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## Book Reviews

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An Cumann Tíreolaíochta na hÉireann

## Book Reviews

**Contentious Terrains: Boglands, Ireland, Postcolonial Gothic**, by Derek Gladwin, Cork University Press, 2016, 312 pp., €39.00 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1782052043

Derek Gladwin is in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, and has previously co-edited two collections that have interested geographers. In this journal, Jos Smith (2016) reviewed the collection on Tim Robinson (Gladwin and Cusick, 2016, see also Kearns 2016), and in the *AAG Review of Books* I have responded (Kearns, 2015) to the collection of ecocritical writings on James Joyce (Brazeau and Gladwin, 2014). With his interest in landscape, environment, space and place, and his explicit concern with geographical theory, Gladwin is assiduous in cultivating relations between Geography and Literary Studies. The current book is rooted in the literary notion of the Gothic and in the geographical concept of thirdspace. Literary critics such as Luke Gibbons (2004) have suggested that the presence of those presumed dead among the living proved a useful way to think about the trauma and guilt of colonial crimes, denied but yet shaping lives. In this spirit, Gibbons and others have revisited works by Irish authors such as, from the eighteenth century the anonymous *The Adventures of Miss Sophia Berkley* (cf. Killeen, 2014), and from the nineteenth century Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (cf. Hansen, 2009), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (cf. Valente, 2000) and the ghost stories of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (cf. Gallagher, 2004). Gladwin takes the story further and uses the structure of feeling produced by colonialism to find legacies and echoes in postcolonial Ireland.

The second extension of Irish Gothic studies comes with Gladwin's focus upon landscape. He draws upon geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan but his main debt is to Ed Soja for the discussion of thirdspace. Although Gladwin has terminology of his own that he prefers, his approach essentially relies upon the notion of third space as characterised by a logic of both/and rather than of either/or. This is where the boglands come in. If the Gothic unsettles the reader by staging the return of the repressed, then the boglands themselves do something very similar as a particular region. After all, this is where the bodies of victims are preserved and where the work of cutting peat can uncover them with all their archaeological and forensic information. But bogs are also squidgy, indefinite landscapes at the best of times, given to elements of spontaneous combustion, shape shifting, and people swallowing. In short, if the Gothic is useful for thinking about the suppressed elements of the past, then, the bog is the landscape in which to stage the inquiry. Creative writers can think with the bog as space, and with the Gothic as time.

Gladwin begins by taking Stoker to the bog and suggesting that in Stoker's 1890 novel, *The Snake's Pass*, the contradictory features of the bog allow it to serve almost as a character in the novel. An Anglo-Celt wants to prevent the eviction of a woman he loves by buying the land on which she lives from its current landlord. He has dreams for

the area and plans to drain the bog and turn it over to productive arable. But to treat the land as unimproved is also to present its current inhabitants as somehow unworthy and thus the love object is placed in an impossible position, she can only be redeemed by being erased. Gladwin establishes the active role of the landscape in the story although I think he might have made a bit more about the murderous character of improvement. This is significant not only in general terms given the links between the civilising process and the colonial use of famine (Nally, 2011), but the novel invites slightly more specific reflections. *The Snake's Pass* seems to be set in the part of Mayo that was at the heart of the Land War, which was directed by Michael Davitt who likewise came from this area. In this case, improving the land with draining and with lime suggests other more pointed acts of forgetting. Lime was used by the British to desecrate some bodies after death, as in 1821 when the head constable in County Limerick arranged that Whiteboy rebels killed during their attack upon police 'should be buried in quicklime, [...] instead of allowing the families and friends of the deceased to claim the corpses' (Donnelly, 1983, 132). The same thing happened with the members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood executed in 1867 and known thereafter as the Manchester Martyrs. In order to prevent their bodies being reclaimed to Ireland for burial, the prison authorities let it be known that they had been buried within the prison grounds in quicklime (Jenkins, 2008). In other words, the material that improvers wanted to infuse into the soil was not only the very thing that would stop the earth holding memory, but was used in precisely this way in order to preclude insurgent use of political memory, to disrespect Irish bodies.

Gladwin shows repeatedly that the boglands are a place with which to think against the amnesia and selective recall practised by official Ireland and by global neoliberalism. Writing of nationalists in the 1930s, he shows how Seán Ó Faoláin and Frank O'Connor worried about the masculine belligerence that remembered the War of Independence of 1919-21 as a complicated victory of virtuous republicans over vicious British soldiers. For example, in O'Connor's short story, *Guests*, it is the cold asepsis of the bog that makes it the place for the shameful act of gratuitous murder, that leaves two British soldiers in a clammy Irish grave. O'Connor gives his IRA men names that strongly associated them with the tradition of insurgent republicanism. Yet there is nothing heroic about their cowardly treatment of the guests they take to the bog. Again, Gladwin shows how the landscape features of the bog allow it to address the central questions in the fiction, preserving doubts about the legitimacy of the violence. In this chapter, Gladwin takes the community of Cork republican intellectuals that Terry Eagleton (1998) had earlier so effectively delineated and restores the political significance of the division between O'Connor and Ó Faoláin on one side, and the conservative nationalist, Daniel Corkery on the other. Gladwin shows convincingly that there are aspects of the bog that help in expressing a position that is more ambivalent and unstable about the claims and virtues of nationalism.

That same ambivalence is enjoyed by Seamus Heaney in his bog poems where, as Gladwin argues, Heaney can trouble himself with feelings of attachment yet revulsion with respect to republicanism and its violence. Gladwin talks of the 'slippage' (p. 136) in

Heaney's work where body and landscape swap valences. Gladwin is particularly good on questions of gender in Heaney's bog poems (cf. Coughlan, 1997). Heaney repeatedly writes of the bog as a vagina, receiving its dead bodies as almost a last embrace for the rejected victim. His poems are anxious in the face of the capacity of his male gaze to dwell with erotic interest in the most unlikely of places, as on the nipple of the preserved corpse of an ancient victim of tribal violence. If the bog is a place where things are buried, it becomes also a way to think into the residues buried deep within his own psyche, unsettling his grasp of his own libido and inviting identification with and understanding of a tribal violence that recruits and appals him, both in the past and in the present.

My favourite chapter in Gladwin's provocative and useful book is the one on Marina Carr's 1998 play *By the Bog of Cats* ... where, again, gender is interrogated in relation to landscape. The bogland as a place left behind by the improving gestures of European neoliberalism gives Carr a way to represent a space for a seemingly atavistic version of female empowerment. From the ghosts of the place, from the mythology of its peoples, and from the marginal position of a traveller women, Catwoman pours scorn on the restrictive gender roles of modern society. The central figure, Hester, replicates elements of the tragedy of Medea. Like Medea she has been wronged one time too many (Sihra, 2000). The bog provides a place where the sexism and crass materialism of settled society can be seen clearly, and indeed resisted. The denigration of the traveller woman in the play animates the tragic development in which rather than torture herself with her untenable position, Hester punishes the man who scorned her by destroying his world just as he and settled society have almost completely destroyed hers. The energy of Hester's anger is testimony to the self-respect folded into her identity as a woman of the boglands. The landscape is available as a metaphor with which, as in the other works discussed by Gladwin, one might rethink the fatal obviousness of the quotidian. With its access to buried trauma, the boglands unsettle any and all progressive teleologies.

By culture and history, Ireland enters a conversation about itself in part through talking about regions, the Pale, the West, the boglands. The geographical imaginations of the boglands are rich and disturbing and the postcolonial gothic is, as Gladwin so brilliantly shows, an inventive way to access the power of such myths. Geographers have much to learn from this book and it would be great were it taken as a model by other scholars to produce works that help us to see how other regions and places have proven useful to think with. Contentious terrains invite such speculation.

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**Geoinformatics for Marine and Coastal Management.** Edited by Darius Bartlett and Louis Celliers, Taylor & Francis Group, CRC Press 2016, 414pp. 64 Colour & 63 B/W Illustrations, £89 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-4987-3154-6

*Geoinformatics for Marine and Coastal Management* is co-edited by Dr Darius Bartlett who recently retired after more than 25 years as lecturer and researcher at University College Cork and now continues as a Research Associate concentrating on writing and publishing, and Dr Louis Celliers, who currently combines roles as a Principal Researcher and Head of the Coastal Systems Research Group of the Natural Resources and the Environment Business Unit Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), University of Natal. Together they bring the reader on an interesting and insightful journey that explores the pivotal role that geographical information and its associated technologies play within a wide range of coastal and marine application spheres. While global in focus, there is a strong Irish dimension which is reflective of the many Irish contributors such as those from the Marine Institute, the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), Academia [Dublin City University (DCU) and University College Cork (UCC)], and the Irish Naval Service, to name but a few.

Of interest to coastal/marine learners, practitioners and professionals alike, the breadth of the subject-matter covered serves to remind the reader of the myriad of inter-relationships that exist in the coastal and marine environment. From key technical and scientific aspects, to critical governance and legal/regulatory policy compliance issues, it is the cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary nature of these topics that emerge as the over-riding message. Indeed, it is this diversity of marine stakeholders together with the requirement for 'interoperability' that is emphasised in the book's foreword (by Bruce McCormack) who confirms that interoperability across technologies, data and people must be seen as the strategic goal. Much later in the text, this is revisited when the role of marine coastal ontologies specifically, and technical standards more generally, are highlighted as vital compatibility and interoperability enablers. Here, the importance of agreed marine/coastal ontologies and adopted technical standards is clearly defined as being a critical component in promoting greater utilisation of coastal/marine resources (such as marine renewable energy, fishing industries, etc.) across the wider marine or 'blue' economy.

An illustrative 'snapshot' of current and evolving good practice in coastal/marine geoinformation capture, analysis, management and application spheres, the editors have grouped the content into clusters or themes, the 'boundaries' of which are 'fluid and negotiable', and are explored across sixteen distinct yet interrelated chapters.

Technical aspects of geospatial data capture, analysis and management (such as those described in the survey, mapping and geomorphometric analysis of the high resolution bathymetric data captured by the INFOMAR programme within the Irish marine space) are included. Indeed, the exponential growth in available and accessible remotely sensed data (often from a myriad of sources, at varying scales, resolutions, and therefore quality and appropriateness – fitness for purpose) are also evaluated. The emergence of coastal/

marine geoportals and the role these are playing in improving access to downloadable spatial (marine) datasets and other online information sources (rather than merely map-viewers) are also reviewed. These, together with greater geospatial analysis capabilities and technologies, are facilitating more informed decision-making and management. These issues are expertly presented within this book across a diverse range of applications from onshore and offshore renewable energy site locations, spatially informed fisheries management to the development and adoption of a universal approach to navigational electronic database and charting.

In parallel to these technical issues is the legal 'seascape' which is primarily focused on environmental management compliance together with security and surveillance within clearly delineated marine/coastal jurisdictions. When such a regulatory framework is combined with a growing demand for evidence-led decision-making at all levels of coastal/marine governance globally, a critical need for real time data capture begins to emerge. Contributors here review coastal/marine climate change impacts through illustrative risk assessment and response management scenarios (such as Arctic marine ecosystem-based management systems or those working towards the adoption of Marine Spatial Planning across EU member states) the success of which often is determined by current and potential ICT solutions. Indeed, increased uptake and utilisation of UAVs, sensors, remotely sensed and earth observation data (Voluntary Geographic Information [VGI], crowdsourcing, geotagging, participatory mapping, etc.) is confirmed here, as are developments of multimodal smart sensor interconnectivity, linked authoritative data and Open Source solutions.

With contributions from leading experts both here in Ireland and across the globe (and perhaps the only minor hesitation here is about this balance/ratio of Irish versus global emphasis which may have needed greater introduction or justification at the outset) this text encapsulates an array of applications that range in scale and complexity from local to regional, and from national to global. Accessible in its approach, both in its level of technicality and writing style, each application is practice-evidenced and supported by quality visuals and by extensive referenced material. Chapter by chapter, the authors navigate their reader through many facets of marine/coastal geoinformatics – from technical to procedural, from stakeholders to regulatory/legal frameworks. This book is essential reading for all those wishing to achieve a greater insight into current marine and coastal management issues worldwide.

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