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Global Awareness in Paula Meehan's work

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ABSTRACT

In "The Future of Irish Poetry?" Richard Tillinghast claims that the new generation of Irish poets—in contrast to the previous one dominated by figures such as Yeats, Mac Neice, Kavanagh, and Heaney—has a weaker sense of local rootedness, place, and locality. Whereas these previous writers shared a strong concern with ideas of nationhood and locality, [w]hen we come to the new poets . . . that old sense of Ireland seems to have gone up in smoke. It would seem that now, as a prosperous member of the European Union, host to waves of emigration from Eastern Europe and elsewhere, Ireland is just like everywhere else.

In contrast to Tillinghast's view, Meehan's work, from earliest to her most recent, shows how the local continues to be central to her aesthetic. This sense of rootedness in Ireland is nonetheless combined with an awareness of oppression in other parts of the world, an awareness which was perhaps absent in the work of those poets that Tillinghast considers literary precedents of recent Irish writers. As this critic points out in reference to Harry Clifton, contemporary Irish poetry

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"shows how much the world has changed, how glaringly its inequalities, brutality and exploitation impress themselves on" writers who are able to put themselves "in a position to see first-hand what is happening in other parts of the world—other cultures that MacNiece, Heaney and Kavanagh would seem to have had little interest in" (170). This article shows how Meehan's work is driven by the "globalist" impulse of creating an opentranslocal solidarity among oppressed communities. Her stance could be summarized as what globalization theorist Gilroy calls a "metropolitan planetary consciousness" (83), an attempt to connect, on a global scale, disparate minorities by seeking resemblances between one another. While prior work has explored.

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This article shows how Meehan's work is driven by the "globalist" impulse of creating an opentranslocal solidarity among oppressed communities. Her stance could be summarized as what globalization theorist **[End Page 180]** Gilroy calls a "metropolitan planetary consciousness" (83), an attempt to connect, on a global scale, disparate minorities by seeking resemblances between one another. While prior work has explored GyatriSpivak's notion of "planetary consciousness" in Meehan's work in relation to her environmental aesthetic and her critique of transnational capitalism (Allen Randolph), my concern here is modeled on Gilroy's concept of metropolitan transnationalism as it pertains to Meehan's social and democratic commitment.[2] In this essay, I address the danger of misrepresentation involved in adopting such a globalist stance, and explore Meehan's attempt to avoid this risk by reflecting in her work a fluid and unstable identity. This view of the poet as constructed by multiple identities, constantly in flux, is what grants her "a fully communal role" (Kirkpatrick).

TOWARD A "PLANETARY CONSCIOUSNESS" AND "GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW"

Meehan's work reinforces the possibility of continuity within humanity based on common experiences and the relationship of human beings to one another across time and space. Ever since her initial volume *Return and No Blame*, Meehan has attempted to establish an ancient tribal connection, a communal stance in her earnest attempt to "learn this ancient holy way" (*Return* 36). In "Dialogue," the speaker connects poetry with female heritage. Here, Meehan is encouraged in her task by her grandmother, who offers her some transcendental words regarding the life of the poet and the individual: "Blessed be the road that does not end. / Blessed be each minute that borrows us / To witness its eternity" (33). The temporal framework past, present, and future is irrelevant for Meehan's grandmother, who in her ability to see beyond this chronological continuum understands all things and beings as related synchronically by their a temporal journey through "the road that does not end. "What this figure transmits is spiritual enlightenment, an awareness of the eternity of the soul and an acknowledgment of the interconnection of all poets,

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dating back to ancient times: "We are old: a species gone to seed, / Run wild under the stars / And our talk is old talk" (33). The artistic terrain is conceived as an ancestral medium which stretches back to "old . . . species" walking timelessly along "the road that does not end." Poets are united by their planting of seeds which run wild and beautiful under stars. Meehan conceives poetry as an "old talk," almost a prelinguistic language, a superior practice that surpasses the mere local and parochial. Her definition of poetry as something ancient, which "predates letters and literature" and re-establishes the modern man on "a continuum that goes way back into the very earliest kind of **[End Page 181]**community" (O'Halloran and Maloy 8) finds its source in the influence of her grandmother in her life, a woman who taught her about the power of the oral tradition, a medium which preserves culture and keeps the ancestral memory alive. Meehan's poetry has thus both a public and private dimension; as she claims, her poems are "autobiographical in one way," but also "public speech" (Dorgan 269).

In this sense, poetry for Meehan is a fluid area which allows the crossing of boundaries: between the dead and the living, between times, places, and cultures. All things past and present are interconnected, Meehan suggests, just because of the ongoing circularities of birth, change, death, and rebirth that characterize life itself. Meehan perceives poetry as a fluid artistic terrain that allows her to cross all sorts of established temporal and geographical boundaries. Her work thus accords with Ramazani's definition of a "translocal poetics" (350) and Welsch's notion of "transcultural" discourse, as that which "is able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects. . . . The globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specificity and particularity."

Meehan's translocal poetics reflects Tillinghast's view that contemporary Irish poetry is characterized by global rather than local concerns. Poems such as "No Go Area," "The Leaving," and "The Dark Twin" (*The Man Who Was Marked by Winter*), in their indeterminacy of local references, denounce the existence of xenophobia as a universal experience, which could happen regardless of place and time. As Brain claims, "these could be troubles anywhere: Northern

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Ireland, Nazi Germany, Yugoslavia" ("Dry Socks" 111). Meehan's interest in the existence of oppression on a global, rather than local, scale may stem from her contact, ever since an early age, with images, cultures, and ideas from across continents. As she claims, "I grew up in a world where the abiding images or symbols forme were those of Hiroshima, the nuclear force, the power that could absolutely obliterate the planet, and the image of the whole earth from space. So, in a way, my consciousness is global" (González-Arias 198).

Indeed, Meehan's poetry invokes the ideal of global, "planetary consciousness," away of thinking which extends beyond parochial interests to incorporate the whole biosphere, "an appreciation of nature as a common condition of our imperilled existence, resistant to commodification and, on some level, deeply incompatible with the institution of private property" (Gilroy 83–84). As Allen Randolph explains, this ideal of "a planetary imaginary" is for critics such as GyatriSpivak difficult to conceptualize, due to the fact that it is understood "as an unrealized horizon, a 'catachresis for inscribing collective responsibility,' 'an experience of the impossible'" (Spivak 102; **[End Page 182]** qtd. in Allen Randolph). How then to establish transnational forms of solidarity without running the risk of falling into the abstract and the "impossible"? Is it possible to exercise a non-exclusive planetary politics, one able to encapsulate the needs of disparate realities?

Meehan's work resolves this ethical dilemma between the particular and the global by uniting her local commitment and planetary consciousness.[3] As her poetry shows, adopting a global perspective involves using the local as the starting point of any form of revolutionary politics. Allen Randolph claims, in reference to a poem by South African writer Jeremy Cronin, that the planetary can be "both locally inflected and globally connected."As seen in "Dialogue," Meehan's private personal experiences, in particular her childhood memories, are key to the communal stance she adopts in her work. This intersection between the global and the particular, planetary consciousness and local commitment is clearly reflected in her enigmatic poem "She-Who-Walks-Among-The-People" (*Pillow Talk* 60–62). This prosaic poem has been sharply criticized by Kelly,

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who claims that, in its fusion of "politics, parable and poetry," it "dishonours the considerable poetic gifts that Paula Meehan possesses" (31). Indeed, this poem, written in honor of former Irish President Mary Robinson, illustrates perhaps more clearly than any other poem Meehan's social awareness and her belief in the political role of poetry. The child in the poem implores her granny to tell her stories about her ancestors: not childish stories such as the Little Red Riding Hood, but more "authentic" stories that would connect her with her past. The granny, then, tells her an ancient story of a time when "a bad spell / was cast on the whole island" (60). The narrator describes a world marked by an unequal distribution of wealth among tribes: whereas some of them"owned all the land and chariots and most / of the things on the island," at the bottom of the hierarchical social pyramid, there were "[t]he tribes who had nothing"; "[n]obody cared about them" and even worse "A terrible silence / stole over them" (60). Rather than idealizing the past, the granny describes a world that is marked by greed over property possession. This is a world that needs to be brought out of its shadowy and silent past and spoken of. The grandmother teaches the child the power of words, their ability to transform reality precisely by breaking the imposed silence. Sanctifying the labor of "lawgivers," "doctors," and "teachers," she transmits the power of speaking on behalf of this dispossessed community (61–62).

Out of these "shining warriors," the granny singles out "a slip of a girl with laughter in her eyes," who "studied hard at her books" and learned Law. With "her marvellous gift of speech," she fought on behalf of "the women [who] were slaves / and had to do what the men told them to do" **[End Page 183]** (61). Meehan implies that raising oneself as a spokesperson is necessary at a certain point: the girl in the poem is made by the people "chief / among all the warriors" (notice in this respect the title of the poem, "She-Who-Walks-Among-The-People," a compound reminiscent of honorary titles granted to the chiefs in tribal societies). But speaking on behalf of someone can also be a risky job which may lead to misrepresentation. That is why speaking out gives way to listening to the needs of her own people:

She'd come and stand among the people and *listen*.

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Wherever they organized and struggled she'd be there to *give them courage* and bear witness to their hard work and service.

(my emphasis, 62)

Speaking on behalf of her community is not the key issue here; this leader encourages action by "listen[ing]" to their needs and "giving them courage." She walks among the dispossessed; she learns their way of living and lives among them, and is not away speaking at high courts. Indeed, Meehan believes that the universal and communal voice, in order to be honest and truthful to itself, must necessarily avoid global aspirations and be grounded in local and personal experience. Meehan has acknowledged the risk of deliberately assuming a global posture by talking about an experience which is not her own: a poem"has to do with your own vision and experience. It is dangerous to want to write a poem that isn't your own" (González-Arias 202). In this sense, grounding her poems in her own lived experiences and locating herself in specific geographical and cultural locations are essential for exercising a successful "politics of location," because as Hirsiaho claims: "A global viewpoint to any political question is impossible; every viewpoint is a place on the map. By writing a text as one's own world map, universal or global assumptions lose their credibility" (159). Indeed, the female warrior in Meehan's poem stands in between the communal and the individual, the global and the local, an interstitial stance encapsulated in the slogan "act locally, think globally." Like the Biblical Saviour, she knows the sufferings of common people through her engagement with them. It is only by means of this personal awareness of local tragedies, Meehan implies, that noncoercive and nonativistic forms of transnational connections are possible. When the child in the poem asks her grandmother "'And, Granny, did the people live happy ever after?'" (62), the narrator does not offer the expected fairy tale ending, but finishes with a moral prophecy that reinstates in the present context the importance of social responsibility and commitment to the dispossessed: **[End Page 184]**

'The people will endure.

They are scattered

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over the face of the earth like those stars above you over the face of the heavens. Our dreams are as clear as water from a good well and we mind each other.'

(62)

The chosen saviors of these dispossessed people are guided by the dreams they perceive "as clear as water from a good well," the symbol of authentic knowledge in Celtic lore.

Meehan uses the stars as emblems of a cross-cultural and cross-temporal connection between marginalized underclass communities. Like those stars "over the face of the heavens," the speaker admires their persevering power to survive despite the passing of time. As Hena points out by appropriating Benedict Anderson's notion of nationhood: "the globalization of cultural identity is not always equivalent to cultural imperialism. Instead, globalization can foster 'global imagined communities' linked through their common disempowerment and resistance" (258). Ramazani explains this global form of solidarity as a form of "identitarian transnationalism," according to which allegiances are created (339). Similarly, in Meehan's poem, the divisions between past, present, and future disappear, as the speaker imagines the existence of cross-national and cross-cultural identity formations "scattered / over the face of the earth" but united by their shared experiences of trauma and dispossession. In this sense, this poem becomes a textual site that accommodates a "global imagined community" linking people across temporal and physical divisions (Hena 258). Meehan's final lines contain a glimmer of hope, as her granny envisages a future populated by people who will be able to endure and survive. In this sense, Meehan suggests that resistance might be located in the link between cross-cultural identities. This points toward the utopian vision of a "globalization from below" on behalf of the poor, the vulnerable and the dispossessed (Appadurai 3),[4] something also invoked by Gilroy in his call for a "planetary consciousness" based on "a cosmopolitan solidarity," an "open communication . . . from below" (80, 92).

This sort of collective responsibility on the part of the poet is also reflected in "Home by Starlight" (*The Man* 46–47). Here, Meehan also employs the stars as icons that suggest the temporal and

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geographic union among different oppressed communities. Establishing a dialogue with an imaginary fellow poet, the speaker turns to the stars as "patterns" for her poetry, guiding posts for her journey through life: **[End Page 185]** you will find patterns there, you will know lifetimes ago we gazed at the same constellations amazed by such brilliance, and found in their rule the measure of each year, each journey.

(46)

Once again, poetry is represented as an ancient tribal task that unites the primitive bard and the contemporary poet across time and space. What unites poets is their role as representative spokespersons of the oppressed and vulnerable communities. The dispossessed are like those stars in the sky, whose reality is always present but largely ignored. The task of the poet must be to "gaze" at those "constellations" in order to break their imposed silence and, inspired by their "brilliance," denounce their oppression.

Poems such as "Dialogue," "She-Who-Walks-Among-The-People," and "Home by Starlight" gesture toward a transcendental translocal poetics in their suggestion that poetry is a means of traveling across physical and temporal barriers. These poems illustrate Meehan's belief that globalization affords the possibility of forms of collaboration across geographies (O'Halloran and Maloy 5). As anthropologist Appadurai claims, "globalization is not simply the name for a new epoch in the history of capital or in the biography of the nation-state. It is marked by a new role for the imagination in social life," an imagination interested "in constructing world pictures" (13).Repoliticizing the term, Appadurai views imagination as active and agential in the new global culture. Similarly, Meehan envisages a more revolutionary politics of culture that enables the transformation of the meaning of the imaginary in the modern world. By "constructing world pictures" in her work, Meehan redefines the global as a field of possibility for the dispossessed and the marginalized, illustrating the usefulness of forging solidarity among oppressed collectivities.

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A "DISINTEGRATIVE" UNIVERSAL VOICE

As we have seen, Meehan's poetry attempts to speak on behalf of an oppressed underclass community. Adopting such a global stance is nonetheless a risky enterprise, because it runs the risk of undermining difference and misrepresenting a reality that is heterogeneous. Indeed, Meehan is very much aware of the danger of presenting herself as a spokesperson. As she claims in various interviews, she sympathizes with the oppressed although **[End Page 186]** she avoids acting as a spokesperson: "I couldn't consciously set out to give a voice to the marginalized, but all my sympathies have been and continue to be with people who are on the edges of things" (Mills 6); "you have to be wary of the pressure to speak for other people. I can't speak for all women" (Praga 73). In order to avoid the essentialist risks present in such a task, Meehan's poetry emphasizes the limitations involved in presenting herself as a spokesperson, both by highlighting her inability to act as a communal poet and her difficulty of access to her ancestral past. As she claims in an interview and as her work continually exemplifies, the poet's view is always partial and incomplete, for no one can ultimately offer a final and viable version of what really happened:

Everybody had a different version of every story and you would watch a small event in life become dramatized with each retelling till it had assumed epic-like proportions in the course of few hours. . . . So that was the sense of this community, constantly inventing itself, telling its stories endlessly to each other. I remember my own attempts to find the family history and it was an impossibility because every version was different.
(77)

Unsurprisingly, then, Meehan defines herself as an "artificer" when she writes about her past, because she would "instinctively fictionalize . . . some of [her] biography" (O'Halloran and Maloy 21). That is why the way past remembrances are evoked in her work, ever since her initial volume of poetry, is by means of motifs that suggest uncertainty or lack of complete accessibility. As she says in "The Women In The Backyard": "Echoes: beat around my head like rain" (*Return* 10). Her memories are like persistent sounds not clearly discernable and drops of water that escape the speaker's grasp. In "Coda: Payne's Grey," Meehan tries to "to paint rain // day after day," but her

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artistic craft, not surprisingly, is fraught with difficulties, for it is impossible to capture something which is constantly dissolving rather than static (*Painting Rain* 96).

Water may suggest the difficulty that the speaker finds for conceiving a stable sense of community identity on which to base her notion of self. Nevertheless, it is paradoxically these unstable boundaries of belonging and attachment, this lack of firm identity formation, which allow Meehan to adopt such a global communal approach. As Bhabha claims: "It is, ironically, the disintegrative moment, even movement, of enunciation—that sudden disjunction of the present—that makes possible the rendering of culture's global approach" (217) . The subversive potential of "the disintegrative moment" Bhabha mentions is clearly captured in "From Scratch" **[End Page 187]** (*Painting Rain* 24), where Meehan employs the shore-ocean metaphor in order to talk about the process of writing and the Buddhist philosophy of the impermanence of material things. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker visualizes the sand as the piece of paper on which she strives to write a "name" with the aid of "a driftwood stick, a hazel wand," an enterprise that, once finished, must be started again "from scratch," due to the ability of water to dissolve any sort of scriptures in sand:

At the tide's edge your name—going, going gone with the turning tide. What was mere dream of empire—dissolved, wrecked. Gone badly wrong.

(24)

This poem serves as a reminder that even "name[s]," that is to say, human or social forms of designation, are temporary. By highlighting her inability to fix names in artistic representations, Meehan scrutinizes the very act of consigning fixed identities, and subsequently the act of naming, classifying, and distinguishing "Oneself " from the "Other." Her poem, therefore, becomes an appropriate global text that is able to encapsulate, in its indeterminacy, disparate realities. Meehan calls for a disintegration of individual selves and "name[s]," in order to achieve spiritual union with the whole universe. Only by means of this liberating dissolution can the poetic speaker become a truly "global lyric subject" (Hena 247).

Meehan's recent poem, "Nomad Heart" also suggests that collective and individual identity is arbitrary and transitional. In particular, this poem acknowledges the self as part of an ever-

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changing volatile world, as a constantly fluid entity which moves in accordance with the moving of the earth in the galaxy:

Sometimes looking to the cold wintry stars you can feel the planet move as it whirls in the flux of the galaxy, the whole path of the milky way buzzing like a hive.

They say it's better to journey than arrive— halting being the usual rigmarole of move-along-shift. Sometimes the soul just craves a place to rest, safe from earthly wars.

(*Painting Rain* 27)

The speaker marvels at the mystery of the whole universe and at the position of the human being within the galaxy. The vocabulary here is of **[End Page 188]** movement rather than inactivity: move, whirls, flux, path, buzzing, journey, move-along-shift, etc. The soul is presented as a spiritual and immortal entity resting in an ever-changing body: its ability to mind-travel and to see beyond ("it's better to journey than arrive") is what gives the poet a certain ability to stand across national, temporal, and cultural borders. This notion of a transhistorical, transcultural "I" flowing freely across geographies and temporalities echoes Whitman's universal stance in poems such as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," where the speaker's individual voice suddenly disintegrates and achieves a mystical fusion with past, present, and future groups of men and women riding the same ferry: "The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated, every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme, / The similitudes of the past and those of the future" (Baym, et al. 993).

Meehan's fluid translocal identity is also captured in the last poem of *Pillow Talk*, "Home." Here, Meehan puts into practice her definition of poetry as something that is deeply connected, rather than detached from, lived experience: "When the song that is in me is the song I hear from the world / I'll be home" (71). As she claims in an interview, "real poetry" is not "something that exists in books, but something that exists out in the culture and the language" (Brain, "Nobody's Muse" 14). This view of poetry as something lively and fluid rather than static and formalistic prompts the speaker to travel around the world in search of this particular song. The constant movement of this nomadic speaker is also reflected in the open form and long poetic lines of the poem, which remind one of Whitman's free verse. Indeed, this poem illustrates the transformative

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power of changing locations. The term "home" in this poem has such a broad meaning that it almost becomes a free-floating signifier. The repetition of "home" throughout the poem, and its generalization as a place in language, ultimately signifies that, in terms of geography, home could be for the speaker anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, such a global perspective does not ultimately mean that, for Meehan, poetic discourse is independent of historical contexts or ultimately detached from material realities. Significantly enough, the idea of "home" is simultaneously connected to the global and the local: local names and places resonate throughout the poem: a song she "heard once in Leitrim . . . in the Sean Relig Bar" and later "a mighty sound" she heard "On Grafton Street." As in "She-Who-Walks-Among-The-People, "Meehan reconciles the local and the global by simultaneously focusing on the particular and the universal.

Roland Robertson, arguably one of the most influential theorists of globalization, claims that globalization is shaped by "the twofold process of **[End Page 189]** the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular" (177–78). According to Robertson, the universal and the particular are not to be understood as incompatible categories, constantly in opposition. In "Home" Meehan similarly combines the local and the global in her depiction of a poetry intrinsically rooted in, and yet necessarily beyond, lived local experiences. The speaker's destiny is ultimately "to take to the road," and continue traveling, for the sake of maintaining her song alive to the changing times and for the sake of recording everyday lives:

I'm burning my soapbox, I'm taking the very next train. A citizen of nowhere, nothing to my name.

I'm on my last journey. Though my lines are all wonky they spell me a map that makes sense. Where the song that is in me is the song I hear from the world, I'll set down my burdens and sleep. The spot that I lie on at last the place I'll call home

(*Pillow Talk* 72)

In this sense, it is fluidity and instability that grant the speaker the possibility of adopting a cultural "global approach" (Bhabha 217). Rootlessness is intrinsically connected with artistic liberation and freedom of speech. The poem opens the possibility of creating new sites of identity,

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outside the boundaries of nationalities and belongings. As Welsch claims, we live in a transcultural period in which "there is no longer anything absolutely foreign. Everything is within reach. Accordingly, there is no longer anything exclusively 'own' either." This notion of identity as free from attachment, bondage, and ego is recalled in this poem. The emigrant speaker, in alignment with the harmonies of nature, lets herself flow along the currents of time and space.

Another poem which expresses this form of translocal identity is "Hermit," where the speaker ventures "out into the world," freeing herself from stereotypical conventions of femininity (*The Man Who Was Marked by Winter* 61). As in "Home," this is a poet who discards parochial exclusiveness by traveling worldwide: "My body will be my shelter. . . . I'll survive on air and scholarship / and the delight of my own voice" (61). The sense of place is defined as something fluid and the voice as something sustaining. Similarly, in the title poem "Return and No Blame" (39–40), Meehan adopts the Biblical role of the prodigal son, bound to leave his home and travel along "unknown roads" (40). This romantic notion of the poet as a vagrant stands as a perfect counterpart to a property-obsessed society ruled by greed and consumerism. **[End Page 190]**

In this sense, Meehan has no difficulty in recognizing identity as multiple in the modern world, and it is precisely this fluid approach that grants her the authority to adopt a global stance. In "Chameleon" (*Return* 62–63), Meehan states, through a series of parallelisms, the many multiple identities she acquires in her life. This is dramatized not only through the animalistic reference to the chameleon, a lizard characterized by its ability to change color, but also in the many places she has traveled to: Athens, County Galway, Poland, New York, and Eastern Washington University. Indeed, this cross-cultural global identity in Meehan's work is also informed by the intergeographic mappings of her poetry. In "Intruders," geographical boundaries suddenly merge as the speaker, vacationing on a small Scottish island, imaginatively recalls Dublin's "Finglas, Cabra and Ballymun (*Return* 37)." In "Crete . . . A Journey,"reflections on the truthfulness of Catholic images are made in front of the pagan temple of Lissos (31–32). In the sequence "Three Love Poems, "Meehan intersperses Irish landscapes—the coast of Leitrim and the Slyguff Lock, at County Carlow —with the "lovely Grass of Parnassus," in order to infuse her romantic scenes with an air of sacredness (*Dharmakaya* 34–36). In this sense, her poetry constantly traverses

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cultural and geographic boundaries by conjoining place names, mythical heroes, and premodern magic.

CONCLUSION

Meehan's work challenges Ramazani's comment that the application of the very label "transnational" to Irish poetry is difficult because "Irish poetry is often assumed to be even more 'provincial' and 'rooted' than other varieties of contemporary poetry" (346). As we have seen, the historical trauma of Meehan's class spills across national and temporal borders. As a poet fully alive to history, Meehan combines her interest in recording her local past with her attempt to build a "metropolitan planetary consciousness" (Gilroy 83), a "globalization from below" on behalf of the vulnerable and dispossessed (Appadurai 3). To avoid the charges of misrepresentation in her use of a universal communal voice, Meehan records a notion of identity that is fluid rather than fixed. Her work integrates multiple realities and changing identities precisely by recording the poet's communal identity as a mobile and dynamic signifier which avoids the risk of "reassert[ing] the very national and ethic categories of identity that a cross-cultural poetics is meant to outstrip" (Ramazani 353).

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Notes

1. In memory of my Granny, "la yaya," a blessing in my life.

2. Spivak advocates this concept of planetary consciousness in *Death of a Discipline* (Allen

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Randolph). Both Spivak and Gilroy prefer to use the term "planetary" rather than "globalization," partly due to the connotations of imperial homogenization implied in the latter concept. As Gilroy explains, "[t]he planetary suggests both contingency and movement. It specifies a smaller scale than the global, which transmits all the triumphalism and complacency of ever-expanding imperial universals" (xii).

3. This ambiguity between the global and the local implicit in transcultural texts has been variously articulated in recent years by Hena, Ramazani, Appadurai, and Gilroy.

4. Appadurai contrasts this vision of globalization with what she terms "globalization from above" (17), a more standard notion of globalization as determined by multinational corporations and national governments.

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