



Inaugural Symposium of the Suburban Cultures Inter-disciplinary Research Network

The Sensory Suburb

National University of Ireland Maynooth, December 9th, 2011

PROGRAMME

9:00 Registration and welcome (NIRSA Conference Room, 2nd Floor IONTAS Building)

9:15- 11:15 The Sensory Suburbs Salon. (Chair: Chris Niedt, Hofstra University)

Nine short presentations from colleagues around the world on work in progress that connects with the theme of the symposium and the broader mission of the Suburban Cultures network:

Amanda Hagood, Hendrix College, Conway: Science Fiction in the Suburbs

Ellen Rowley, Trinity College Dublin: The Dublin Suburb 1940-1960 as a Catholic gesamtkunstwerk?

Daphne Medina, Independent Scholar: *An Examination of Colorado Springs Suburban Residential Landscapes as Cultural Historic Resources*

Finola O'Kane Crimmins, University College Dublin: Visual Subversion in Eighteenth-Century Dublin: The Suburban Design Practices of the Fitzwilliam Estate

Robert Wood, Independent Scholar: Suburban Tabi

Kate Scarth, University of Warwick: Charlotte Smith's Eighteenth-Century Sensory Suburbs

Manuela Carvalho, University of Lisbon: The Lisbon Log Project: An Overview

Francesca Negro, University of Lisbon: Centripetal Forces: the Representation of the City and the Suburbs in Saramago's 'The Cavern'

Q and A

11:15-11:30 coffee (foyer)

11:30- 12:45 Keynote address: Mark Gottdiener, State University of New York at Buffalo: *Theming and the New Form of Urban Space: Beyond the Suburb/ City Dichotomy.* Respondent: Eamonn Slater, NUI Maynooth (Chair TBC)

Q and A

12:45- 13:45 lunch (Global Kitchen, reserved area)

13:45-15:15 Writing the Suburbs. (Chair Jo Gill, University of Exeter)

Joanne Jacobson, Yeshiva University, New York City: Remembering Eden: The American Suburb's Sensory Landscape in Memoir

Moynagh Sullivan, NUI Maynooth: Gender and Class in the poetry of Rita Anne Higgins

Q and A

15:15-15:30 coffee (foyer)

15:30- 16:30 *Reading the Suburbs*. Booker prize winning author, Roddy Doyle reads from his work followed by Q and A session (Chair Mary P. Corcoran NUI, Maynooth)

16:30 Close of symposium, next steps for research network.

The work of Mary Burke, a visual artist based in Dublin, whose subject matter is the suburbs, will feature on screens in the IONTAS Building foyer during the Symposium. Visit her site at www.maryburke-visualart.com

Speakers:

Professor Mark Gottdiener: Theming and the New Form of Urban Space: Beyond the Suburb/ City Dichotomy



Mark Gottdiener holds an MA in Economics from the University of Minnesota and a PhD in Sociology from SUNY Stony Brook. His areas of specialization are urbanism and cultural studies. He is one of the founders of the New Urban Sociology, with a textbook of that title now in its fourth edition (co- author), and of the Socio- Semiotic approach to material culture. He is the author/co-author/editor/co-editor of 16 books and over 100 research papers in these fields. Awarded a Fulbright Research Fellowship in 1985, he has also held visiting professorships in the U.S. and Europe, as well as lecturing in several Latin American countries. In 2010 he was presented with the "Robert and Helen Lynd Award for Distinguished Career Achievement" by the American Sociological Association.

Abstract

Applying the Lefebvrian approach to urban space, I claim America's current stage of political economy, Global Capitalism, following the previous period of Transnational De- Industrialization, has produced a new urban form, the Multi- Centered Metropolitan Region. Disappearance of the City-Suburb dichotomy formerly organizing discussions of urban patterns is one key characteristic. Now multi- centered growth poles of commerce, retailing, air transport and manufacturing create their own inner dynamics ruling the massive metropolitan regions in the U.S. and possibly elsewhere.

Within the new form of space, locational competition has become more acute as multi- centers vie for visitors/clients/customers. The phenomenon of "theming," in turn, has expanded in kind by facilitating the new, prevailing spatial dynamic. New forms of architecture, new uses of existing architectural forms, new spaces of consumption, new ways of consuming space, and other important hybrids of signs attached to the built environment have resulted. Examining these current changes within the context of Suburban Studies, my presentation provides a new understanding of theming and its more recent variations, including branding and architecture as sign value. An introductory section first examines the origins of suburbia by focusing on the "supply side" creation of developments outside the city center and their maturation through corporate and government manipulation of land use regulations and consumer demand.

Professor Joanne Jacobson: Remembering Eden: The American Suburb's Sensory Landscape in Memoir



Joanne Jacobson grew up in suburban Chicago (USA), and received her B.A. (from the University of Illinois, Urbana) and her M.A. and Ph.D. (from the University of Iowa)--in American Civilization. Her memoir *Hunger Artist: A Suburban Childhood* (Bottom Dog Press/ Bowling Green Station University) appeared in 2007, and her academic study *Authority and Alliance in the Letters of Henry Adams* was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1992. Her critical essays and creative nonfiction have appeared in such publications as *The Nation, New England Review, Fourth Genre, Massachusetts Review* and *Michigan Quarterly Review.* She has taught American studies, American literature and creative writing at the University of Iowa, at the University of Angers, France (as a Fulbright lecturer), at Middlebury College, and at Yeshiva University in New York City, where she is currently Professor of English.

Abstract:

This presentation will frame a reading by Joanne Jacobson from her 2007 memoir *Hunger Artist: A Suburban Memoir*—an evocation of the unravelling of one middle class Jewish family's effort to start fresh on suburban ground in the 1950s and 1960s. The memoir will be located in a post-World War II "landscape of hope," grounded in the optimistic prerogatives of home ownership and the mastery of outdoor space: the sensory textures of lawn, backyard and garden; the world of do-it-yourself. The emotional fate of those expectations of transformation—of upward mobility and material plenty—will also be explored in the context of the author's own process of writing this memoir, and of other memoirs dealing with growing up in U.S. suburbs during this period.

Dr Moynagh Sullivan, NUI Maynooth: 'Looking at Being Someone': Gender and Class in the Poetry of Rita Ann Higgins



Moynagh Sullivan is a University Lecturer with research interests in Psychoanalytic and Gender Theory, Twentieth Century and Contemporary Poetry, Women's Writing, Postmodernism and Popular Culture. She has published a number of articles in these areas, and she has co-edited two collections of essays on contemporary Irish Culture and Society, *Facing* the Other: Interdisciplinary Essays on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Contemporary Ireland, and *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, as well as a special issue of *The Irish Review* on Irish Feminisms. She lectured in Tokyo and at UCD for a number of years before she came to the English Department at NUI, Maynooth.

Abstract:

This paper primarily examines the work of Galway poet Rita Ann Higgins and examines how her work seeks to rethink the place of poetry in Irish culture. Higgins's poetry addresses the complicated intersections between gender, class, and sexuality, (dis)ability and age, and it deals with how the commodification of desire underwrites cyclical re-investment in poverty itself as well as how it drove Celtic Tiger culture. The paper also explores how her work addresses the public private dialectic through focusing on public and private 'spaces' including a woman's body, through which conflicting demands of class and gender intersect. It also looks briefly at how questions of space, privatization and suburbia are addressed by the poets Eavan Boland and Paula Meehan.

Roddy Doyle: Reading the Suburbs



Roddy Doyle is the author of nine novels, a collection of stories, and *Rory & Ita*, a memoir of his parents. He has written five books for children and has contributed to a variety of publications including *The New Yorker*, *McSweeney's*, *Metro Eireann* and several anthologies. He won the Booker Prize in 1993 for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*.

Roddy has written for the stage and his plays include *Brownbread* and *Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner*. He co-adapted with Joe O'Byrne his novel *The Woman Who Walked into Doors* and he co-wrote with Bisi Adigun a new version of *The Playboy of the Western World*. He also wrote the screenplays for *The Snapper*, *The Van, Family*, and *When Brendan Met Trudy*, and he co-wrote the screenplay for *The Commitments*

Roddy Doyle lives and works in Dublin. His version of Nikolai Gogol's satirical comedy *The Government Inspector* is currently running at Dublin's Abbey Theatre.

Salon Presenters and Chairs/Respondees:

Amanda Hagood, Hendrix College, Conway: Science Fiction in the Suburbs



Amanda Hagood (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University) is an ACS Environmental Fellow in English at Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas. Her research centres on the idea of environmental disaster in twentieth century U.S. literature, with a special interest in the writing of the emerging food movement. She has published on the unlikely literary affinity of Rachel Carson and Flannery O'Connor, and on the post-apocalyptic fiction of Judith Merril.

Abstract:

I propose a presentation exploring the relationship between science fictional representations of the suburbs and the development of environmentalist thought. The presentation features work completed for my manuscript, The Domestication of American Environmentalism, which explores the post-World War II 'Suburban turn' in US environmental thought: the ways in which concepts of domesticity, consumerism and private property began to claim a place beside, and to some degree replace, older 'green' paradigms such as resource conservation or wilderness preservation. My project treats several representations of suburban space and suburban life, ranging from Judith Merril's Shadow on the Hearth (1950), which imagines the aftermath of a nuclear attack on New York City from the perspective of a suburban housewife, to Margaret Atwood's The Year of the Flood (2009), which envisions the creation and collapse of corporate-sponsored 'compounds' that deconstruct the longstanding idea of a suburban utopia. in keeping with the theme of 'sensory suburbs', my presentation would focus on the portrayal of the suburbs in Cold War era science fiction films such as Jack Arnold's The Incredible Shrinking Man (1957), which explores the vulnerability of suburban spaces and suburban bodies to the environmental hazards of nuclear fallout and synthetic pesticides. In particular, this film combines forced perspective, oversized sets and (for the time) cutting-edge blue-screen technology to defamiliarise the suburban environment, creating a visual argument against the stability and safety often attributed to the lived experience of the suburbs. The spatial anxiety, I ultimately argue, has become a key component in the imagination of global environmental disaster which drives much of modern environmental thought.

Ellen Rowley, Trinity College Dublin: *The Dublin Suburb 1940-1960 as a Catholic gesamtkunstwerk?*



Dr Ellen Rowley is a research associate and award-winning lecturer on the subject of architectural history and theory with the School of Histories and Humanities, Trinity College Dublin (2003 – 2008). She writes about the history and culture of architecture in Ireland from 1940 -1970. Along with fellow DoCoMoMo Ireland cofounders, she is working to safeguard key buildings of this period from destruction and careless redevelopment, notably heading up the first inventory of C20th architecture for Dublin City Council (2011). She is assistant editor of *Irish Architecture 1600 – 2000*, Volume IV of *Art and Architecture of Ireland* (Royal Irish Academy, Yale

University Press, 2014), and enjoys collaborating with architects, artists and film-makers around the culture of building.

Abstract:

From 1930 – 1960, Dublin's development occurred at its periphery: great wheels of new roadways, punctuated by green spaces, provided the low-density frameworks for terraced and semi-detached residential boxes surmounted by pitched roofs, while front and back gardens and canopied front doors completed the image of Dublin's new 'toy towns'. This was the frenzied making of Dublin's middle landscape – a peripheral condition which peaked during the early 1950s and whose legacy shapes the experience of Dublin as an amorphous city today.

Provocatively, the mass housing of this middle landscape was consistently and persistently supported by the equally new but vast public structures of ecclesiastical authority, namely the Catholic Church building and accompanying schools. Firstly, due to their lower densities, the new suburban housing estates were favoured from a moral stance. And secondly, the blank nature of the estates allowed the Church to assume unparalleled control in terms of pastoral services.

My research probes into the Catholic flavour of Dublin's mid-twentieth-century process of suburbanisation. From previously unseen archival material (Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, Dublin Corporation and pointedly, the McQuaid papers, Dublin Diocese), I am stitching together an image of the Church's influence on the Local Authority – hand made maps by and letters from Archbishop McQuaid's priest advisors are taken together with analysis of the built evidence, so as to posit that Dublin's new suburbs from 1940 – 60 were conceived of as total works of Catholic social engineering, kinds of Catholic *gesamtkunstwerk(s)*.

Daphne Medina, Independent Scholar: An Examination of Colorado Springs Suburban Residential Landscapes as Cultural Historic Resources



Daphne Medina is a social historian whose work focuses on cultural shifts within specific areas of history such as food studies, ethnic/women's histories and all things 'subaltern'.

Daphne currently lives and works in Utrera, Andalucía, Spain, where she is researching Utreran food history and the impact of modernization on traditional foodways in the local area.

Abstract:

The suburban residential lawn and landscape is a complex landform that incorporates cultural history, social ideals and aesthetics, and urban design into a carefully planned space that is often a reflection of a community's values.

The purpose of this presentation will be to examine the historical value of the planning and maintenance that have gone into the landscaped lawns and private areas of traditional American suburbs. For the purpose of place, the focus of this study was suburban neighborhoods located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

By analyzing the history of the American suburb as well as the ideals and expectations that grew out of Progressive and New Deal era ideologies, it becomes clear that lawn and landscape design has transcended the suburban American residential landscape, and has taken a place within the

subsequent lawn-care industry which has developed to ensure residents that their vision of suburban utopia can be continuously fulfilled with the right amount of fertilizer, pesticides and water.

In addition, the moral order of suburban neighborhoods is questioned, and it is argued that suburban morality has been directly affected by the individualistic nature of our homes and the privacy-driven landscapes surrounding them. For if a *public* landscape is a reflection of community values, then what does *private* residential landscaping say about personal ones? Suburban landscapes reveal much about our communities, and when viewed as a historical resource, Colorado Springs' residential landscaping, like much of suburban America, reveals much about the city and the type of society that it fosters.

Finola O'Kane Crimmins, University College Dublin: Visual Subversion in Eighteenth-Century Dublin: The Suburban Design Practices of the Fitzwilliam Estate



Finola O'Kane is a lecturer in architecture and conservation at UCD. Her first book *Landscape Design in Eighteenth-century Ireland; Mixing Foreign Trees with the Natives* was published in 2004 and awarded the inaugural J.B. Jackson Book Prize by the American Landscape Foundation in 2007. An architect, she has published widely on Irish design history both nationally and internationally and her forthcoming book *Ireland and the Picturesque; Design, Landscape Painting and Tourism in Ireland 1700-1830* will be published by Yale University Press on behalf of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art.

Abstract:

A new Protestant church was a key building project for any Irish eighteenth-century estate town. Its typical position at the focus of the town's central square professed the town's spatial allegiance to the established church, and to the local Protestant landlord who had frequently given both site and substance for its construction. Subverting this practice, the absentee landlord Viscount Richard Fitzwilliam of Merrion, owner of 1,366 acres in south-east Dublin, was not interested in promoting any such urban design interventions on his city centre lands, and even less so his suburb of Blackrock, county Dublin. Blackrock's churches were slotted unceremoniously into available plots on the long avenues linking the principal houses. No civic space interrupted these long axes and the church spires, which visually structure many Irish towns, both large and small, were all off-axis and divested of their visual power. They were likewise divested of their spiritual and temporal authority, as without a church, and its attendant community structures, Blackrock was inherently subversive in the confessional environment of eighteenth-century Ireland. Lord Fitzwilliam was also in the unusual position of actively promoting catholic agents and tenants on his estates, where length of lease determined the landscape's management and thus its appearance. Where the lease was longer than thirty-one years the landscape reflected this fact, and discoverers circled some of Fitzwilliam's best tenants, taking their improved landscapes for their own.

This paper will examine the role the absent point of view played in directing Lord Fitzwilliam's development decisions in Dublin during the course of the eighteenth century. It will also explore the perception of catholic landscape and the role of the Fitzwilliam estate in creating and promoting such a category. Employing a broad range of visual and documentary sources, the paper will also examine the structure of one of Ireland's first maritime leisure suburbs and the attraction such developments held for an absentee eye.

Robert Wood: Suburban Tabi

Robert Wood studied at the Australian National University and the University of Pennsylvania. His latest article is on Aboriginality and the suburbs and is forthcoming from *Jacket2*.

Abstract:

Suburban Tabi was written anonymously and published by The S Press of Perth, Australia. It is a poetic, essayistic, aphoristic reply to the Aboriginal Australian experience of the suburbs. Drawing on Kant, Marx and the Language Poets, Suburban Tabi self-consciously situates itself as a manifesto of sorts and expresses what it is to be suburbanist. It establishes suburbanism and suburbanists as antithetical to suburbanites and recovers what is good in the suburbs in ethical and aesthetic categories. Suburban Tabi is a book that warrants engagement with as it theorises a way out of the post-modern, post-ideological era and offers practical advice on how to be in Australian suburbia for those with liminal identities.

Kate Scarth, University of Warwick: Charlotte Smith's Eighteenth-Century Sensory Suburbs



Kate is a PhD student in the Department of English & Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick. Her thesis addresses the proliferation of affluent homes on the edges of Romantic-era London. She is particularly interested in looking at these homes from a spatial/geographical perspective, and her thesis' working title is *London Suburbs: Spaces of Home in Fiction 1788-1822*.

Abstract:

In the late eighteenth century, London was rapidly expanding outwards, resulting in unprecedented suburban growth. The aristocratic, gentry, and merchant classes alike built villas in London's *campagna*, while once rural villages like Clapham and Islington expanded, and ribbon development sprung up on the roads leading to these places. I will focus on Charlotte Smith's novels *Emmeline* {1788} and *Celestina* {1791} to look at how women's experience of suburban places is mediated through their senses, specifically through their emotional engagement with place.

In this novel, the acquisition of a London-adjacent home ideally reflects a retreat from the city, allowing for an opportunity to recapture or stake out a rural idyll and to cultivate strong emotional bonds with intimates. Meanwhile, other characters ostensibly import the corrupted feelings of urban fashion and dissipation into London's environs. All of these places are suburban in their geographical position just outside the city, allowing, if desired, for daily movement between the suburban home and the metropolis. They are also suburban in that they are emotionally constructed in relation to the city, whether this is a relationship of rejection, emulation, or a combination of the two. I will use a spectrum that moves from solitude and rejection of the city through to immersion in the urban. Smith portrays the two ends of this spectrum as dangerous emotional places, characterized by out-of-control sensations bordering on Gothic terror and fear. It is in the centre of the spectrum that women can attempt to create a more balanced suburban place existing between the poles of urban and rural emotional excesses.

Manuela Carvalho, University of Lisbon: The Lisbon Log Project: An Overview



Manuela Carvalho is Research Fellow in Comparative Studies at the Centre for Comparative Studies, University of Lisbon. Her research and teaching interests lie mainly in the field of theatre and interarts studies. She was the principal investigator of a funded research project in the area of theatre and cultural translation and is the co-editor of two books on theatre translation published in Portugal. Her current project is concerned with the role of artistic practices and representations of the urban space in the cultural, political and spatial configurations of the city of Lisbon.

Abstract:

The project *Lisbon Log: Performing the Urban Space* (University of Lisbon) was designed as a response to the need to study the role of cultural and artistic practices, as well as representations of urban space, in the new configurations of the city of Lisbon. This approach considers arts in urban and cultural redevelopment, including the intervention of cultural and artistic promoters on the one hand, and the contribution of different social, ethnic, cultural and artistic groups and minorities, on the other. The role of suburban cultures in this approach is fundamental.

This short presentation intends to outline the main objectives, tasks and expected outcomes of this project (and team members), as well as to present some preliminary data collected. We aim to reinvigorate discussion of arts practices by framing them within architectural, political and urban contexts; and, at the same time, address the built environment in the expectation that new possibilities for social interaction, communication and creative expression will emerge.

Francesca Negro, University of Lisbon: Centripetal Forces: the Representation of the City and the Suburbs in Saramago's 'The Cavern'



Francesca Negro is a Post-doc researcher at the Centre for Comparative Studies at University Of Lisbon, her theme of research is domestic space in contemporary literature. She's also member of the Lisbon Log project, a project of research focused on the study of the artistic and social development of the city of Lisbon and its peripheral areas. She recently organized a conference on the theme *Public and private, sliding borders,* a congress whose main interest was studying the changing in the relation between public and private spaces and communitarian and individualistic attitudes from a multidisciplinary point of view.

Abstract:

In José Saramagos' works the house, and the living space is always very important and represents a complex symbolic apparatus.

The city of Lisbon is a central and living element in the *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* (1984) and the urban territory is also very important in the novel *All the names*, but it's in *The Cavern* that Saramago reproduces a sort of universal map of the relationship between the city, the suburbs and the peripheral territory in general. The space that defines the peripheral territory is very dense from the point of view of the sensorial perception and the opposition between this space and the one of

the mall, that is absorbing all the city into its centre, is described by the opposition of the physical sensations of the two context and the progressive distortion of the human perception.

Describing the life, the activity and the movements of an old man and his family (living in the suburbs of the city) Saramago reflects on the domestic set in general and on the necessity of building a very personal territory in the urban context. Using Plato's myth of the cavern he undertakes a deep analysis of human expectations and needs in relation to social, public and private space, and give us a wonderful representation of the changing of the urban territory in the last thirty years.

Nihal Ekin Erkan, Marmara University, Istanbul and Burcu Temiz, Istanbul University: Poster – 'The Conceptualisation of "Suburb" in the City of Istanbul'.

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Christopher Niedt, Hofstra University

Christopher Niedt is currently an Assistant Professor of Applied Social Research in the Department of Sociology and Academic Director of the National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University. His research is broadly concerned with the effects of metropolitan growth and decline on race and class inequality. He has studied the political history of inner-ring suburbs, their recent turn towards gentrification, and the viability of regional approaches that aspire to more equitable and inclusive forms of prosperity. His most recent research projects focus on the property rights movement, the housing crisis, and growing racial/ethnic diversity in the suburbs. He is currently editing a volume on suburban social justice movements that challenge racial/ethnic exclusion.

Eammon Slater, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Eamonn Slater is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He has edited two books with his colleague, Dr. Michel Peillon, *Encounters with Modern Ireland*, (1998) and *Memories of the Present*, (2000). He has published a range of articles on the Political Economy of nineteenth century Ireland, on Irish landscape, and various aspects of the sociology of Irish culture. Recently, his work has taken a 'dialectic turn' in which he has attempted to apply a dialectical framework to understanding the relationship between nature and society. This endeavour has lead to a number of publications on the suburban front garden, the 'theming' of nineteenth century landlord estate parks in Ireland and the 'reoccupation' of Irish suburban ghost estates by nature (an exploration into visual sociology). Currently, he is doing research on Marx's conceptualizations of colonialism in nineteenth century Ireland from a dialectical perspective.

Jo Gill, University of Exeter

Jo Gill is Senior Lecturer in Twentieth-Century Literature and Director of Education at the University of Exeter, UK. Her interests are in the poetry of the suburbs, and suburban life-writing. She is the author of *Anne Sexton's Confessional Poetics* (UP Florida 2007), *Women's Poetry* (Edinburgh UP 2007) and *The Cambridge Introduction to Sylvia Plath* (Cambridge UP 2008). She has also edited or

co-edited several books including *Modern Confessional Writing* (Routledge 2006) and *The Cambridge Companion to Sylvia Plath* (CUP 2006). She has recently completed a new book on *The Poetics of the American Suburbs* and will shortly publish several journal articles based on this research including an essay on Josephine Miles in *Western American Literature* and on Phyllis McGinley in *Women's History Review*.

Mary P. Corcoran, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Mary P. Corcoran is Professor of Sociology, at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, where she is also a research associate at the National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA). She is a graduate of the University of Dublin, Trinity College and Columbia University, New York. Her research and teaching interests lie primarily in the fields of urban sociology, public culture and the sociology of migration. She has edited five volumes of the *Irish Sociological Chronicles* series. The author of numerous scholarly articles and reports, Corcoran's most recent book (co-authored with Jane Gray and Michel Peillon) is *Suburban Affiliations: Social Relations in the Greater Dublin Area* (Syracuse University Press/UCD Press, 2010).