of the buildings, the staff etc ?

Where did you tend to sit within the cinema?

How aware of censorship were you?

What was your attitude to X-rated pictures?

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Do you have particular memories of the war years and how it effected film going?

Did you buy something to eat/drink before, during or after going to the pictures?

Did you dress up when you were going to the pictures?

What other outstanding memories do you have of going to the cinema as an adult?

What do remember about cine-variety?

Do you remember any social distinction in going to the pictures?

WORKING IN THE CINEMA

When did you start working in the cinema?

What age were you when you started?

What were your work details?

What kind of training did you get?

How important was union membership?

What kind of social activities were organised by/for film workers?

When did you retire?

Can you remember particular audience reactions to films?

Did you get to know members of the audience?

Did people have favourite seating arrangements?

Would you have problems with members of the audience?

Would you like to have made a film?

Appendix E.

Towards a Contemporary Analysis of the
Irish National Democratic Revolution.

In this appendix the role of social-democratic, communist, socialist and republican organisations will be investigated in terms of an NDR analysis. Virtually all political parties have sought the electoral support or the allegiance of the Irish working class since its coming into being as a social class. While Fianna Fail has traditionally received the highest numbers of votes from the Dublin working class, other bourgeois parties have also sought the votes of the (Dublin) working class electorate. In the early 1980s Garret Fitzgerald told a Fine Gael trade union conference that his party sought to become the *"acknowledged party of the working man and woman"* (cited in Bew et al, 1989:119). However, for the purposes of this research the focus is on those parties of the 'left' which have traditionally sought to become the representative voice of working class men and women. I confine my observations to those organisations because within them the spirit of resistance to capitalism/ imperialism has shone the brightest. However, in the late 1990s the communist/socialist detachment of the 'left' is in a weak ideological and organisational position. Confronted with the demise of 'existing socialism' and the global sway of capital it is truly a time in which the old ways have died and a new revolutionary direction is still to be imagined.

While the concept of NDR was explained within the body of the thesis, I will now give a brief synopsis of the concept before continuing. First of all, I contend that what is commonly called the 'national question' in Ireland is essentially a 'democratic question' with both class and gender characteristics. That analysis can be supported by a brief examination of the class/gender forces that converged most clearly at the historical conjunctions of 1798 and 1916. If 1798 was significant due to the struggle between the emergent Irish industrial bourgeoisie and an alliance of feudal landlordism and British colonialism, then the 1916 period witnessed a new tripartite class alliance (bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie and working class) in opposition to British imperialism and its native allies. The story of contemporary Irish history is primarily a struggle between those who have fought for the extension of democracy and those who have sought to suppress it. While that struggle has always had a class, national and international dimension, I propose

that it also has a gender dimension In the 1978 period that aspect was articulated by women like Mary Ann Mc Cracken, and in the 1916 period it was given expression in terms of demands for suffrage and related democratic rights for women While the working class had its finest leader in the person of James ('Jemmy') Hope during the 1798 period, by 1916 it had entered the stage of history and was represented by its own autonomous and independent organisations However, having fought for the nation, the Irish working class experienced marginalisation within the new southern state by a new hegemony comprising the bourgeoisie, the petit-bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church

The widespread repression which followed the 1798 Rebellion and the civil war and partition in the aftermath of the 1916 Rebellion ensured that the struggle for democracy in all its forms was thwarted In the Ireland of the late 20th century the working class, various socio-cultural and ethnic minorities are still denied the fruits that the bourgeoisie and sections of the petit-bourgeoisie enjoy Ending that scenario has been the proclaimed objective of the following political organisations

The Labour Party (LP) started life in 1912 as a trade union sponsored party and in 1914 was named as the Irish Trade Union and Labour Party (Mitchell, 1974 40) It publicly welcomed the Russian Revolution and at a special congress agreed a Declaration of Rights which included the objective *"To win for the workers of Ireland, collectively, the ownership and control of the whole produce of their labour"* [1] That fundamentally communist demand remains a guiding principle to those committed to the project of `new communism' [2] However, as for the Labour Party, its shift from socialist to social democratic politics was responsible for directing the trade union movement towards an acceptance of virtually exclusive social democratic methods of organisation that have resulted in a division between the 'industrial' and the 'political' organisation of the working class By its acceptance of bourgeois parliamentary politics as a means of achieving its objectives, it has effectively locked its electorate into a see-saw arrangement that sees its vote rise and fall, with no prospect of going on the offensive to transform capitalist relations of production as was envisaged by its founder, James Connolly

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[1] From <u>The Irish Labour Movement From the Twenties to Our Own Day</u> by W P Ryan The Talbot Press Ltd Dublin No Publication Date p 259

In other words it has joined the 'big boys' club and accepted their rules In the November 1992 general elections the LP won its highest ever number of seats - 33, including five women, a gain of 18 seats on the previous election But as so frequently happened in the past those gains were temporary, and once again the party failed to build autonomous popular working class organisations which could steadily bring forward the democratic interests of the working class and its allies in parallel with LP parliamentary politics Once 'out of office' parliamentary power returns to exclusively bourgeois hands Having long abandoned founding socialist aims, the party leadership has bound itself by the limitations of social democracy and has had its radical legacy corrupted by frequent coalition arrangements with bourgeois parties such as Fine Gael and Fianna Fail As a social -democratic organisation, the LP along with it fraternal parties abroad, pride themselves on keeping the worst excesses of capitalism at bay In that regard they have had a record of success

While social democracy is a key component of any contemporary labour movement, to have any real and lasting effect in Irish society the party requires a renewed sense of socialist-feminist vision and a frank (re)appraisal of the limitations/possibilities of social democracy among its membership As with all organisations of the 'left' there are in its ranks women and men who continue to seek their political inspiration from an Irish revolutionary tradition Indeed, its present leader, Ruari Quinn, traces a continuity of line from the French Revolution, 1798, Thomas Paine, the Land League, the birth and growth of the trade union movement, some Labour Party leaders up to Dick Spring, as well as the now former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson He does so in a photomontage he designed for the party, which also includes labour and national proclamations/symbols [3] As with all visual and political representations that lineage is open to an alternative and/or a parallel interpretation, not least a NDR one Indeed, such a political analysis and programme might well have won the LP the large working class vote which, since the 1930s has gone to the Fianna Fail party as well as a larger middle class vote Awareness of such legacy ought to act as a break on the leadership's current weaknesses on questions of Irish sovereignty and the push for a federal Europe

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[2] As in Chapter One I use the term 'new communist' to identify a political perspective which refuses to turn its back on the strengths of the communism project and is not blind to its non-democratic and repressive aspects

[3] A reproduction of Ruari Quinn's Labour Party photomontage can be seen in Saothar 20, 1995 p 101

There is, I would argue, within the LP at least the elements of a NDR analysis That analysis is outlined by Councillor (and former T D) Declan Bree from Sligo, who in highlighting the political possibilities in the post-Downing Street Declaration foregrounds James Connolly's politics and the Republican Congress as inspirations for a unity in struggle among socialists, republicans and trade unionists for a *"new, the first real Irish, democratic republic"* (Bree, 1994 24) The type of Ireland Bree envisages is one in which 'Protestant workers' will once again, as they did in 1934 with members of the Republican Congress, commemorate Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown (Bree, 1994) [4]

In any discussion of the Communist Party of Ireland, the (former) Democratic Left, and The Workers Party, the challenge facing them is similar to their international fraternal organisations, i e how to make political progress since 'communism has collapsed' and its method of organisation (the Leninist party) has been discredited by those who reneged on the founding principles of communism/socialism [5] Political organisations/parties which maintained cordial links with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and European 'communist' parties were faced with hard questions when the walls were torn down by thousands of people in those countries no longer willing to tolerate the lack of democracy and the failure to achieve communist/socialist objectives Maintaining uncritical 'fraternal' links in the name of 'proletarian internationalism' after the USSR invasion of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan created contradictions, departures and splits for the Communist Party of Ireland and those parties in the Official Sinn Fein to Democratic Left lineage. For those Irish socialists/communists who remained silent or acquiesced while the working class of Eastern European 'communist' countries were being repressed, the issue is one of confronting that reality, interrogating the theories and replacing the practices that led to that betrayal of principles

Parties and organisations of the 'left' have also had to face the reality that capitalism continues to adapt, expand and restructure in ways that had never been envisaged by them (Harvey, 1989) The shrinking industrial working class and the continuing rise in automation and digitisation must also be taken into account So too Anthony Gidden's contention that capitalism may bury the working class, rather than the other way around as

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[4] That process of 'commemoration' can also be read as a metaphor for a new set of socio-political relationships

[5] The fusion of 'democratic centralism' and the military structure of the 'Official' IRA created a hierarchical organisational structure that was both patriarchal and secretive

envisaged by Karl Marx (Giddens, 1987 275) Then there is the reality of some workers achieving a 'stake' in capitalism while other sections are described as 'going under' into an 'under-class'

But even if what was erroneously described as 'communism' has 'collapsed', many of the reasons that prompted its coming into being remain, e g capitalist exploitation That stark reality is illustrated by the fact that 80% of the world's resources are owned by 20% of the world's population (Kirby, 1997) On an international level unemployment is, according to the International Labour Organisation, currently comparable to the 1930s figures [6]

In its evolution from Official Sinn Fein/IRA (via Sinn Fein-The Workers Party, The Workers Party) to the Democratic Left and then its 1999 merger with the Labour Party, the party has largely adopted the 'modernisation'/'tradition' dualistic analysis as part of their political understanding of Irish society [7] In doing so the party has moved from an anti-imperialist position to one which argued that multi/transnational capital had a progressive role to play, i e that the development of productive forces associated with multi/transnational corporations would create the conditions for the growth of an industrial working class, thereby creating the necessary basis for proletarianisation, which the party considered as a precondition to the development of a socialist society [8]

If the advocates of 'modernisation' believed that it would contribute to the disappearance of (revolutionary) nationalism (or what is erroneously called 'civil war politics'), that was not to be, as events surrounding the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and the start of the 'troubles' in the north illustrated [9] The 1916 commemorations provided the opportunity for a stock taking of the first 50 years of independence For the majority of Irish nationalists the failure to achieve national unity, to end the economic dependency on Britain and restore the Irish language were the main deficits For others the continuing existence of unemployment, poor housing and immigration was also the legacy of 50 years

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[6] Quoted in "The Digital Advantage" by Jim Javis and Michael Stack in Left Curve No 20 1996
Left Curve Publications San Francisco

[7] See Eddie Rooney's 'From Republican Movement to Workers's Party An Ideological Analysis' in Curtin et al (1984) for an analysis of the fundamental aspects of the party's transformation

[8] That analysis is most clearly presented in The Irish Industrial Revolution(1977) by Sinn Fein-The Workers' Party and two of several critiques are by the Ripening of Time collective and James Wickham's The Politics of Dependent Capitalism" in Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie's Ireland Divided Nation, Divided Class (1980)

[9] In 1980 Paul Bew, Peter Gibbon and Henry Paterson wrote that *"urbanisation and industrialisation have relegated the national question to the margin of Irish politics"* (cited in Gibbons,1996 83)

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of neo-colonialism and bourgeois dominance. Fianna Fail, with its skilful exercise of populism, had held the political high ground on the objectives of re-unification and restoration of the language. However, the emergence of northern revolutionary nationalism/republicanism offered an alternative political route to a United Ireland. With the growth of the Provisionals, fissures gradually began to appear in the ideological cement of bourgeois constitutional nationalism.

As the sectarian face of unionism revealed itself to the world, support for the granting of a range of democratic rights to the nationalist minority won widespread support throughout Ireland and internationally. But finding common agreement on ways to proceed with a progamme of democratic rights within a divided society with imperialist linkages proved more difficult to develop. For some communists/socialists the way forward was to build unity around a programme of democratic demands, which was effectively a political strategy of reforming the six county state. However, advances made in that direction were dashed by unionism's most reactionary articulation i.e. Paisleyism. That bigoted response confirmed for some the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the British/unionist axis and its apparent incapacity to reform itself.

So rather than appeasing British/unionist power, others believed that the question of democratic rights and self-determination had to be openly declared and actively pursued in the interest of nationalist and non-bigoted unionists and loyalists alike. That political approach was most clearly articulated by Jack Bennett, a member of the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI), who in opposing the dominant party thinking, paraphrased its political position in the following terms:

> *"The workers are divided by the politics of partition. Therefore to unite them don't mention the subject that divides them, lest you divide them"* (cited in Milotte, 1984:231).

But communists/socialists failed to develop a popular programme of action, which declared the interrelationship between the national, class and gender questions in a way that would unite the vast majority of the Irish people. They refused to take seriously the sexual division of labour and the related oppression of women. As partition had divided the nation and the working class, the 'Irish left' itself divided on the 'national question' and its failure on the woman question. Meanwhile the northern and the southern bourgeoisie continued to make Ireland safe for national/transnational capital. A divided

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working class made that task all the easier. Bourgeois hegemony was assisted by strata of the petty bourgeoisie and social democratic parties who were willing to share parliamentary power with bourgeois parties, without ever advocating a political programme that included the transformation of 'capitalist relations of production'.

With the absence of a clear socialist/Left Republican leadership on the 'national question,' the Provisional Republican Movement stepped in with a policy of armed actions directed against the British military 'presence', the paramilitary aspects of the six county state and selected 'economic targets'. That struggle, which also took the lives of many civilians, was to last up until the ceasefire of 1997. The Provisional Republican Movement has also sought to win the support of, and organise within, the Irish working class. But rather than seeking its support among workers in the most 'advanced' sections of the Irish economy, as those in the Official Sinn Fein/IRA to Democratic Left political lineage sought to do, the Provisional Republican Movement built its most significant base in a number of Northern and Southern working class ghettos and rural border communities. In doing so it has forged no significant links with either working class loyalism nor any other section of northern or southern Protestants as a start towards building a unity between Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter as enshrined in the Republican tradition which dates back to the United Irishmen. While frequently proclaiming its socialist credentials, Sinn Fein's political analysis has not linked questions of class and national independence in ways that are capable of mobilising the majority of the Irish working class against imperialism[10] and its Irish allies i.e. northern unionism and the southern bourgeoisie. In other words Irish Republicans have failed to distinguish between the 'national democratic' and socialist-feminist phases of the NDR.

Official Sinn Fein/IRA, later Sinn Fein-The Workers Party, upheld an analysis of 'imperialism' which was largely in keeping with a partly benign (albeit Eurocentric) understanding of the concept developed by Marx and Lenin. However, by the 1950s other Marxists working within that tradition argued that imperialism had been restructured and

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[10] My understanding of imperialism takes as its starting point V.I. Lenin's Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (1975) which is partly derived from J.A. Hobson's Imperialism: A Study (1902). According to Lenin, the "five essential features" of imperialism centred on a particular historical understanding of capital and its export linked into international monopoly and territorial division by the "greatest capitalist powers". In order to avoid censorship Lenin focused almost exclusively on the economic aspects of imperialism, thus having to neglect its wider socio-cultural ramifications. I believe that discussions of 'neo-liberalism' and 'globalisation' ought to be grounded in a clear knowledge of Marxist analyses of imperialism to avoid vague terms such as the 'British presence'.

was now associated with 'subordination or dependency'.[11] Explaining such a scenario in the Irish context, Luke Gibbons, a leading Irish cultural critic, makes the point that the:

> *"Emergence of transnational corporations and a new*
> *international division of labour in the aftermath had less to do*
> *with development than underdevelopment, i.e. with systematically*
> *increasing the dependency of peripheral countries on the*
> *economic power of the metropolitan centre"* (Gibbons, 1996:90).

It was Eoghan Harris, the John the Baptist of social democracy, who openly urged his comrades in The Workers Party (WP) to *"walk away from socialism"*.[12] Then, following a split in the WP, those with whom Harris had been aligned re-grouped and formed the Democratic Left (DL) in 1992. Two years later the party entered the Rainbow Coalition Government which lasted from 1994-1997. Besides working closely with the Christian Democratic Fine Gael party, the DL became increasingly indistinguishable from the other Rainbow partner - the Labour Party, marking its final evolution into a fully-fledged social democratic party. Having accepted bourgeois parliamentary democracy as 'the only game in town', the DL set its task as working within the existing power structure, which in effect means seeking a slice of the cake rather than organising to take over the bakery. However, DL's participation in government cannot be lightly passed over because it effectively handled the briefs it was allocated and was one of few parliamentary parties to speak in the interests of women. In the process of government it has accumulated valuable knowledge. But in becoming an exclusively parliamentary party it has weakened its organisational structure and lost many of its former working class political cadres. It also renounced the use of political violence, which signaled its severance from the Official IRA.[13]

If the Democratic Left's history grew out of a lineage of splits, the organisation now known as the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) has also had various reincarnations. Among those who belong to that tradition are most outstanding fighters against capitalist exploitation and fascism in its Irish or Spanish manifestations. Since the 1910s there has

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[11] For a discussion on this debate consult "Modernism and Imperialism" by Frederic Jameson in the Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature series of Field Day pamphlets, No 14, 1988.

[12] Eoghan Harris's advice appeared in his pamphlet The Necessity of Social Democracy (1989). In 1991 he returned to the theme in a Sunday Independent article where he wrote of socialism being *"as dead as a dodo"* and that no amount of democracy would bring it back to life. He also wrote how *"the workers...admire the skills of an O'Reilly or a Smurfit or a Ryan and wished we had more entrepreneurs with that energy"* (1/9/1991).

[13] In 1998 the Democratic Left negotiated a political agreement with the Labour Party and formed a new newly constituted Labour Party.

been a small (sometimes tiny) communist 'presence' in Ireland and in its various articulations it has adopted a range of political analyses on the class and national questions which have often stemmed from its close adherence to the policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight its relationship with the CPSU seemed at times overly dependent The CPI, not unlike their onetime comrades in the Official Sinn Fein/Sinn Fein the Workers Party, also placed great hopes in what they called the 'state sector' Such a policy promoted the illusion that an Irish or British state or any section of it was somehow neutral in the contradictions among social classes In terms of working class organisation, the CPI was frequently economistic in its practice e g in the way it sought to have its political cadre elected to leading positions within the trade union movement north and south of the border This it did to the detriment of developing its political leadership in both class and national struggles and enunciating the interconnectedness of both struggles in a way that was consistently revolutionary It was primarily due to its economism[14] that the northern section of the Irish communist movement, the Communist Party of Northern Ireland (CPNI), directed its attentions to the section of the working class with the largest industrial proletariat, i e the 'Protestant working class' Such a policy had serious political pitfalls, least of them being the mistaken belief that somehow engineering, shipbuilding workers etc in the six counties were more likely to develop a socialist class consciousness Such thinking brings the issue of 'consciousness' and its source back into the frame and raises the question whether an enlightened socialist proletarian consciousness could develop in isolation from a wider ideological struggle against reactionary loyalism/unionism and British imperialism Furthermore, did the CPNI's political work among 'Protestant workers' mean that they played down the 'national question' in the hope of achieving a working class unity around primarily economic issues On this general policy the party had its critics within its own ranks This was alluded to earlier with reference to Jack Bennett's political analysis [15] Having left the CPNI, Bennett wrote that

> *"What is necessary now is to push ahead vigorously towards the*
> *goal of the ultimate democratic objective - that of sovereignty*
> *and self-determination Then there would be no more democratic*

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[14] According to Charles Bettleheim 'economism' *"ascribes the major role in the building of socialism not the initiative of the working people but to the accumulation of new means of production and technical knowledge"* therefore for Bettleheim 'economism is *"bourgeois ideology within Marxism"* (Bettleheim,1977 19 35)

[15] Jack Bennett had been former member of the Northern Ireland Communist Party and at the time of writing was active in both the Belfast Wolfe Tone Society and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, two organisations of which he had been a founder member

> *demands to frighten the Protestants with. They would be released*
> *from their perpetual misery and imaginary fears, and would be*
> *enabled at last to participate in a free Irish democracy"*
> (Bennett, 1972:18).

Bennett's analysis rejected both the 'two-nationist' stance which was most cogently advocated at the time by Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien, then a member of the.[16] Bennett also rejected the 'two-communities' analysis, which did not include 'British power' in the equation. However, Bennett's non-sectarian anti-imperialist analysis was not adopted by the NICP in the late 1960s. Neither was it adopted when NICP and the southern Irish Workers League reunited in the Communist Party of Ireland of Ireland in 1970. What the CPI proposed was the building of two 'peoples' alliances' north and south which would first act as an opposition, then as an alternative to the northern and southern bourgeois government parties. In the eventuality of two governments sharing *"similar democratic progammes"*, a government for the whole of Ireland could be considered in *"a fraternal and peaceful manner"*. [17] So in effect the CPI advocated a reformist, rather than a revolutionary programme which put the resolution of the 'national question' on the long finger. As a result no clear socialist strategy on the 'national democratic' phase of the NDR was forthcoming from the ranks of Irish communists and their allied organisations. What in effect did emerge was a programme for reform of the six county state (the infamous 'two-stage theory') which failed to effectively mobilise the vast majority of the Irish people against British imperialism and reactionary Unionism. So with a revisionism in the tradition of Eduard Bernstien percolating the ranks of Irish communism, the belief in a peaceful resolution of national question and a gradualist policy of social reform won out.

Meanwhile the Provisional Republican Movement took the fight to the 'enemy' in the belief that national unity (and working class unity in the opinion of some members) was impossible without the defeat of the British imperialist/Unionist axis. On that political basis they maintained a 25-year-long 'armed struggle' which has seen it survive every means of repression directed at it by the British state. As a military-politico movement it articulated the alienation of the 'nationalist minority' and its aspiration for equality, justice and a united Ireland. Sinn Fein's greatest political weakness has been its failure to

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[16] Conor Cruise O'Brien was not alone in articulating this position. The British and Irish Communist Organisation (B.I.C.O) and the Democratic Socialist Party have also been enthusiastic proponents.

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unite the majority of the Irish people in the struggle for a united, democratic non-sectarian Ireland in the spirit of Wolfe Tone, the father of Irish Republicanism

While mainly driven by an imperative for a bourgeois settlement, the Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 is a welcome step With most Republican and Loyalist guns silenced, considerations on the nature of the 'national democratic' phase of the NDR can be pursued in a more favourable political climate The acceptance of the agreement by the electorates north and south has created the possibility of shifting the logjam of Nationalist exclusion and Unionist misrule, for which successive British governments were largely responsible The participation of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition has meant that issues specific to women are now on the political agenda, having previously been marginalised in what has been to date a deeply patriarchal society The signing of the Agreement by working class loyalists is also important because they offer the possibility of an alternative to bourgeois unionism [18] For the first time this century the majority of the Irish people on either side of the border have united around a common position that contains the seeds of mutual recognition and acceptance of socio-cultural diversity

A limited, but welcome step

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[17] From A Democratic Solution (Programme of the CPI) Adopted at the 15th National Congress 1971

[18] Perhaps one of the best documented indicators of this change of thinking or reconsideration within loyalism is the Beyond the Fife and Drum and Ulster's Protestant Working Class pamphlets They are the eleventh and ninth of a series of Island Pamphlets produced by Island Publication which address questions of cultural and political interest to both loyalism and unionism, as well as being of great value to those who are interested in exploring new political possibilities in the period following armed hostilities

Appendix F.

Family Profiles.

(i)   The Burkes father, mother and three children The father is unemployed, the mother works at home and has a part-time job One teenage boy is still at school and two of the children have completed their education and no longer live at home The family home is rented from Dublin Corporation

(ii)   The Cransons father, mother, the mother's father and two daughters The father is employed, the mother works at home and the eldest daughter lives elsewhere with a child The family home is privately owned

(iii) The Dowlers mother and four children, three of whom are school going children, the fourth is still at home The mother also works part-time outside the home and the family is living in private housing

(iv) The McIlroys father, mother and four adult children The father is retired A son and daughter live at home, while another son and daughter have families of their own The family home was purchased from Dublin Corporation

(v)   The Murphys father, mother and five children under the age of 14 The father is employed and the mother works full time in the home

(vi)   The O'Neills father, mother and three children The father is unemployed, the mother works in and outside the home and all the children are still living at home, two of whom are working, while one is still at school The family home is rented from Dublin Corporation

(vii) The Sheridans mother and three school going children. The family home is rented from Dublin Corporation

(viii) The Smyths father, mother and three children The father is employed and the mother works in the home The eldest boy is working while the two younger girls are still in school and college The family home is privately owned

(ix)   The Teelings father, mother and three boys The father is a supervisor, the mother works full time in the home The eldest boy is employed in office work and two other boys are still at school The family home is privately owned

(x) The Whelans. father, mother and seven children. The father is on sick leave from a local factory where he is employed as a shift worker The mother works at home as well as part time outside the home Five of the children live at home while, one with a child of

her own and two others live elsewhere with families of their own The family home is purchased from Dublin Corporation

In highlighting the common and diverging factors within and across the ten families the following points emerge as of March 1991

- All the parents of the ten families were born in Dublin, in areas other than that of Coolock In the case of their children, some were born when their parents resided at previous addresses, while others were born after their parents moved to Coolock Prior to living in Coolock previous addresses would include Artane, Ballybough, Ballymun, Church Street, Crumlin, Finglas, Fairview, North Wall, Santry and Sean Mc Dermott Street,

- While all the families chosen would have a working class background, social mobility within the ten families is evident Examples of this mobility is the employment status of some of the fathers and the educational achievements of some of the children A daughter of one of the parents achieved an Honours Leaving Certificate in 1991 and was subsequently allocated a university place in August of the same year, while another is involved in a post Leaving Computer course While all but one of the parents left school after their Primary Certificates, some of their children have continued to complete Intermediate/Group and Leaving Certificates The one exception was a parent who continued her education to the Intermediate Certificate stage and more recently as part of a local Adult Education project took several Leaving Certificate subjects,

- The occupations of adult family members, both employed and unemployed, would have included general and supervisory positions in catering, cleaning, confectionery, distributive, electrical, engineering, motor, pharmaceutical, plumbing, printing, publican, textile and timber industries or trades Other sources of waged and unwaged employment included work in banking, credit control, the home, insurance, youth work and on a Social Employment Scheme,

- As to levels of employment in the two parent families, four of the fathers were employed outside the home, one was on sick leave during 1991, one retired and two were unemployed In those eight families four of the mothers worked full time in the home, while four others in addition to working in the home had part time jobs By October 1991 that number had increased to five In the case of the women parenting alone, one was a full time house wife, while the other had a part time job as well,

- In terms of housing, four of the families live in the privately built estates of Riverside, Beechlawn and Newbury, four live in purchased corporation houses in Belcamp, Bunratty Road, Kilmore West and Moatview Two families live in rented corporation houses in Belcamp and Moatview, corporation estates built in the period 1979 to 1982,

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- The internal house plans and number of down stairs rooms differed in several respects from house to house All privately owned homes had a second living room and one Dublin Corporation built house had an extension added on to it While some kitchens had seating arrangements several did not, so meals were either eaten in a separate dining area or in the `living room'  In some cases a television was located in both `living rooms' and in others instead of a television, a radio and music system and the second television was upstairs in one of the bedrooms Therefore the question of space was a significant factor in determining how family members interacted with the process of watching television,

- Means of transport varied among the ten families Four of the families had cars, one of which was owned by the son One son owned a motor bike while bicycles were owned by several of the children Other than that the 17A, 27, 27A, 27B, 42,42C,43, and 101 buses were the main modes of public transport which serve the area,

- In response to the question on party political affiliation in the questionnaire, only one person indicated an affiliation, in that case to Fianna Fail In conversation both of the women parenting alone said that they normally didn't vote, but made an exception in the Presidential elections of 1991 by voting for Mary Robinson,

- Seven of the families had telephones, while three did not,

- Eight of the families owned video recorders, of the remaining two, one had been stolen while the other had been given to another family member due to lack of use,

- Four of the families had dogs,

- None of the families bought the RTE Guide, except on occasions such as Christmas However, on the week in which the families were asked to keep a diary, two of the families had purchased copies of the RTE Guide The fact that in the intervening period between the interviews and the keeping of the week long diary in October the RTE Guide was extended to cover all channels may well account for this change

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