

this case. Yet, whilst the trend in analogising pain is important, analysis on why animals specifically are used is lacking in Bourke's analysis. The estrangement of the sufferer is explained but the reason behind the language employed, which places people as others, lacks depth. This is surprising considering that Bourke has previously written on this topic, so many readers would expect the incorporation of this material into her new work.¹ Instead, in this chapter at least, Bourke uses the source material only to demonstrate changes in the way pain was expressed, and the impact it had on the sufferer. She does not offer an explanation of how the metaphor was constructed. Thus, whilst Bourke does move the debate forward on pain by opening up this idea that pain is not all the same, and her argument on language is interesting, the book fails to do more than show that this area deserves to be studied.

I do not, however, want to discourage anyone from reading *The Story of Pain*; it has been written as a foundation to help develop new ways of thinking about ourselves and our sorrows (xi). Bourke has successfully demonstrated that pain should be seen more as an event which shifts and changes depending on the social environment and century – certainly the experience is very different since the arrival of painkillers and anaesthetics. Bourke's study achieves its goal of opening pain up as a serious line of academic enquiry, but it is a book that leaves you asking for more.

Nicholas Grene, *Nothing Quite Like It: An American – Irish Childhood* (Dromore: Somerville Press, 2011). 176 pages.
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Nicholas Grene's memoir, *Nothing Quite Like It* recollects the author's childhood in Ireland as 'an Anglo-Irish, American, Polish Jew' (9). The work comprises nineteen chapters, ranging from 'Prehistory' (referring to the author's family) to 'Going up to Trinity' in the 1950s. It recounts how a little boy he had grown up and built his own world in opposition to external reality, in which he had to face a 'Clash-limited perspective' (38) - Clash being the name of the small village in which the author was raised and lived for almost sixty years. The book explores his school days in the local Protestant National

¹ Bourke, Joanna, *What it Means to be Human: Reflections from 1791 to the Present*, (London: Virago, 2011).

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School, his subsequent boarding schools in Drogheda and Belfast, and his experience of being a young farmer. Here, Clash is a point where ‘the rootedness’ (10) and ‘the belonging’ (10) that the author has come from is discussed and reflected upon. Clash, the boy’s entire universe, is affected by the agricultural and cultural changes experienced throughout the many small villages and towns of Ireland at the time. Grene illustrates these changes with descriptions of his interactions with *Art Nouveau* in the 1950s, and by describing the changes in harvesting methods over time. In that sense, Grene’s memoir also functions as an historical record of the transforming Irish landscape in the 1950s. Indeed, throughout the memoir, the reader is made aware of the changes taking place within the agricultural industry, including the reduced dependence upon workhorses, as ‘the turnover of farming activity names come and go within a generation’ (53).

What makes the author’s childhood interesting is that both of his parents were professors and his mother, a student of Martin Heidegger, wrote a book about Heidegger. Published in 1957, this work ‘was the first monograph on the subject in English’ (40). We might imagine it a blessing to be born to intellectual parents, but Grene’s childhood was in fact far from simple: his father was a professor of Classics at the University of Chicago, but would come back to Ireland for farming every half-year. The author was born in Chicago, America, but he was raised in a small village in Ireland where ‘to be not Catholic was to be Protestant’ (33). As the author recalls, living and working on the farm was a significant element in shaping his childhood and such a ‘labour-intensive’ (54) experience does not in fact make for an idyllic rural childhood. Rather, the author’s rural childhood resembled the daily life of an adult farmer, in the sense that he had his own farm work to perform. Indeed, Grene depicts a farm life based on his vivid memory of ‘digging the potatoes’ (54), ‘threshing’ (62) and the like, all very much removed from any nostalgic sentiments of childhood. To put it another way, the vivid and meticulous description of childhood memory in this memoir does not converge on the longing for a lost time, but shows childhood as a process of life itself.

Such an attitude arises from the author’s insistence on maintaining a distance between his childhood and the present, as is demonstrated through his use of sentences starting with ‘I can remember’ or ‘I cannot remember’. This distance creates a series of co-existing voices which mix the views of a little boy with ‘the greying sixty-something professor of English’ [at Trinity College Dublin] (51). And the gap creates the rhythm of the narrative in the memoir in terms of reconstructing the childhood memory. Although the author says: ‘[I]t is all reconstruction, nothing of my own’ (14), and even says: ‘I can remember nothing’ (14), from that point of view, this memoir is a sort of palimpsest in that the author re-imagines and re-writes the memories of the past. The distance represented by the sentences, ‘I cannot remember’ and ‘I can

remember', enables Grene to give a cohesive view to his memoir in terms of narrating his story. This remembrance of his childhood is appealing to readers in particular, who don't necessarily know much about how having a diverse social identity played out in the context of Irish society in the 1950s. Complicated aspects of identity are described in a witty and humourous fashion. For instance, he recalls that 'it was buttons that turned me into a Protestant' (29), referring to the fact that aged five he 'was put in the local Catholic National School' (30), but his 'incompetence with buttons' (30), which were 'too stiff...to open' his trousers, caused him such "shame" among his peers that he 'was sent instead to Balinatone, the alternative Protestant National School' (30).

Indeed, we see that the author stands at the threshold between 'all the separations' (44) –'landowner and workman, Protestant and Catholic, the overeducated and the undereducated' (44), which exist throughout the Irish farming community.

This unusual position within the wider social context is also reflected in his parents' divorce. This event could be understood as a turning point in the memoir as 'the terrible trauma of divorce [...] was the social shame it represented' (122). He recalls that divorce, in those days, conjured an image of divorcees as 'women in books with scarlet-painted fingernails' (121) and that 'the image of the scarlet-painted fingernails remained with me throughout' (122). These images strike an emotional resonance in terms of the boy's growing pains, particularly when we realise that divorce was regarded as a 'social shame' (122) in Ireland at that time. Afterwards, we see the teenage Grene travel to France to study and to Israel to work on a kibbutz. Later, we encounter him as an adult as he enters Trinity College and leads his college life in accordance with what he knows of the farm, calling himself 'a freshman farmer' (165).

The memoir ends with a scene in which the author lands in New York after his first flight to America. Grene's tendency to recount moments of time throughout his life make *Nothing Quite Like It* an interesting work; arguably it is more than a memoir, because aspects of the incongruity between the world and the boy are not only convincing and appealing, but also function as an historical recollection of farm life in 1950s Ireland. In this respect, this book is a fascinating contribution to both memoir and, more broadly, a local history of Ireland. It will appeal to a general public who know little of contemporary Irish history and to readers interested in Irish history or Irish literature and memoir.