Bridging Division

Derry/Londonderry and Mostar: the literatures of partition, unification and reconciliation

Great Hall, Magee Campus, University of Ulster

Derry/Londonderry
27-29 September 2013
Derry/Londonderry and Mostar effectively portray divided and (re)united communities, providing a microcosm of national, ethnic, political, military, religious, ideological and cultural conflicts in their respective regions.

Located in composite states and divided societies, the inhabitants of these cities have tried to preserve their disparate, threatened identities and have defined and re-defined them. In the 20th century and, especially since the emergence of postcolonial theory as an academic discipline, cultural and literature studies have dealt with ‘in-between’-identities generated after the downfall of various European empires. Whereas there has been a developed and widespread theoretical spectrum of postcolonial approaches to Ireland and Northern Ireland and a veritable feast of literature on the partition of Ireland and the Irish ‘Troubles’, scholars have been reticent in deploying a postcolonial approach for the description of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

Derry/Londonderry and Mostar are divided by rivers and defined by iconic bridges and city walls. These provide fluvial and physical barriers which have tradionally supported national, ethnic, religious and cultural division. The river Neretva divides Mostar on an east- (Muslim)west (Croatian, Catholic) axis, with a Serbian Orthodox minority. Mostar’s Stari Most, built during the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1566), survives as one of the glories of a golden age of Ottoman architecture and as a tangible link between east and west, Islam and Christianity. Destroyed by the Croatian military (1993) and rebuilt and reopened by UNESCO (2004) it is, with Derry’s Peace Bridge (2011) a powerful symbol of the reunion of cities in conflict.

The river Foyle divides Derry/Londonderry into the predominantly Catholic Cityside and Protestant Waterside. Differences in the city’s name – Doire Calgach/Doire Colmcille, Derry and Londonderry (as renamed under royal warrant in 1613) – make profound political and cultural statements. That the Civil Rights Movement effectively emerged from Derry in 1968, predestinates the city as a medium of significant spatial semantics. As well as providing the setting for some of the worst violence of ‘The Troubles’, it has become a key focus of cross-community peace-building and reconciliation after the Good Friday Agreement.

This three day, international conference, in association with Derry City Council, The Holywell Trust, The Honourable, The Irish Society, the Arts and Humanities Research Institute, Celtic Studies Research Institute, the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences (University Ulster), the University of the Saarland and Saarland Ministerium für Finanzen und Europa will examine the historical, political and cultural contexts for the conflict/post-conflict literatures of these two diverse, culturally-rich conurbations on the extremities of Europe.
Friday, 27 September

5.00pm: Opening:
Martina Anderson (MEP), Maureen Hetherington (Holywell Trust), Deirdre Heenan (Provost, Magee) Roland Marti (Dean of Arts, University of the Saarland), Pól Ó Dochartaigh (Dean of Arts, Ulster), and Martin Reilly [Mayor of Derry].

6.00pm: Panel 1

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland: comparative context and inter-textuality
The Balkans and Ireland, specifically the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland and have become the watchwords for national, ethnic, confessional and cultural conflicts in 20th century Europe. Although these two ‘trouble-spots’ and their age-old conflicts and protracted peace agreements have huge differences, there are some similarities worthy of note, not least the shared the themes of identity, border, legal process and the role of the courts in conflict and post-conflict, which will be the subject of this panel.

Chair: Roland Marti
Presenters: Gerard Toal (Virginia Tech), Brendan O’Leary (Pennsylvania)

7.30pm: Wine Reception/Finger Buffet

Saturday, 28 September

9.00-10.30am Panel 2

The impact of empires: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Ireland/Northern Ireland
This panel will compare and contrast the impact of the British, Ottoman and Habsburg imperialism on Ireland and the Balkans, showing how political and cultural interpretations have both fanned the conflicts as well as contributing to the process of peace and reconciliation.

Chair: Micheál Ó Siochru (TCD)
Presenters: Éamonn Ó Ciardha (Ulster), Breandán Mac Suibhne (Centenary College), Matthias Bähr (UCD)
10.30-10.45am: Coffee break

10.45am-12.45pm: Panel 3

**Conflict/War and the Peace Processes of the 1990s in Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina**

This panel will compare the roads to Good Friday and Dayton, investigating how both regions' conflicts and protracted peace efforts have been discussed within European and global contexts. These divided/reunited cities bear striking resemblance, both in their social structures and their symbols of division, partition and unification.

**Chair:** Paul Arthur (Ulster)
**Presenters:** Jennifer Todd (UCD), Fedja Burić (Bellarmine), Roland Gjoni (UCD)

12.45-1.45pm: Lunch

1.45-3.45pm: Panel 4

**The architecture, art and infrastructure of division, partition and unification**

This panel will focus on city architecture, art, cartography, showing how conflicts and peace processes have been defined in the visual record of the respective cities and regions.

**Chair:** Elizabeth Crooke (Ulster)
**Presenters:** Giulia Carabelli (ABART Mostar), James Loughlin (Ulster), Rozita Dimova (Humboldt Berlin), Bruno von Lutz (Saarland)

4.00-5.30pm Event: Tower Museum, Tour of the walls

6.00pm Reception, Tower Museum

7.00pm: Conference Dinner, Custom House

**Sunday, 29 September**

9.00-11.00am: Panel 5

**Natural and unnatural boundaries; physical and symbolic borders**

This panel examines divided/reunited cities and regions; Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, the Neman Valley and the Foyle and Neretva basins, showing how their inhabitants utilize civic, geographical and natural sites and locations to define and
delineate national/ethnic, cultural and religious communities/boundaries.

**Chair:** Roel Sterckx (Cambridge)  
**Presenters:** Jaume Castan Pinos (Southern Denmark), Rūta Eidukevičienė (Kaunas/Saarland), Liam Campbell (Foyle Civic Trust)

**11.00-11.15am:** Coffee break

**11.15am-12.45pm:** Panel 6

**Identities in conflict; Bosnian and Northern Irish city literature and politics**

This panel will analyse the narrative implementation of spaces, places, locations and borders in city literatures, highlighting the importance of conflict and reconciliation in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identities.

**Chair:** Éamonn Ó Ciardha (Ulster)  
**Presenters:** Sanjin Kodrić (Sarajevo), Ana Aceska (Humboldt Berlin), Susan McKay (Independent Scholar and Journalist), Eva Michely (Saarland)

**12.45-1.45pm:** Lunch

**1.45-3.15pm:** Panel 7

**“Bridging Division” by literature and culture: Discourses of identity in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina and Northern Ireland**

This panel will deal with post-Good Friday and post-Dayton literature and culture, exploring how both writers and social commentators discuss and problematize national/ethnic/religious labels. Having first catalogued the lunacy and trauma of war and the vicious circles of violence, the anthropologist, film-maker and writer play a key role in the appeal for dialogue, negotiation, reconciliation and tolerance. The media enables societies to explore their identities, as well as initiating dialogue among divided and rival communities.

**Chair:** Joachim Frenk (Saarland)  
**Presenters:** Miranda Jakiša (Humboldt Berlin), Gabriela Vojvoda-Engstler (Saarland), Philip McDermott (Ulster)

**3.15-3.30pm:** Coffee break

**4.00pm:** Free Derry Tour
Bridging Division

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