

# Studies: 1912-1962

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I N February 1911 the last issue of the *New Ireland Review* appeared. A valedictory note recalled seventeen years of successful existence and added that: 'we are content to have held the field until larger and better-equipped forces could occupy it'. The metaphor seems unduly martial for so pacific an age, but it was no less justified than the pride of survival that it expressed. The *New Ireland*, like the *Lyceum* before it, was a phase in the University struggle. Both journals looked back to Newman's *Atlantis*. They were a portion of the Jesuit achievement in the old University College. Now, in 1911, that College had been reconstructed into something that approached Catholic claims. It had passed out of Jesuit control (though fifty years later the new College still seems permeated by the memory of what went before). But there was still work to do.

The nature of that work was defined in a prefatory note to the first issue of *Studies*, in March 1912. The establishment of the new College 'would appear a fitting occasion for an effort to produce a Review which would give publicity to work of a scholarly type, extending over many important branches of study, and appealing to a wider circle of cultured readers than strictly specialist journals could be expected to reach.

It is with this object that some University Professors and Graduates have undertaken to conduct an Irish Quarterly Review, which, under the general name of *Studies* will publish contributions in various departments of Letters, Philosophical subjects and Science.' These fields have been occupied ever since by the larger and better-equipped forces which were foreseen by the *New Ireland*. The work has gone on through two major wars and a civil war; the mere fact of survival and regular appearance has been no small part of the achievement. But that is perhaps not so much the achievement of the better-equipped forces as of their generals; not so much the work of the contributors as of the editors.

It would be vain to attempt to provide a scheme of the subjects which *Studies* has examined in its fifty crowded years. It would be impertinent to attempt even a running commentary. *Studies* is for serendipity, not for synthesis. Nevertheless changing interests and cir-

cumstances are faithfully reflected in its pages. The range of the first number foreshadows what was to come. Its title-page showed:—

- The Theft of the Hounds of Finn* (poem). Anon.  
*The Electrical Theory of Matter*. H. V. Gill.  
*The Legend of the Hermit and the Angel*. G. O'Neill.  
*The Meaning of Evolution*. A. J. Rahilly.  
*The Gallican Church and the National Assembly*. J. M. O'Sullivan.  
*Hedonism*. Joseph Canavan.  
*Tradition in Islam*. Edmund Power.  
*Athenian Imperialism*. J. M. Murphy.  
*Newman's Ideals and Irish Realities*. T. Corcoran.  
*The Development of Supreme Judicature in Ireland*. J. A. Mur-  
naghan.  
*The Future of Private Property*. T. M. Kettle.

The list shows clearly the strength of the ties between the new journal and the old '86'. It is an impressive team and, of course, Bradman is still batting.

Neither then nor for years to come was there any article on contemporary political controversies. There was no lack of material for such an article in those days but Father Corcoran's editorship steered clear of the whirlpools. The only reference that one can trace was a singularly unfortunate prophecy, in a review, that the Home Rule bill of 1912 would provide a final settlement of Irish claims. But a reader of a later generation, which can boast no greater success in that line, must not mock the hopes of his predecessors.

He would do better to note the rapid development of what has long been one of the most successful features of *Studies*, the reviews. In poetry, there was no lack of subject-matter; there is a succession of notices of A.E., of James Stephens and the first poems of Francis Ledwidge. Indeed the editor's net was flung widely enough to cast up some achievements which deserve their own form of immortality. A polite review was given, for example, to the collected poems of a Welsh writer; a collection which, rather improbably, had reached its fourth edition. The tone may be judged by quotation from an ode on the newly-crowned George V.

*Our King, our Model and our Friend*  
*Our Brother, Sympathizer (one rare blend !).*

Not even Eusden could have done better than that; and after all these years, a suspicion lingers that Father Corcoran may have been at some pains to immortalize such loyalty.

If so, it was an unusual departure from an austere policy of non-

intervention in politics. In June 1914 the last issue of his editorship began with articles on *Hellenism and the Aramean People*; *The Constituent Elements of a Rhetorical Argument*; *Stones from Bulgaria*. His personal contributions were usually on educational themes and it is a sad commentary on self-government that much of what he pleaded for has not yet been put into practice. His articles read as if they were written today, showing their age only by some contemporary reference, such as a quotation from Professor Wilson's speech accepting the Democratic candidature for the Presidential Election of 1912.

His successor's advent coincided almost exactly with the outbreak of war. With the advent of Father P. J. Connolly the tone of *Studies* changes almost immediately. It was not that there was a conscious decision to go down into the streets. World events could not be ignored; and they could not be discussed without reference to their implications for Ireland. Everything flowed together. The destruction of Louvain and Rheims recalled memories of an earlier age of Irish self-assertion, the settlements of monks in France and Belgium falling appositely to the issues of the war as they appeared in its earlier stages. Ten years before, *Studies* might not have looked benevolently on the Third Republic, now it carried a succession of notes and articles on the revival of religious feeling and practice in France. The title of one such article, *Catholic Admirals in the French Navy*, may stand as a token of the hopeful and trusting spirit in which Ireland, with Home Rule at last on the Statute Book, would rejoin the nations of the world and fight in the company of a traditional friend on one side and of a traditional enemy (*conflict crowned and drowned with olives of peace*) on the other. This was still Tom Kettle's war.

Here and there, one can note some misgivings. Not all the books that set out the war aims of the Allies received favourable reviews. 'Surely the author does not believe,' asked one reviewer, 'that the Allies are cynical enough to apply the healing doctrine of nationality only to their enemies?' As the war dragged on, suspicions became stronger. The Peace Notes of Pope Benedict XV were fully discussed and defended against British and French attacks. The territorial claims launched against the Austrian Empire received short shrift. 'The author of this book,' one review commented, 'unless we are greatly mistaken, is a journalist. Internal evidence of this fact is not wanting. The treatment of certain vital questions is neither critical nor impartial.' This seems certainly a case in which reading the review removes any obligation to read the book. The journalist was Virginio Gayda; and his claims against the Dual Monarchy are not likely to have been less moderate than his claims against the British twenty years later. In the same strain is a review by John Marcus O'Sullivan who noted that a pamphlet by Dr Benes did not discuss the 'Ulster question

of Bohemia's German fringe'. This, he thought, 'may be a cause of trouble in the future'.

But this is to anticipate. The first part of the war was seen as something in which Ireland had a stake. The Allies were 'our Allies'; the men in the trenches were 'our troops'. It was a phase that ended sharply. The issue of June 1916 included the first of four articles on *Poets of the Insurrection*.<sup>1</sup> It was followed within the year by the first of a distinguished line of obituary articles and perhaps the saddest—on Tom Kettle by Arthur Clery. Thereafter, the progress of the war was closely followed in connection with the emerging principle of self-determination and Wilson's Fourteen Points. But the mood is unmistakably changed. *Studies* did not then or even in 1920–21 concern itself with the course of events. (The one exception was an article on the ethics of hunger-strikes.) It did not enter into controversy. It had the same editor and much the same contributors and certainly the same principles of conduct in 1920 as it had had in 1915. But, to repeat, the mood was altogether changed. The pages of *Studies* are not the most obvious source for an assessment of the contribution of Mr Lloyd George and Sir John Maxwell to Anglo-Irish relations: but their reticence is more eloquent than much special pleading.

It may have been difficult to refrain from comment in 1920 or 1921: to repress cynicism in the months that followed seems to have been almost superhuman. The first year of self-government started for *Studies* on the note of reconstruction which had been taken for granted in happier and more optimistic years. Laurence Kettle contributed an article to the March issue on possible sources of power supply. The June number carried an article by Father Gannon describing a visit to Belfast during the pogrom which reads as horrifyingly as any news out of Algeria today. The author recorded 'a distinct relief as the train bore me southwards. The atmosphere of life in Dublin is not exhilarating just at present; but Belfast—'. Even that modified consolation was soon removed; the September number carried memorial articles on Arthur Griffith and an assessment of the loss inflicted by the destruction of the public records. The contrast between hopes and realities was too much for some contributors. Disenchantment was summarized in an article on *Lessons of Revolution* which A.E. wrote for the March issue of 1923. 'The champions of physical force,' he wrote, 'have, I am sure, without intent, poisoned the soul of Ireland. All that was exquisite and lovable is dying. They have squandered a spirit created by poets, scholars and patriots of a different order, spending the treasure lavishly as militarists in all lands do, thinking little of what they squander save that it gives a transitory gilding to their

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas MacDonagh, Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett and John Francis MacEntee.

propaganda . . . I cannot understand the faith of those who act on the belief that a nation is immortal and can survive any strain . . . There comes a point where recovery is impossible. Something—a skeleton or larva—may survive, but not the nation with confident genius. There will always be herdsmen to look after the bullocks; but the genius of the Gael, if this conflict continues for much longer, will have vanished from its place of birth'. It was only five years since the publication of *The National Being*; it might as well have been five hundred. But these were not the most disillusioned words that might be read in the issues of *Studies* at that time. Later in the same year Arthur Clery reviewed William O'Brien's book on *The Irish Revolution*. Referring to the account of the quarrels between the Nationalist leaders, he wrote: 'It is only the comrade of youth who can become the object of one's deepest hatred. To us of the present generation enmeshed in our own quarrels, it is a gloomy consolation to realize how those of the last hated one another.'

We have learned since then that other peoples can conduct civil wars more savagely and with greater persistence. But it would be impossible to understand the history of any national institution, such as *Studies* is, without a realization of how that generation was affected. The surge of thought and expectation which was so marked in the earlier years of the century was reversed: those who had hoped most were thrown back into apathy or cynicism. National development was brought about in the end, but much more slowly and more doubtfully. Father Connolly had many difficulties in his long editorship: the task that must have been hardest of all to achieve was to keep a journal going that depended on the co-operation of those who had been most immediately involved in the split.

From this point onwards *Studies* became increasingly concerned with the problems thrown up by self-government. They were perhaps approached with less confidence than might have been the case; but they could not be ignored. Ever since the early years of the Free State *Studies* has provided a platform where issues of policy can be discussed without the need to score party points. It is a service which no other journal has attempted; on this score alone it has performed a public service of immeasurable importance. Even in 1923, the reader will find Father Coyne addressing himself to a problem that was to become only too familiar—the future of the railways. In later issues the provision of a new currency was discussed and the report of the Fiscal Inquiry Committee was reviewed by C. H. Oldham with a robust attachment to the virtues of free trade. A little later, *Studies* came still nearer to contemporary politics when George O'Brien discussed the Budget speech. The first sentence has a contemporary ring: 'In criticizing

Mr Blythe's or any other budget, the first thing to be borne in mind is that suggestions relating to decreased expenditure are, strictly speaking, irrelevant.' This writer must not criticize his master but so cold a sentence seems a little unfair to Mr Blythe who presented a budget for about £28 millions and reduced income tax by a shilling to 4s. 0d. in the pound. It may be that people in the 1920's did not know when they were well off. It is more probable that they had more stringent standards than we can hope to maintain.

These were matters of domestic importance. The new world created by Versailles was examined with interest. The new régimes in Poland and the Baltic states were described with modified hope. The system of proportional representation adopted by the Weimar Republic was examined with less justified approval. The issues of the middle and later twenties recall names that have been almost lost from sight under the avalanches of the forties—Primo de Rivera in Spain or Monsignor Seipel in Austria. *Studies* examined Prohibition in the United States and did not approve of it. It did, however, endorse the nomination of Al Smith for the Presidency in 1928 and its contributor prophesized victory. 'Had prosperity continued at its flood tide, there would have been grave doubts of it. But there has been a halt. We have more idle men in our Eastern cities than at any time since before the war. That is a factor in favour of change and will almost surely give the Democrats the victory in the election.' As we know, the Democrats had to wait until there were a lot more men idle in all the cities; but it is well to be reminded that the American dream had begun to fade before the Wall Street crash in 1929.

Economics and politics by no means exhausted the range of *Studies*. Its variety may be gauged from the fact that the article on Al Smith was preceded by one on *John Keogh and Catholic Emancipation* and followed by one on *A Poltergeist in a Huguenot Household*. Father Ronald Knox contributed an article on Boswell. Tim Healy wrote on Irish land tenure and R. A. S. McAllister suggested another possible ending for *Edwin Drood*. The reviews continued to expand, and familiar initials appear—M.T.; W.J.W.; G.O'B.; M.T.H. Mary Hayden may not have fully succeeded in her crusade to explain the precise effect of Poyning's law to a succession of amateur historians, but her reviews enforced rising standards of exactitude. Other reviewers were less courteous. It was remarked of one notable writer that he 'was not at pains to make himself intelligible'. That was only carrying on a tradition of asperity; in a much earlier issue Father George O'Neill had accused Tom Kettle of 'an excessive glitter of mixed metaphors'.

In the 1930's the journal continued to grow in size and scope. In external affairs, the rise of Hitler and later the Spanish war occupied attention. At home, much attention was given to the rights and wrongs

of the means adopted to revive Irish. This was complemented by a succession of articles, largely contributed by Dr Michael Tierney, on the nature and origin of Irish nationalism. A reader today may feel that much of the thought of this period was inward-looking; in reality a great deal of what had been taken for granted before 1921 was being re-assessed and re-defined. Today, public opinion on many matters is unmistakably different from what it was twenty years ago; a great deal of the change comes from the slowly-working influence of articles in *Studies*.

The last decade of Father Connolly's editorship brought new difficulties. There was nothing new about publishing in war-time; but this was a different kind of war. There were no allies, gallant or otherwise; and the obligations of neutrality were rigidly defined by the censorship. Contributions became more general and more theoretical; but publication was triumphantly maintained until Father Connolly ended his editorship with the decade in 1950.<sup>1</sup>

Others, who knew him better and have greater gifts of expression, will recall his personality and assess his immensely valuable contribution to Irish life. The present writer must be content to recall the immense kindness with which young writers were encouraged to contribute—and the stern tenacity with which their contributions were improved. There was a ritual in such matters. A letter would arrive setting out, in that characterful writing, a possible theme for an article. It would be accompanied by a mass of heterogeneous cuttings.<sup>2</sup> The contributor would sit down to the task, pleased by this recognition of his talent, encouraged by the obvious trouble taken by his Editor, and (at least in one case) relieved that delays in delivering previous articles had not ended in a blacklisting. A draft would be dropped in at '35'. If all was well, there would be a post-card to say 'Excellent. First-Class. O.K.' All was well: one could relax. But not always. There might be a telephone call. 'About that article . . .' a tired voice would begin, bearing a suggestion of wonder at how any writer could possibly be so perverse. To argue, one eventually found, was waste of everybody's time. The writer found his article duly printed. It was not necessarily the article he first wrote. It was quite certainly the article that Father Connolly wanted written. He was not only an editor, he was a patron and a friend; and as all three he was superb.

During the present editorship, which incredibly is twelve years

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<sup>1</sup> It is fitting to recall the many great contributions made to *Studies*, particularly in the years 1926-1950, by Father Aubrey Gwynn. In addition to numerous articles and reviews, signed and unsigned, he shouldered a great deal of the drudgery involved in bringing out a quarterly. (Editor's note.)

<sup>2</sup> The writer is prepared to swear that a request for an article on agricultural de-rating was backed by a cutting from *Freeman's Journal*, which had ceased publication twelve years before.

old already, there has been both continuity and change. The interest shown in economic affairs was fully maintained during the 1950's, a decade filled by argument about the balance of payments and policies of capital investment. *Studies* provided the opportunity to discuss these matters less bad-temperedly than they were treated elsewhere. This was necessary work; and it would not have been done if a platform had not been available. However tedious it may have appeared to those who were not committed, some fruits were obtained from seeming aridity. Mr Whitaker's introduction to *Economic Development*, that survey on which so much of present policy is based, ended by quoting from an article contributed by Dr Philbin to the autumn issue of *Studies* in 1957; and he went on to describe his study as 'a contribution, in the spirit advocated by the Bishop of Clonfert, towards the working out of the national good in the economic sphere'. It is to be hoped that economic development will mean less writing about it: but, then, prosperity hath her problems. However, they will at least have the attraction of novelty.

What appears very clearly in the issues of the last twelve years is a reaching out to wider issues and interests, and a continual assessment of what is happening elsewhere. As long ago as September 1952 there was an article on *The Ecumenical Movement*. Earlier still the first of what is now a lengthy series of articles on European unity appeared. Nowadays, when the Common Market threatens to become as much of a bore as the balance of payments once was, it is refreshing to note that these articles are concerned much less with economics than with the spread of the idea of one Europe. Lastly, the reader will not fail to note an increasing attention with literary criticism ranging from James Stephens to *Reflections on Dr Zhivago*. Many-sidedness has been multiplied.

In an ultimate sense, these shifts of interest are in harmony with the traditional function of *Studies*—to inform public opinion, to engage interest, to present issues dispassionately. That function has been fulfilled even in times when it was almost impossible to find unbiassed views: it must be hoped that the task will become easier in the second half-century. And, above all, it is to be hoped that the relations between *Studies* and the professors and graduates of University College will remain as close and as warm-hearted as they have been since the first beginnings.

*In the December 1950 issue of STUDIES, the first number brought out by the present editor, the opening article is a generous appreciation of Father P. J. Connolly from the pen of his close friend and most valued collaborator, Dr Michael Tierney, President of University College, Dublin. Three months later Father Connolly died in St Vincent's Hospital on 7 March 1951. May the Lord reward him for his single-minded devotion to STUDIES.*

(EDITOR'S NOTE)