

Brendan O’Leary, *A Treatise on Northern Ireland*, vol. III, *Consociation and Confederation: From Antagonism to Accomodation?*

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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/10970>

DOI: [10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10970](https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10970)

ISSN: 2259-8863

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Caen

Printed version

Date of publication: July 8, 2021

Number of pages: 170-173

ISBN: 978-2-38185-030-6

ISSN: 0183-973X

Electronic reference

Philippe Cauvet, "Brendan O’Leary, *A Treatise on Northern Ireland*, vol. III, *Consociation and Confederation: From Antagonism to Accomodation?*", *Études irlandaises* [Online], 46-1 | 2021, Online since 08 July 2021, connection on 11 October 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesirlandaises/10970> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesirlandaises.10970>



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James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Pádraic Ó Conaire, Brian Friel, Stewart Parker, and others yields its rich harvest of meanings and connections that are still relevant today. It is particularly emphasised in chapter 4 (“Revisioning the Circus”, p. 131-174), where the subversive nature of the circus is highlighted, especially with regard to gender and sexual anxieties. The trope’s significance for creating revisionist narratives is exemplified with the help of texts by John Banville, Paul Muldoon, Seamus Deane, and Seamus Heaney, as well as Neil Jordan’s 1991 film *The Miracle*. The conclusion puts the topic into perspective for the 21st century’s Ireland and points out that the circus metaphors reveal the same cultural continuities / discontinuities for Irish and worldwide cultural shifts.

Olena TYKHOMYROVA

Brendan O’Leary, *A Treatise on Northern Ireland*, vol. III, *Consociation and Confederation: From Antagonism to Accomodation?*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, xlv + 458 p.

This is the third volume of a remarkable and monumental three-volume *Treatise on Northern Ireland* written by Professor Brendan O’Leary, the world-rekknowned specialist of Northern Ireland. The first volume is subtitled *Colonisation*, the second, *Control*. The last volume, reviewed here, is subtitled *Consociation and Confederation*.

The whole *Treatise*, and more particularly this third volume, is a masterstroke. Brendan O’Leary, perhaps more than ever before in his prolific writings, demonstrates his outstanding skills and style as an analyst of Northern Ireland’s politics and society. This volume, composed of seven chapters, brings together an incredible amount of primary and secondary sources – the size of the bibliography is impressive – of personal anecdotes, of statistics, of portraits, of notes, making it one of the most comprehensive accounts of the period ranging from Direct Rule to the more recent post-Good Friday Agreement (GFA) era. He offers a strong defense of the 1998 Agreement and of its results, in spite of the Brexit question which, as he shows, has considerably destabilised post-GFA Ireland since 2016. His thesis can be summarised as follows. Unlike Sunningdale and the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA), the GFA was a comprehensive and balanced solution to the multi-dimensional Northern Irish question, whose success is tangible: a quasi total cessation of political violence since 1997. Thanks to inclusive consociational institutions in Northern Ireland plus the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and the British-Irish Intergovernmental Council (B-IIGC), the GFA did not only bring peace. It contains the long-term possibility of the reunification of Ireland whose form, unitary, federal or confederal, is open to debate and negotiation.

O’Leary is very convincing when he demonstrates that the GFA is much more than Sunningdale for slow learners, as many tend to believe. For him, the GFA

brought innovations which neither Sunningdale, nor the AIA had provided for. The AIA, although it failed at creating agreed and stable democratic institutions, was however a great step towards a more comprehensive settlement as it forced extremes on both sides to reappraise their approaches and showed the imperative need for any political settlement to include strong Irish and Anglo-Irish dimensions (p. 154-156). For O'Leary, the great achievement of the GFA, notably thanks to its inclusive consociational components and the joint arbitration of the British and Irish governments, is that it has led the conflicting communities to stop violence and to act exclusively through legal and constitutional means. For O'Leary, the creation of a Democratic Unionist Party-Sinn Fein executive in 2007 was the dramatic and logical outcome of this beneficial consociational logic, which globally worked until 2017. In the final chapter, O'Leary stops looking at the past and looks to the future, demonstrating that the NSMC and the B-IIGC, established by the GFA, are the main mechanisms through which a future reunified – unitary, federal or confederal – Ireland within a confederal Europe can eventually emerge from the GFA.

In this volume, Professor O'Leary forcefully re-asserts his profound and long-held consociationalist convictions, starting in the very first pages in which anti-consociationalist arguments are systematically reviewed and attacked and the consociationalist credo is emphatically re-explained. Like Arend Lijphart or Arthur Lewis, O'Leary is one of those consociationalists, who are realists and democrats. He sees national and ethnic identities as durable and difficult to de-construct. He expresses doubts on the value of bottom-up, deliberative approaches as well as on majoritarian democratic mechanisms to solve ethno-national conflicts, for any democratic arrangement which does not recognise such identities is bound to fail as, in divided societies, it leads to the tyranny of the majority. Recognising the existence of plural majorities, giving autonomy to separate cultural groups, and finding practical institutional mechanisms to give each a proportional share of political power is more likely to lead to stable and truly representative governments. For consociationalists, consociations are the most effective and practical way to build institutions which limit violent conflictuality as it is easier and quicker to accommodate than to transform group identities. This is precisely why, according to him, the GFA has proved to be the historic achievement it was promised to be. Added to the NSMC and B-IIGC, inclusive consociational institutions in Northern Ireland, founded on parity of esteem and communal equality, created a whole new constitutional system in which the two communities' rights, ethos and aspirations are, for the first time, fully and equally recognised.

However, O'Leary's defense of the GFA and of its consociational component, does not really bring definitive answers to the ongoing scientific debates surrounding the GFA. In a way, it could be argued that his own analysis will fuel such debates. If the Northern Irish consociation is to be valued because it allows parity of esteem and "recognition all round" (p. 199-202), why then is a reunified Ireland the only possible future he envisages? If consociation is equally beneficial to all by breaking with majoritarian democracy, why does he simultaneously lay so much emphasis on demographic changes taking place, saying that the Agreement

“does not require Unionist consent to a united Ireland but a majority in Northern Ireland and a concurrent majority in the South” (p. 217). If consociation works in Northern Ireland and contains the possibility of normalised politics, why has normalisation not even yet begun after more than twenty years? If each partner in the consociation believes they are net beneficiaries from power-sharing, why did local power-sharing institutions prove so hard to restore after one of the so-called partners made them collapse in early 2017? Further questions are raised from the link between his defense of the GFA and his reflections on the possible forms of a future reunified Ireland (chapter 7). If, as Professor O’Leary claims in the very last words of this book, this Agreement offers the possibility of achieving the United Irishmen’s dream of “unifying people on the island within one political system, self-governing and separate from England but embedded within the confederation of the European Union” (p. 363), his study does not really provide a definitive demonstration that everybody in Ireland today positively subscribes to his ideal, however noble it is. Communal identities have changed a lot since 1798. Many people today, on both sides of the communal divide in Northern Ireland, on both sides of the partition border and on both sides of the Irish Sea would question the very principle of a self-governing Ireland within a European confederation. If a European confederation was perceived as so desirable and necessary, why did so many Northern Irish voters vote to leave the European Union in 2016? Many unionists in the Democratic Unionist Party, in the Ulster Unionist Party and in Great Britain, do not claim they are the sons and daughters of Wolfe Tone. They want more than their Protestant British identity to be recognised in a separate Ireland. They want the constitutional link with Great Britain to be guaranteed, as was promised in 1998: how can they be persuaded that a federal or even confederal Ireland with Dublin as the center, within a European Confederation, is a form of recognition of their rights? Has there been any clear sign so far, even in the midst of the post-Brexit referendum chaos, that the more moderate and pragmatic unionists would consent to a process of reunification? Do not many Alliance Party voters and supporters, whose numbers are growing significantly, want a solution which transcends Northern Irish communal identities and ideologies? On the nationalist side, nationalists and republicans today do not have much in common with Wolfe Tone either. For instance, the aspiration towards a reunified Ireland, whatever its form, is not as strong in the Irish Republic as it is in the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. Without being a “hyper-constructivist” (p. 6), one can see that the new version of Articles 2 and 3 or the 2004 constitutional reform of Irish citizenship law are explicit signs that people and politicians south of the border, are not so attached to the one-separate-island-one-separate-state ideal? What all these questions aim to point out is that, even though the 1998 Agreement was a historic achievement which brought an enduring end to violence, largely because “consociation has helped manage and calm those divisions intensified by bullets and bombs between 1966 and 1997” (p. 289), it must be equally recognised that, so far, the GFA has failed at bringing together all stake-holders around one unifying cultural, political and territorial project. As has been revealed since the Brexit

referendum, the century-old Irish border question has still not been solved and little progress towards a final and comprehensive settlement has been made since 1998.

All in all, although this review is unfortunately too short to give a full analysis of all the merits of this book, the reviewer wanted to stress three essential reasons why anyone engaged in the scholarly study of the Northern Irish question should be greatly thankful to Brendan O'Leary for writing this volume. First, it is by far one of the most comprehensive and detailed analyses of the processes, negotiations, actors and changes which, since Direct Rule was re-imposed in 1972, have led to such a lasting and quasi general cessation of political violence in Ireland. Second, because it is certainly the most complete and synthetic defense of consociationalism that Professor O'Leary has ever produced. Third, because, as any piece of outstanding scientific value, it raises questions as much as it answers them, questions on how the future of Northern Ireland can be definitely agreed without the political, cultural and territorial rights of one community prevailing over the political, cultural and territorial rights of the other.

Philippe CAUVET

***Pop Beckett: Intersections with Popular Culture*, Paul Stewart, David Pattie (eds.), Stuttgart, Ibidem-Verlag (Samuel Beckett in Company; 6), 2019, 308 p.**

If his name is alien to no one, Samuel Beckett remains in the popular imagination as a somehow hagiography-prone obscure authorial figure, whose texts are difficult to decipher. The sixth volume of the "Samuel Beckett in Company" collection, entitled *Pop Beckett: Intersections with Popular Culture* is a timely investigation of the author's presence in our everyday life. Following the publication of P. J. Murphy and Nick Pawliuk's book *Beckett in Popular Culture: Essays on a Postmodern Icon* (2015), this new collection gives an insightful reevaluation of the dichotomy between "high" and "low" cultures in the context of Beckettian studies. The introduction identifies a series of artistic fields on which the Beckett persona sits: a bridge inaugurated in 2009 in Dublin, an episode in the BBC TV series *Urban Myths*, his portrait laid on many Trinity College gifts, and so on. The list seems endless and shows to what extent an author and his oeuvre soon become commodities for the sake of popular culture. This collection offers thus a clear overview of how, where and why Beckett's oeuvre remains present in many forms.

The first part of the book investigates the way in which Beckett interacted with popular culture in his own time and how it manifests itself in his texts. In his essay, John Pilling starts by giving an abundance of allusions to popular culture within Beckett's earlier texts, with a special emphasis on songs in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. He goes on to demonstrate that Beckett's texts were never completely