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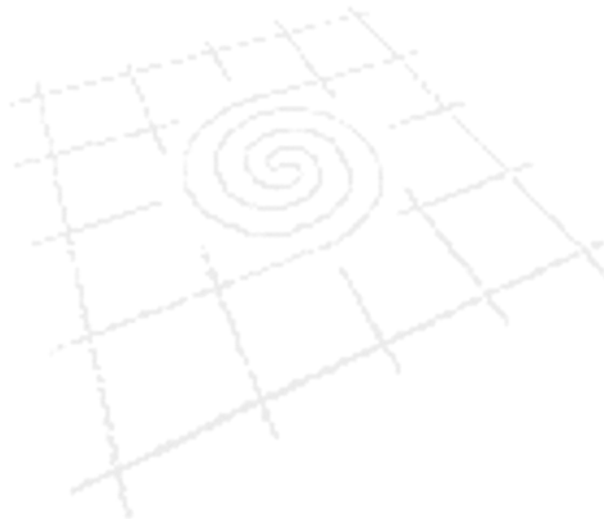

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"Vote Yes for Common Sense Citizenship": Immigration and the Paradoxes at the Heart of Ireland's 'Céad Míle Fáilte'[1]

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[1] 'One hundred thousand welcomes'

Abstract

In this paper we examine the discursive production and employment of, what Irish politicians term, 'commonsense citizenship' as a means of addressing and regulating new immigration to Ireland, and in re-defining Irishness and Irish citizenship (culminating in a national Citizenship referendum in June 2004). We argue that commonsense citizenship is employed in such a way as to fix and essentialise Irishness, thus highlighting the threatening other, and to construct immigrants as suspect, untrustworthy, and deserving of Ireland's 'hospitality' only in limited, prescribed ways or not at all. Through examining six troubling paradoxes we reveal slippages, contradictions and nuances that commonsense citizenship works to deny and erase, but nevertheless work to undermine its essentialism and injustices. In so doing, we argue these paradoxes open ways to rethink Irish citizenship, and how such a notion is produced discursively.

INTRODUCTION

In his book *Global Me* Zachary champions Ireland as an excellent example of a harmonised, cosmopolitan, multicultural country, with immigrants “adding diversity and lifting the Irish economy to new heights” (2000:161). And yet, in a referendum held in June 2004, the Irish electorate voted by a margin of four to one for a change in the definition of Irish citizenship to deal with the perceived problems associated with immigration, particularly those linked to refugees and asylum seekers. Prior to the referendum, any child born on the island of Ireland had an automatic right to Irish citizenship – this right was enshrined in the Irish Constitution. As a consequence of the referendum, the right to citizenship by birth was removed from the Constitution, and Irish citizenship is now primarily defined by blood ties.

The Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell (of the Progressive Democrats party -PDs), described the referendum as “both rational and necessary”. There is, he wrote: “a steady stream of people coming to Ireland, both legally and illegally, so as to ensure that their children avail of our present law so as to secure the entitlement to Irish citizenship.”[1] The referendum would ensure, he argued, that Ireland could “manage migration into the State in a sensible and proper fashion” (McDowell 2004. His remarks were echoed by Fianna Fáil, the largest political party in Ireland, and ruling coalition partners with the PDs. The party urged the electorate to support the referendum: their campaign posters read “Vote Yes for Common Sense Citizenship”. For supporters of the referendum, it was commonsense that the ‘loophole’ granting Irish citizenship by birth would be closed, thus ensuring that access to Irish citizenship and Irishness would be available only to ‘legitimate’, ‘authentic’ and ‘deserving’ parties.

The calls for commonsense citizenship, and the comprehensive endorsement of those calls by the electorate, need to be placed in the context of a rapid change in migration patterns to Ireland. Since the 1990s Ireland has become, for the first time in modern history, a country of net immigration. In the period from 1995 to 2004, 486,300 people moved to the Republic of Ireland. In the same period, 263,800 people emigrated, resulting in net immigration of 222,500 (See Table 1). The Central Statistics Office reported, in September 2004, that the population of Ireland had exceeded four million for the first time since 1871. Reasons for this recent growth in

immigration to Ireland are complex, but include Ireland's economic strength (the 'Celtic Tiger' era), the Northern Ireland ceasefires, and EU enlargement in 2004.

<Table 1 about here>

Growing numbers of immigrants is not in itself an unusual phenomenon in a wealthy Western country. Yet Ireland is crucially different from many Western countries because of its long experience of emigration. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ireland was a net exporter of people. Millions of Irish people – thousands within each generation – fled poverty and social repression to seek work and new lives abroad, thus creating a large, global diaspora. The extent of emigration led geographer Jim MacLaughlin, writing just over ten years ago, to describe Ireland as an 'emigrant nursery' (MacLaughlin 1994). Despite recent economic growth in Ireland, significant numbers still emigrate from the country annually, and Irish politicians and the Catholic Church continue to be active in lobbying on behalf of the thousands of undocumented Irish immigrants currently living in the United States. Irish identity has thus traditionally been associated with the act of migration. As writer Polly Devlin commented, "emigration was a big sad Irish word in every sense … We were all poised on the point of eternal emigration" (in Logue 2000: 42). Despite this, Ireland's emigrant past and present is often conveniently forgotten in the rush to regulate and restrict immigration, and to assert 'commonsense citizenship.'

In this paper, we examine the nature of 'commonsense citizenship'. We argue that 'commonsense citizenship' seeks to fix notions of Ireland and Irishness, and to define who can be Irish, predominantly on the basis of blood ties and shared cultural heritage. In this way, 'commonsense citizenship' is deployed as an essentialising tool to define and draw a distinctive boundary between Irish citizens and (certain) immigrants, working to erase the fluid, relational and contested production of Irishness. This fixing is, we contend, inherently unstable, creating a series of paradoxes that expose the contradictions, hypocrisy, selective memory, nationalism and racism that it simultaneously uses and hides. Mapping out and deconstructing these paradoxes reveals the contingent, relational, contested and contradictory nature of commonsense Irishness, as well as the political potential of the diversity of

Ireland's reaction to immigrants. While we focus on Ireland, our analysis has parallels for understanding debates around immigration and citizenship elsewhere.

COMMONSENSE CITIZENSHIP

Following T.H. Marshall's classic text *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), citizenship is often seen to contest three sets of rights – civil/legal, political, and social – that define the status of an individual within a state. As Richardson (1998: 84) summarises:

> 'Civil or legal rights are institutionalised through the law and include things such as the right to own property; freedom of speech, thought and faith; liberty of the person and the right to justice. Political rights are institutionalised in the parliamentary political system and councils of local government and include the right to vote and participate in the exercise of political power. Social rights include the right to a certain level of economic welfare and security'.

Through being citizens of a state individuals gain entitlements to these rights. As a consequence state citizenship, and the granting of citizenship or equivalent recognition (e.g., that citizens of other states are entitled to certain rights), takes on enormous significance for immigrants new to a state. Equally, the defining and regulation of citizenship becomes a concern to a state and its existing citizens if it is seen to come under threat. Given large, worldwide immigration, especially from the Global South to the minority North, state citizenship is perceived to be under threat in many countries, especially in the EU and North America. As a consequence, states have sought to tighten up legal entitlements to asylum and citizenship and to enact more rigorous screening procedures at border crossings, thus regulating and restricting the flow of immigrants across borders. These measures have been justified through discourses that draw on ideas of legitimacy and authenticity, themselves shaped by nationalism and (often implicit) racism, and which fuel moral panics that threaten immigrants 'stealing' jobs, leeching the welfare system, and radically altering in negative ways national cultures and ways of life. Such discourses are often portrayed as 'commonsense' – it is rational and logical to protect a state's economy and culture in ways that benefit existing citizens.

This has certainly been the case in Ireland, where 'Common Sense Citizenship' formed the bedrock slogan for the 'Yes' campaign in the June 2004 citizenship referendum. We would argue that the appeal to commonsense in the lobbying of voters had a number of powerful discursive effects. First, by appealing to commonsense, the 'Yes' campaign sought to stunt accusations of racism or xenophobia. Voting 'Yes' was not about discriminating against immigrants, it was about protecting and benefiting Ireland through the long term protection of culture (stopping the dilution and erasure of Irishness) and economy (workers could be sent back if the economy had a downturn). Second, commonsense citizenship worked to focus on the present – the here and now – casting as irrelevant Ireland's own history of emigration and anti-Irish racism. The referendum was about the future, not the past; the past after all being a foreign country. It was therefore commonsense for people to vote to shape and protect their future in ways that ignored earlier generations' experiences as immaterial to the contemporary context. Third, commonsense understandings of immigration worked to undermine the legitimacy of a range of immigrants – guest workers, asylum seekers and refugees – by questioning their authenticity and by generalising their motivations and experiences. The discursive construction and denigration of refugees, asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' as bogus, spongers, or economic parasites cast doubt on their right to stay in Ireland and claim citizenship for themselves and their children. Fourth, commonsense worked to (re)define and fix notions of Irishness. On the one hand, there was an appeal to a national, shared culture, and on the other Irishness was defined by blood ties and a rooted legacy in Ireland. To be Irish, one had to have grown up in Ireland or the Irish diaspora, and therefore be assimilated to the 'Irish way of life' or one's parents had to be Irish. Of course, the latter often ensures the former. Commonsense therefore cast culture and identity in essentialist terms – as having inherent characteristics – rather than seeing Irishness as something constructed or performed; diverse, contingent, relation and constantly in the process of formation. This essentialist notion of Irishness therefore worked to create an exclusive, universal, rationale category, difficult to challenge due to its commonsensical nature. In doing so, it sought to unite anyone who considered themselves Irish against others through an appeal to a common cultural and genetic heritage, and thus erase differences in culture and opinion amongst the populace.

Despite the appeals of commonsense citizenship and its rationalities, we would argue that there is nothing commonsensical about the complex issues on which the electorate were being asked to vote. Irishness *is* diverse, fluid and contested, and the motivations and experiences of immigrants vary considerably. Commonsense citizenship sought to straightjacket both and to create a simple, appealing narrative. In doing so, however, commonsense citizenship created a series of paradoxes, six of which we discuss in the remainder of the paper: (1) Ireland has always been multicultural, yet Irish society is represented as homogenous and monocultural; (2) in-migration is resisted, yet Ireland's history is dominated by emigration and it still continues to export people; (3)

economic migrants invest in Ireland, but have limited benefit from such investment; (4) the Irish are both the perpetrators and victims of racism; (5) most immigrants are white, but most discourses about migration present immigrants as black; (6) policies to combat racism and promote inclusiveness co-exist with policies that promote the exclusion of asylum seekers using racist ideology. These paradoxes are important, we believe, because they cleave open the simple, essentialist narrative of commonsense citizenship, revealing how it works to create a very particular and selective political narrative. Simultaneously, they open ways to rethink Irish citizenship, and how such a notion is produced discursively.

PARADOX I: IRELAND WAS AND IS MULTUCULTURAL, YET IS OFTEN REPRESENTED AS HOMOGENOUS AND MULTICULTURAL

The notion of a monocultural, homogenous community – white, Gaelic, and Catholic – formed a central part of Irish Free State discourse from its inception. The 'imagined community' that emerged relied on a simplified and highly restrictive version of Irishness. Edna Longley wrote that "masses of cultural expression – alternative realities, virtually alternative countries – were ignored while the Free State/Republic fetishised 'Irishness'" (Longley 2001:9). A number of organisations and institutions were crucial to the construction of this version of Irishness. These included the Catholic Church, republican parties, the Irish language crusade, and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA). The "special position" of the Catholic Church was recognised in the Irish Constitution, the official status of the Irish language was established, politicians promulgated a vision of rural Ireland as the purest form of Irishness, and the GAA, with its ban on 'foreign games' (such as rugby and soccer),

promoted a highly popular, nationalistic vision of sports (Ferriter 2004). Together, these and other organisations and institutions – through politics, religion, sporting and social life – have been instrumental in attempting to exclude 'non-conforming' cultures from definitions of 'Irishness', and in constructing a version of Irishness that highlights Catholicism, nationalism and cultural homogeneity, underpinned by an assumed whiteness. The resulting consensus served to undermine civil and political rights "by the generalisation of disciplinary techniques and the elimination of difference and distinctiveness" (Dean 1994:183). It also served to mask the State's failure to reflect more deeply on Ireland's cultural differences, and to actively militate against the denigration and/or oppression of people and cultural practices that did not fit in with accepted stereotypes.

However, the Irish State is, and has been since its foundation, a multicultural state. Irish citizens have been and are of different races, ethnicities and religions, with other variances along lines of gender, class, sexuality, ablebodiness and so on. Some recent academic texts have highlighted this, and have introduced complexity into discourses of Irish identity (see, for example, Brown 1985; Kiberd 1995; Cullen 2000; Longley and Kiberd 2001; Loyal 2003). Among the axes of differentiation that have been examined are religion, gender, race, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Current examples include the work of Rolston and Shannon (2002) and Garner (2004) on race and racism in Ireland; forthcoming work by Ó Grada which provides a rich social and economic history of Ireland's Jewish communities; ongoing research by Crowley on the history of Travellers; and Kitchin and Lysaght's (2004) tracing out of the discursive formation of Irish sexuality. Other critical work highlights the extent of dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy, suggesting that many Irish citizens disrupted and challenged organisational and institutional attempts at personal and national regulation (see Ferriter 2004 for a broad-ranging account of many of these acts of resistance).

Commonsense citizenship in the Irish context bases one of its claims to legitimacy on a common cultural heritage that relies on shared religious, cultural and political practices. Validating this claim involves a denial of the kinds of differences that exist – for example, different religious practices, different races and ethnicities, and different sexualities – as well as a denial of the historical and ongoing struggles

over the meanings of Ireland and Irishness. Recognition of Ireland's long experience of multiculturalism challenges the power of representations of Ireland as homogenous and monocultural, and creates possibilities for other, more inclusive understandings of Irishness.

PARADOX II. IRELAND RESISTS IN-MIGRATION, WHILE TRADITIONALLY BEING AN EMIGRANT COUNTRY

For the two centuries prior to the present period of immigration, Ireland has been a net exporter of people. This can be inferred from Tables 2 and 3, which show the population of Ireland from 1821 to 2002, and net migration rates from 1951 to 1994. As recently as the 1980s and early 1990s, several thousands were emigrating on an annual basis. As a consequence of many decades of substantial migration from Ireland, millions worldwide now claim Irish ancestry – as members of the 'Irish Diaspora.' Migration from Ireland has peaked periodically, usually connected to difficult economic, social and political periods in the country. Periods of significant out-migration include the years immediately following the Great Famine, the 1950s and the 1980s. For example, it is estimated that over 600,000 people emigrated from Ireland (26 counties) in the period from 1851 to 1855 (Miller 1985:570). By 1961, there were over 750,000 people of Irish birth living in Britain (Ferriter 2004:75). Between 1987 and 1996, the Central Statistics Office estimates that over 430,000 people emigrated from Ireland, peaking in 1989 when over 70,000 people – 2% of the population – left the country. The process continues today, with roughly 20,000 people – the majority under 25 years of age – emigrating annually (CSO).

<Tables 2 and 3 about here>

Dominant discourses about migration from Ireland focus on its almost obligatory nature. Kerby Miller, writing of post-famine emigration, argued that Irish emigrants saw themselves "not as voluntary, ambitious emigrants but as involuntary, nonresponsible 'exiles', compelled to leave home by forces beyond individual control" (Miller 1985:56). Narratives of compulsion were exacerbated by accounts of the experiences of Irish migrants in their new homes. For example, Catholic Irish migrants to the antebellum US were described as "low-browed and savage, grovelling and bestial, lazy and wild, simian and sensual" (Roediger 1999:133. See

also Ignatiev 1995; Rolston 2003). Often the targets of nativist groups such as the American Protestant Society and the Know Nothing Party (Miller 1985:323-324), these Irish migrants were poor, lowly, had limited rights, and were the victims of pervasive racism. Many migrants to Britain faced a similarly hostile reception. Historically, Irish migrants to Britain were characterized as simian (Curtis 1997) and associated with dirt and disease and poverty: Engels, for example, described Irish immigrants in Britain as bringing with them "filth and intemperance", and as being "uncivilized" and abjectly poor (Engels 1958:104-107). More recently Hickman and Walter commented that, while racial harassment of Irish people is "underreported and largely unrecognised", many Irish in Britain have experienced harassment: from neighbours, from the police force, and from far-right groups like the British National Party (1997:123). Irish people in Britain have also commented on the impacts of racial stereotyping, and of the use of gate keeping practices to exclude Irish people from equal access to services provided by statutory authorities (Hickman and Walter 1997:115). Irish migrants and their descendants are more likely to be members of lower social classes, to suffer from ill-health, and to live in sub-standard accommodation than most other ethnic and racial groups in Britain (Hickman and Walter 1997:36-62).

It is then deeply ironic that Ireland is actively and aggressively seeking to delimit (see Section 3) and resist immigration to Ireland given its own emigrants' experiences. And yet, despite the seeming paradox that Ireland has forgotten its own peoples' immigrant plight, perhaps the present strategy to control immigration should come as no surprise for three reasons. First, Ireland has a long history of *planned* emigration (e.g., migrations to Spain in the sixteenth century; schemes to assist unemployed and poor to migrate to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the assistance of pregnant women to travel to Britain in the twentieth century) *and* immigration (e.g., Protestant in-migration in the seventeenth century; the acceptance of very limited numbers of asylum seekers from Hungary in 1956; Chile 1973; Vietnam 1979; Bosnia 1990s) (see Duffy 2004; Fanning 2002). Then, as now, the aim was to aid *selected* groups to either leave or come to Ireland under specific conditions.

Second, Ireland, as a member of the European Union, is under pressure from other states to fulfil its role in maintaining 'Fortress Europe'. In other words, Ireland is being pressured to bring its immigration policies in line with other EU states and to close off any 'back doors' into Europe. This line of argument was used (amongst others) by the state to urge voters to vote 'yes' in the recent citizenship referendum. In playing the European card, those in favour of stronger regulation can deny allegations of racism or xenophobia or nationalism, instead arguing that they are playing their part in a wider, continental project.

Third, and discussed in the fourth section, Ireland and the Irish have never been immune from racist ideologies and from the practice of racism, whether being expressed in relation to indigenous Travellers or other groups. It should come as no surprise to see racism and xenophobia mobilised in debates about who should be allowed to migrate to, work in, and become citizens of Ireland.

That said, while these three reasons provide some explanation as to the erasure of history, they excuse rather deny the paradox. Indeed, we find the selective memory of the present Irish government deeply troubling. The periods of suffering, emigration, and the diaspora and its experiences are drawn on continually in the construction of Irish identity, yet these self-same histories are simultaneously forgotten as new boundaries are fashioned to define Irish citizenship. And yet, none of these three reasons has a teleological inevitability; they are not predestined. Rather they are contingent and relational discursive formations which means they can challenged and reformulated in ways that recognises the Irish experience of emigration, and which makes easier the lives of immigrants to Ireland.

PARADOX III: ECONOMIC MIGRANTS INVEST IN IRELAND, BUT HAVE LIMITED BENEFIT FROM SUCH INVESTMENT

The rapid growth in the Irish economy throughout the 1990s and into the new century has meant that labour market demand exceeds what the Irish labour market can supply. In response, the Irish government has actively sought to encourage migrant workers to move to Ireland. However, the movement of migrant labour emanating from outside of the EU is highly regulated and the rules governing movement subject to rapid change depending on labour market conditions. The

government is actively controlling who can work in Ireland, in what sectors and at what times, with respect to their country of origin and skills. In so doing, it excludes certain migrants from coming to Ireland, and it provides many migrant workers with limited rights and denies them the opportunity of staying long term.

To attract and regulate labour migration the government has formulated and implemented an economic migration policy. This consists of two strands: the Working Visa/Work Authorisation (WV/WA) programme administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Work Permits scheme administered by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). These schemes, while complementary, target different people with differing skills. The WV/WA programme targets high skill, well educated workers required for the information technology, medical and construction sectors (DETE 2004a). The Work Permits scheme targets lower skilled workers, from outside the European Economic Area (EU, plus Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and under a separate agreement Switzerland), needed in the service sectors, catering, agriculture, industry, nursing, and domestic home help (see Table 4). Under the Work Permits scheme, 47,551 people were admitted to work in Ireland in 2003, and 34,067 in 2004 (see Table 5).

<Tables 4 and 5 about here>

The schemes clearly make assumptions about the desirability and treatment of different labour migrants. The WV/WA is a fast-track programme where the migrant worker applies for a visa/authorisation through the Irish embassy in their country. The Work Permits scheme cannot be applied to by a migrant. Instead, the prospective employer applies (after demonstrating that posts cannot be filled from the Irish labour pool), with the permit held by the employer not the worker (DETE 2004b). This means that the worker is tied to that site of work and cannot seek work elsewhere, creating a large power differential that has clearly been exploited in some cases.[2] Workers do not have the right to free medical care, education or social welfare entitlements. They can be joined by their family after three months residence. In contrast, WV/WA workers can change their employers within the same skills category as long as they continue to have permission to work and reside in the country (DETE

2004c). Asylum seekers and those applying for refugee status are not entitled to work regardless of their skills and needs.

While workers under the WV/WA programme are clearly seen as desirable, those under the Work Permits programme are seen as merely a means to an end. Such workers are not viewed as part of the long-term population of Ireland and indeed possess no rights to stay. Permit holders are typically from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (with strong representation from Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine),[3] English-speaking nations such as Australia, Canada, US and South Africa, and countries such as Philippines, China, Brazil, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Malaysia (see Table 6). Our assessment is that there are clear nationalistic and racist ideologies at work here that are used to underpin desirability and to delimit future potential citizenship. Indeed, the system is set up so that migrant workers can give to the state, and contribute to its social and economic life, but are entitled to nothing beyond a wage. Given the waves of labour emigrants from Ireland who became citizens of the countries they helped forge (and created the much celebrated Irish Diaspora) these systems of regulation reek of hypocrisy.

<Table 6 about here>

PARADOX IV: IRISH AS PERPETRATORS AND VICTIMS OF RACISM

Ireland and the Irish occupy a complex and contradictory position with regards to racist ideologies and the practices of racism. As noted above, the Irish have long been the victims of racism, both in Ireland as expressed by the British, colonial power and its institutions, and in the countries to which the Irish emigrated – notably the British empire states (UK, Australia, Canada) and the USA, particularly in the nineteenth century (Ignatiev 1995). Paradoxically, Irish people have been involved in racist practices in Ireland and elsewhere. This is especially evident in the Irish involvement in empire, as Irish soldiers, administrators, missionaries and settlers aided the British in their global civilizing and subjugating efforts, but it is also evident in the treatment of race and of racial and ethnic minorities in Ireland. These generalizations mask paradoxes in all of these sites: some Irish prospered in Britain, some Irish were involved in anti-racist movements in Ireland and the US, and some

Irish fought for independence from Britain on behalf of other colonies, just as others bolstered the colonial relationship.

The Irish have been described as "enthusiastic co-partners and beneficiaries in the British imperial enterprise" (Cleary 2003:22), and as the ideal "prefabricated collaborators" (Akenson, in Bielenberg 2000b:228). Accounts of Irish enthusiasm for the imperial project suggest, for example, that most Irish households in Montserrat were slave-owning (in Bielenberg 2000b:216), or that many Irish soldiers and administrators in India had a reputation for being brutal (Holmes 2000:235-239). James Joyce satirisies these eager imperialists in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (2000:176-177).[4] Yet, just as some Irish were willing servants of empire, others fought against empire. Irish women played an important role in Indian independence and feminist movements, for example, and Irish men fought against the British during the Boer War in South Africa (Holmes 2000: 243; McCracken 2000: 265-266).[5] The role of Irish Catholic missionaries is similarly complicated. While undoubtedly contributing to the 'civilizing' endeavour of colonialism, these missionaries potentially provided an alternative world view to that of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism: Edward Hogan claims that promoting colonial objectives "would have been repugnant to the vast majority, given the Irish Catholic historical experience of oppression" (1990: 138).

Irish missionaries certainly had an influence, however, on the construction of race in Ireland. Missionary magazines such as *Africa* and *Far East*, allied with the ubiquitous mission collection boxes in shops, pubs, schools and churches around Ireland, helped to develop the image of the 'black baby' in need of salvation. Writer Tim Pat Coogan commented:

> We were brought up believing that Africans as a class were much in need of the civilising influences of the Irish religions as parched earth was of water. It was an image propagated by missionary magazines with their pictures of a big beaming Irish priest, generally robed in white, surrounded by a group of adoring, chubby little black children (in Fanning 2002:16)

Other commentators have highlighted ongoing discrimination against Irish travellers, anti-semitism, and the stigmatization of white mothers of 'mixed-race' children (McVeigh and Lentin 2002:35) as evidence of home-grown racism. As Ireland has changed from an emigrant to an immigrant nation, examples of racist discourses and practices – particularly directed at blacks and at refugees and asylum seekers – have increased. The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) provides evidence of these discourses and practices in biannual reports. Their most recent report highlights a range of racist assaults, abuse and harassment, and highlights incidences of racism in the delivery of public and private services, and in the circulation of offensive material (NCCRI 2004). At the same time, however, a range of community and voluntary organisations have been established in Ireland with addressing and combating racism. Integrating Ireland, an independent network of such groups, lists over 150 organisations, spread throughout the country, with the explicit aim of "working in mutual solidarity to promote and realise the human rights, equality and full integration in Irish society of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants" (Integrating Ireland 2005).

Thus, the paradox exists that the Irish are both perpetrators and victims of racism. In the construction of racial hierarchies, Ireland is empowered by its whiteness, its Europeanness and its diaspora, but disempowered by its experiences of colonialism and of anti-Irish discrimination. For some, the experiences of the past are used as a rationale for racial equity and equality in the present. For others, the experiences of the present are used as a rationale for more restrictive and selective immigration policies, encouraging white and discouraging black migration to Ireland.

PARADOX V: MOST IMMIGRANTS ARE WHITE, BUT MOST DISCOURSES ABOUT MIGRATION PRESENT IMMIGRANTS AS BLACK

Most immigrants to Ireland are either returning Irish and their families, or citizens of other EU countries, most notably the UK. For the period from 1995 to 2004, 45% of immigrants to Ireland were Irish and 30% were from the EU (over half of these were from the UK) (See Table 1). Despite this, public discourses about immigration have primarily focused on refugees and asylum seekers, who represent a small proportion of the overall number of immigrants (see Tables 7 and 8). This is despite that asylum seekers and refugees coming into Ireland amount to only 10%

(approximately) of all foreign immigrants. According to the CSO, between 1995-1999 immigrants from outside of EU and the US accounted for only 10.5% of all immigrants (total numbers 21,800); this rose to 27.4% between 2000-2004[6] (total numbers 76,500), but is presently falling from a high of 29,900 in 2002 (CSO 2004) (See Table 1). While the CSO has not released a breakdown of nationality of these figures, it is possible to get some idea by looking at the asylum seeker figures (see Tables 7 and 8). These suggest that between a third and a half of non-EU or US emigrants per year are asylum seekers.

<Tables 7 and 8 about here>

Refugees and asylum seekers are often racialised as black, even though no accurate figures are publicly available to legitimate this claim. As a consequence, there is a widespread belief that Ireland is being ‘overrun’ by black immigrants (Cullen 2000), generally understood as asylum seekers. Fianna Fáil TD Noel O’Flynn voiced these sentiments in a speech in 2002, when he said that “the asylum seeker crisis was out of control” and that the country was being held hostage by “spongers, wasters and conmen”. Though denying his remarks were racist, O’Flynn claimed that putting large amounts of refugees from different ethnic backgrounds together was a “powder keg ready to explode” (in Spendiff 2002).[7] It is important to acknowledge, however, that for many would-be immigrants from countries with substantial black populations, asylum represents the only chance “of getting in to Ireland, at least on a temporary basis” (Cullen 2000:19). Work Authorisations and Work Permits are predominantly issued to citizens of countries with substantial white populations, or to citizens of countries like the Philippines, which shares a Catholic heritage with the Republic of Ireland. Steve Loyal has commented that the DETE specifically targets and encourages immigrants from white Christian countries to fill job vacancies opened up by the Celtic Tiger economy (Loyal 2003). This racialisation of work permits is rooted in exclusionary ideologies that have attempted to regulate internal ethnic and religious diversity in the past (for example, by excluding ethnic minorities like Travellers, Jews and occasionally Protestants) and continues today by systematically excluding black populations (Loyal 2003).

In this way, there is a semantic association of black people with asylum seekers, and of asylum seekers with immigrants (White 2002:104). This is exacerbated by a seeming reluctance on the part of some government officials and media to separate issues of asylum and immigration, preferring instead to conflate the two. Instead, various moral panics ensue: about the 'invasion' of (black) asylum seekers (immigrants), and about the consequent abuse of Irish citizenship legislation and of Irish social welfare benefits (see Luibhéid 2004). This gives legitimacy to practical actions that are both controlling and excluding: controlling racial and ethnic diversity – particularly through restricting black migration to Ireland and through imposing more stringent conditions on the granting of asylum – while at the same time managing and facilitating white migration. This has been particularly obvious in the state enforcement of immigration policy through deportation. Two groups of people are generally deported: those whose asylum applications were refused, and those whose parents' applications for asylum were refused (though the deportees were, themselves, Irish citizens by birth). Deportation of people who have entered Ireland on holiday or work permits/visas and overstayed or violated the conditions of the visa is extremely rare. It would be a mistake however to see the acceptability and 'taken for granted' nature of these practices as manipulation from the top down – these processes have been successful precisely because they are building on already present xenophobic and racist sentiments (see Cullen 2002, McVeigh 2002a, Rolston and Shannon 2002). Policy discourse has thrived upon these anxieties. In this way, coercive state policies and everyday discriminatory practices in relation to the perceived invasion of unwanted black migrants are legitimised, allowing the government to prevent 'black' immigration while at the same time making it easy to import low-cost 'white' labour.

PARADOX VI: POLICIES TO COMBAT RACISM AND PROMOTE INCLUSIVENESS CO-EXIST WITH POLICIES THAT PROMOTE THE EXCLUSION OF (SOME) ASYLUM SEEKERS AND IMMIGRANTS

The Irish government signed the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (CERD) in 1968, but did not ratify the Convention for 32 years, until December 2000 (McVeigh and Lentin 2002:6). The ratification of

CERD was one of a number of initiatives directed against discrimination and racism that were introduced in this period. The most significant were the introduction of a range of anti-discrimination legislation, and the establishment of government bodies charged with addressing these issues.

The government had passed the *Incitement to Hatred Act* in 1989, which outlawed the incitement of hatred against people on the basis of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, or membership of the Travelling Community. Despite the existence of the Act, it was not effective in either preventing the incitement of hatred, or in sanctioning those involved in inciting hatred (Fanning 2002:188). Later legislation was more effective: the *Employment Equality Act* of 1998 serves to prohibit some types of discrimination in some public and private sector employment (Tannam 2002:197). The *Equal Status Act* of 2000 extends the prohibition on discrimination beyond the workplace, to the purchase of goods, the use of services, access to accommodation and participation in education. Together, the Acts prohibit discrimination on nine grounds, of which race is one. [8] In addition, a discussion document on a National Action Plan against Racism was published in 2002. As well as introducing a range of legislative initiatives, the government also established two bodies with responsibility for monitoring these acts and for providing guidance on issues of equality, race and interculturalism. The role of the *National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism* (NCCRI), established in 1997, is to act in a policy advisory role to the government, and to develop anti-racist programmes. The *Equality Authority* was established in 1999, and its role is to promote and defend equality rights. The NCCRI and the Equality Authority together act as the national focal points for RAXEN, the European Racism and Xenophobia Network. Membership of the EU has been instrumental in providing the impetus for legislative change with an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory agenda. The work of a range of voluntary and community groups has also been highly influential in developing an anti-racist agenda (Tannam 2002:196), and has complemented state-led anti-racist initiatives (McVeigh 2002b:219).

However, state-led anti-racist initiatives co-exist with state-led racist initiatives, particularly in relation to policies directed against refugees and asylum seekers. From 1994 onwards, the numbers of people seeking asylum in Ireland began

to rise significantly, increasing from 139 in 1992 to a peak of 11,634 in 2002 (see Table 7). The government responded to this with a range of punitive measures. Legislative initiatives included the *Immigration (Trafficking) Bill* of 1999 and the amendment of the *Refugee Act* in 2000, which together served to make it more difficult to successfully claim asylum in Ireland, and to increase deportation rates. In terms of the treatment of asylum seekers, the government introduced a system of direct provision in April 2000, which limited support to basic accommodation, meals and cash allowances of IR£15 weekly for adults and IR£7.50 weekly for children (Fanning 2002:103). Asylum seekers were also dispersed outside Dublin to centres of direct provision, often local hostels and hotels commandeered for the purpose, and often in the face of widescale local opposition because of a perceived connection between asylum seekers, crime and disease. And asylum seekers are regularly portrayed by politicians in negative terms: John O'Donoghue, the Minister of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, described asylum seekers as "illegal immigrants and as exploiters of the Irish welfare system" (in Fanning 2002:103).

Bryan Fanning argues that "policies aimed at promoting inclusiveness and at contesting racism…co-existed with policies aimed at promoting the exclusion of asylum seekers from Irish society" (Fanning 2002:108). With recent legislative developments, his argument can now be extended. Policies aimed at encouraging immigrant labour now co-exist with policies aimed at limiting the rights of immigrants. In particular, the 2004 citizenship referendum removed the automatic right to Irish citizenship of anyone born in the country. Despite a broad coalition of organizations opposed to the referendum, it was passed by a margin of four to one.[9] While Michael McDowell, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform who introduced the referendum, claimed it was not racist, the coordinating body for groups opposed to the referendum disagreed. That group, Campaign Against the Racist Referendum, argued that if the referendum was passed "some children born here will be less equal than others because of their parents' origins. Racial discrimination will be put into the constitution".

CONCLUSION

What it means to be Irish and the discourse used to define Irishness have never been neatly defined. As discussed, the colonial relationship to Britain, the legacy of

Protestant settlers and unionism, and the presence of a sizable Traveller population, have meant that Irishness *in Ireland* has always been contested. Moreover, there is a long history of *planned* immigration and emigration, with policies and schemes that have delimited and regulated movements to and from Ireland. As such, the discourses and practices being employed today to try and control who can move to, who can work in, and who can claim Irish citizenship, are new strategies and tactics in a long tradition of regulation. The paradoxes we identify are striking and telling, however, because Ireland has undergone an economic transformation and has become a seemingly confident, cosmopolitan, prosperous state. As a result, for the first time since the seventeenth century the country has experienced significant non-planned in-migration.

Today the hegemonic 'soft focus' construction of Ireland is one of a pluralistic, multicultural, liberal, cosmopolitan, open society. However, this construction is not as diametrically opposed to the rhetoric of conservative 'old' Ireland as it may first appear and occludes as much as it includes. The continued exclusion of non-conforming cultures (for example Travellers, gay and lesbian communities) not only from the imaginative spaces of Irishness but from fully participating in the normal round of social and political life and 'immigration policies, which are straightforwardly aimed at deterring the entry of non-nationals' reveal the sub-text of government policies (Loyal 2003:84). Ireland's approach to multiculturalism is at best 'minimalist' – acknowledging and ostensibly tolerating cultural existence rather than actively engaging in real cultural exchange (Longley 2001).

Ireland's confidence and cosmopolitanism is a mask hiding deeply etched and historically rooted anxieties and insecurities. In its new prosperity, 'commonsense' Ireland has been quick to forget its own emigrant past and the hostilities and hardships Irish emigrants faced abroad as largely unwanted arrivals. Instead, it has embraced the neo-liberal, right wing and racist rhetoric of much of Europe and North America. It wants immigrant workers, but it does not want them to stay if the economy experiences a down turn (unless they are skilled and from the EU or North America). It will tolerate a minimum of asylum seekers, but only if they are 'genuine' and they contribute in positive ways (i.e., as defined by the state) to Irish society. It expects its

citizens to be able to move to and work in any part of the world, but not vice versa. These paradoxes are troubling, but the articulation of commonsense citizenship serves to dispel disquiet in the in interests of the common good of the state and its existing citizens.

The power of the state and associated organisations and institutions rests, in this instance, in their ability to fix and police meaning, thus dismissing these paradoxes. However, the paradoxes we have identified carry with them an alternative form of political power, through their ability to disrupt fixity and certainty, and to challenge essentialising views of immigrants and of Irishness. This became apparent in a recent case, connected to the mass deportation of 35 Nigerians to Lagos in March 2005. Among the deportees were 19 year old student Olukunle Elukanlo, and mothers Iyabo Nwanze and Elizabeth Odunse, who had left 4 of their children, aged from 8 to 17, behind in Athlone. Friends of many of those who were deported protested against the action, as had been the case for previous deportations. Unlike previous protests, however, one of these was successful. The Minister for Justice, Michael McDowell, following protests by school students, overturned the deportation of Olukunle Elukanlo, who has now returned from Lagos with a 6-month student visa. Those people who opposed the deportations did so on the basis of 'real people': the people they had come to know, who had become members of their communities, who had become their friends. One quote from a recent *Irish Times* article sums this up. In relation to two of the women who were deported from Athlone:

> Their fellow student Claire Martin found them to be "very nice Christian women. They were very friendly, never a bother on them", she said. "Like many people I personally thought that these people were all spongers, getting free cars and tax and insurance. But then I got to know them and I said this and they cracked up. They thought it was hilarious. But it's no laughing matter." (Healy 2005)

Following the deportations and the protests, a poll carried out for Ireland's biggest-selling newspaper, the *Sunday Independent*, suggested that 45% of the population thought the legislation on citizenship should be re-examined, and 61% felt the personal circumstances of all immigrants should be taken into account before applying deportation orders (Harris 2005).

The ideological employment of commonsense citizenship in Ireland mirrors similar experiences in other EU countries e.g. Denmark, Holland and the UK. The difference, in the case of Ireland, is a long and sustained history of out-migration, which continues today in the bodies of undocumented Irish in the US. “Take away the immigrants and their children, and the exiles and theirs” journalist Fintan O’Toole wrote, “and we have no Irish nation, no Irish culture, no Irish identity” (O’Toole 2004). Through an acknowledgement of Ireland’s emigrant past, the personal circumstances of immigrants, the racialised construction of the immigration ‘problem’, and the recognition of racist practices, the contradictions at the heart of ‘commonsense’ citizenship are exposed, and possibilities for other, less restrictive understandings of citizenship and belonging are made apparent.

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Table 1: Emigration from and immigration to Ireland, and net migration rates, 1995-2004

Emigration from Ireland *Source CSO, 2000, 2004*

To	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	
UK	13,300	14,100	12900	8500	11200	7200	7800	7400	6300	4900	*93,600*
EU	5100	5100	4100	4300	5500	5500	5600	4800	4300	3400	*47,700*
USA	8200	5200	4100	4300	5300	4000	3400	4800	2500	2800	*44,600*
ROW	6600	6800	7900	4100	9500	10000	9500	8500	7600	7400	*77,900*
	33,200	*31,200*	*29,000*	*21,200*	*31,500*	*26,700*	*26,300*	*25,500*	*20,700*	*18,500*	**263,800**

Immigration to Ireland

Nationality	**1995**	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	
Irish	17600	17700	20500	23200	26700	24800	26300	27000	17500	16900	*218200*
UK	5,800	8,300	8200	8300	8200	8400	9000	7400	6900	5900	*76400*
EU	3200	5000	5500	5800	6900	8200	6500	8100	6900	10600	*66700*
USA	1500	4000	4200	2200	2500	2500	3700	2700	1600	1800	*26700*
ROW	3100	4200	5500	4500	4500	8600	13600	21700	17700	14900	*98300*
	31200	*39200*	*43900*	*44000*	*48800*	*52500*	*59100*	*66900*	*50600*	*50100*	**486300**

Net migration

1995	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	
-2,000	8,000	14,900	22,800	17,300	25,800	32,800	41,400	29,900	31,600	**222,500**

Table 2: Population of Ireland (26 Counties), 1821 to 1961

Year	Population
1821	5,421,000
1831	6,193,000
1841	6,529,000
1851	5,112,000
1861	4,402,000
1871	4,053,000
1881	3,870,000
1891	3,469,000
1901	3,222,000
1911	3,140,000
1926	2,972,000
1936	2,968,000
1946	2,955,000
1951	2,961,000
1956	2,898,000
1961	2,818,000
1971	2,979,000
1981	3,444,000
1991	3,526,000
1996	3,627,000
2002	3,918,000

Sources: Irish Centre for Migration Studies, UCC **http://migration.ucc.ie** **Accessed July 2005** and Central Statistics Office **http://www.cso.ie/statistics/popn1901to2002.htm** Accessed July 2005

Table 3: Irish net emigration and immigration, 1951-1986

Period	Net emigration	Net immigration
1951-1956	39,353	
1956-1961	42,401	
1961-1966	16,121	
1966-1971	10,781	
1971-1979		13,617
1979-1981	2,523	
1981-1986	15,061	

Source: Irish Centre for Migration Studies, UCC. **http://migration.ucc.ie** **Accessed July 2005**

Table 4: Work permits by sector: 1999-2004

Sector	**1999**	**2000**	**2001**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Service	3,010	6,538	14,018	15,068	16,965	14,571
Catering	694	3,907	9,129	10,306	11,548	8,306
Agriculture/Fisheries	449	2,963	5,714	6,248	7,242	3,721
Industry	414	1,744	3,119	3,094	3,376	2,174
Medical and nursing	721	1,353	2,252	2,883	2,709	2,469
Entertainment	452	650	1,021	874	955	984
Domestic	80	195	521	788	944	772
Education	304	364	480	610	759	717
Sport	60	118	121	153	227	207
Exchange agreements		72	61	297	299	146

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits/statistics.htm>, Accessed March 2005

Table 5: Total Work Permits issued 1999-2004

Year	New Permits	Renewals	Group Permits	Total	Refused
1999	4,328	1,653	269	6,250	Not known
2000	15,434	2,271	301	18,006	Not known
2001	29,594	6,485	357	36,436	Not known
2002	23,326	16,562	433	40,321	1,310
2003	21,965	25,039	547	47,551	1,838
2004	10,020	23,246	801	34,067	1,486

Source: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. http://www.entemp.ie/labour/workpermits/statistics.htm Accessed October 2004, March 2005

Table 6: Work permits issued and refused by nationality, 2002-2004

Nationality	2002		2003		2004	
	Issued	Refused	Issued	Refused	Issued	Refused
Philippines	3255	78	4042	82	4301	152
Latvia	3958	106	4160	58	1201	22
Lithuania	3816	133	4551	76	1238	12
Poland	3142	46	4808	76	1915	9
Romania	2459	95	2527	213	2113	124
South Africa	2273	34	2468	91	2031	77
Ukraine	2092	45	2866	79	2137	95
Brazil	1327	15	1554	78	1522	39
Russian Federation	1238	58	1091	32	795	23
China	1236	119	1593	161	1284	191
Czech Republic	1138	30	1111	35	265	1
Australia	1116	11	1149	12	908	9
Malaysia	1086	8	1030	17	886	54
Belarus	870	17	1028	33	760	42
India	845	48	1030	88	1253	74
Pakistan	840	122	830	239	846	118
Estonia	820	40	1012	12	293	2
USA	792	13	961	9	927	22
Moldova	771	46	1043	48	849	39
Bangladesh	767	24	1038	80	1009	95
Bulgaria	753	39	868	31	721	27
Turkey	155	7	466	6	1191	27
Rest	5572	176	6325	282	564	226
TOTAL	40321	1310	47551	1838	34066	1480

Table 7: Applications for asylum in the Republic of Ireland, 1992-2004

Year	No. of applications	Top five countries of origin
1992	39	
1993	91	
1994	362	
1995	424	
1996	1,179	
1997	3,883	
1998	4,626	
1999	7,724	
2000	10,938	Nigeria, Romania, Czech Republic, Moldova, DR Congo
2001	10,325	Nigeria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia
2002	11,634	Nigeria, Romania, Moldova, Zimbabwe, Ukraine
2003	7,900	Nigeria, Romania, DR Congo, Moldova, Czech Republic
2004	4,766	Nigeria, Romania, Somalia, China, Sudan

Source: Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner http://www.orac.ie Accessed October 2004, July 2005

Table 8: Asylum seeker country of origin (top five nations in any one year), 2000-2004

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Nigeria	3,404	3,461	4,050	3,110	1,776
Romania	2,384	1,348	1,677	777	286
Czech Republic	403			186	
Moldova	388	549	536	243	
DR Congo	358			256	
Ukraine		376	357		
Russia		307			
Zimbabwe			351		
Somalia					198
China					152
Sudan					145

Source: Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner http://www.orac.ie Accessed October 2004, July 2005

Notes

[1] McDowell termed these immigrants *citizenship tourists*.
[2] An ongoing case relates to Turkish workers at Gama Construction. The company has been accused of significantly underpaying workers.
[3] Prior to EU enlargement, large numbers of permits were granted to citizens of Estonia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and particularly Poland.
[4] The excerpt reads as follows: "They turned into Lower Mount Street. A few steps from the corner a fat young man, wearing a silk neckcloth, saluted them and stopped. 'Did you hear the results of the exams?' he asked. 'Griffin was plucked. Halpin and O'Flynn are through the home civil. Moonan got fifth place in the Indian. O'Shaughnessy got fourteenth. The Irish fellows in Clarke's gave them a feed last night. They all ate curry.' His pallid bloated face expressed benevolent malice and as he had advanced through his tidings of success, his small fatencircled eyes vanished out of sight and his weak wheezing voice out of hearing."
[5] Significant contributions were made by Margaret Cousins, founder of the Indian Women's Association and the All-India Women's Conference; Annie Besant, the first woman president of the Indian National Congress and the daughter of Irish parents; and Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble), who was active in the early Indian independence movement (and influenced by Kropotkin)
[6] Year ends April.
[7] O'Flynn's remarks did not appear to detract voters in his electoral constituency. He topped the poll in the general election in 2002, and afterwards was selected by Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, as chairperson of a Dáil Committee.
[8] The other grounds for discrimination are gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, and membership of the traveling community.
[9] Organisations opposed to the referendum included the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, trade unions such as the ATGWU, the Waterford Congress of Trade Unions and the Dublin Congress of Trade Unions, the Union of Students in Ireland, political parties such as Labour, the Green Party and Sinn Féin, the National Youth Council of Ireland, the National Women's Council of Ireland, the National Traveller Women's Forum and the National Lesbian and Gay Federation.