

attitude, ultimately became his identity. He incarnated a tradition of the past in a new environment, a fact that helped him evoke memories and nostalgia amongst the migrant community. Importantly, he could now earn a living exclusively from his art, which was – and still is – very significant for a *sean-nós* singer. His reception, however, was far from uniform. The authors describe the contradicting responses of the audience at Heaney's performances. For some Irish-Americans, he was a living reminder of the 'hard Ireland' that they left behind, a feeling that was not necessarily pleasant. Simultaneously, he was not welcome elsewhere because he would repeatedly refuse to reaffirm stereotypical understandings of Irishness by singing songs such as Danny Boy. He was, therefore, rejected by many living on the East Coast of the United States. This discussion of Heaney's reception fruitfully raises and explores a number of issues of 'authenticity', always at the centre of any study of Irish music.

While the work does explore some of Heaney's iconic songs in depth, it could be argued that it focuses on Heaney as a man from Conamara who sings, rather than Heaney the singer and storyteller from Conamara. By entitling the book *Bright Star of the West*, the authors chose to glorify their protagonist. The recounting of his decision to leave for the US, advance his career, and elevate the visibility of this regional singing style, overshadows the personal aspect including the history of his wife and four children that stayed behind. The monograph, instead, details the individual choices that he made, and the impact that those choices had on his life and surroundings. The authors chose to look at the ways in which Heaney adapted his artistic identity and life to the new environment after his relocation to the US. This focus helps *Bright Star of the West* develop from a summary of Heaney's life events into a critical analysis of the choices that he made and the way in which they affected his career trajectory and the history of the genre.

Ó Laoire comes from a similar area (Gaeltacht) and he is also a singer. From reading this analysis of Heaney's life, one gets the impression that Ó Laoire productively uses his own knowledge of the style of singing, culture and background to draw on similarities, differences and reasonings with Heaney's life. Heaney represented his tradition in quite a similar way that Ó Laoire continues to do today as a well-known *sean-nós* singer. Thus, the author's experience presumably facilitated his empathy with Heaney and helped him understand the strategies of the protagonist's professional life.

If ethnography is a balance between description and interpretation, this book leans well on the interpretive side of the scale. It successfully relies on the knowledge and background of the authors to pull together all the threads of information on Heaney's life. It builds a good understanding of Heaney practising and progressing his art throughout his day-to-day life. While doing this, the authors manage to remain

vibrantly present throughout the read, ultimately turning it into a lively and passionate biographical account.

CAITLÍN NIC GABHAN,
University College, Cork

***The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* by Guy Standing. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. 209pp. £17.99 paperback. ISBN 978-1849663519**

Guy Standing's new book is a timely contribution to the theoretical scholarship of a wide array of social sciences, as it suggests the emergence of a new social class, the 'precariat'. Focusing on the multiplying number of people working under precarious conditions worldwide, the monograph promotes the idea of 'a new group in the world, a class-in-the-making' (p. vii), drawing on social theory and economic science. The author is Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath, and former Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This is a polemic, opinionated book, where the author emphasizes the urgent need to 'wake up to the global precariat', because 'there is a lot of anger out there and a lot of anxiety' (p. vii).

To start with, one of the most interesting, novel contributions of this work comes from its terms of publication. It is circulated under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License. For those not familiar with this terminology, this book is free to be shared, copied and distributed, even remixed, as soon as there is attribution of authorship and publication and it is done for non-commercial purposes. This novel move in academic publishing by Bloomsbury Academic is timeous with the crisis in libraries' funding for the procurement of journals and other works, as well as the proliferation of piracy and peer-to-peer sharing practices by consumers.

This book also breaks new ground in the Anglo-Saxon social sciences, by proposing formally the term 'precariat', to describe a new 'class in-the-making'. Alongside only a handful of academics in the English-speaking academia (e.g. Vosko, 2010, Ross, 2009, Procoli, 2004), Standing is joining the continental debate on 'precarity'. He suggests that a new social class can be identified within a more fragmented class structure of seven social groups: the *elite*, at the top; the *'salaried'* next, in stable full-time employment, followed by the *'proficians'*, self-employed, professionals, technicians, and so on. The *old working class* is next, which, the author suggests, is shrinking, but persisting in some parts of the world. The *precariat* is the next group, followed by the *unemployed masses* and, finally, by 'a detached group of misfits living off the dregs of society' (p.8).

The 'precariat' group is described in the first three chapters. In the first chapter, the author traces its Ancient Greek antecedents to the labourers group of 'banausoi'. The concept of 'precariat' is defined through the lack of labour-related security, as well as by its working conditions. The author suggests that there is also a process of workers' precariatization, leading to effects on the 'brain' (information overload) and the 'psyche' of the precarious (anger, anomie, anxiety, alienation), which render the precariat a dangerous class. The second chapter serves a theoretical contextualisation, with the transformation of the economy in the globalisation era (1974-2008), culminating in the recent economic shock (2008-).

The third chapter responds 'everybody, actually' (p. 59) to the question of the social composition of the global precariat, without, however, offering any demographic figures. The author distinguishes between 'grinners', i.e. people who welcome precarious jobs, and 'groaners', those obliged to accept them in the absence of alternatives. The concept of 'feminisation of labour' (p. 60), which presents a challenge to traditional male (typically blue-collar) jobs and roles is elaborated. Moreover, the challenges for urban youth and the old-agers, leading them to the trap of precarity, are presented theoretically, as well as those faced by marginalized groups.

The next chapter deals specifically with migrants as an integral part of the global precariat. Standing suggests that the association of migrants with 'denizens', people who have a limited range of social rights, is contrasted with full-rights' citizenship. While touching on the diverse forms of peoples' mobility, the author attests that migrants are the 'light infantry' (p.113) of global capitalism, a 'floating reserve' (p.102) of labour, facing populist hostility and racism, in need of basic income security and a collective voice.

Chapter Five brings forth the changes in the notion of work, which, in turn, build pressure on the precariat. Work-related concepts such as time, the workplace, skills and leisure, have been transformed in the service economy, demanding more intense work in various places, imposed by the expectation of constant connection through electronic technologies. This shift has generated concepts like the 'tertiary lifestyle' (p.131), which highlights the negative effects on the whole life spectrum of the precarious, from leisure to reproduction.

The final two chapters contain the political argument of the rise of the precariat, the earlier highlighting the bleak reality, a 'politics of inferno', with the latter advancing the author's proposal for a 'politics of paradise' (p.155). The bad news for the precariat lies in the neo-liberal state's regime, using surveillance and psychotherapeutic methods in all realms of life to invade, control and discipline the 'dangerous class' into being 'happy', despite being demonised for its mis-happenings. This conduces to a dangerous lack of interest in participating in democratic institutions, or a

horrific tendency towards populist neo-fascism. In the midst of the economic crisis affecting Europe, the last chapter outlines a proposal for a '21st Century Good Society' by advancing in detail the 'mildly utopian' (p.155) idea of an unconditional Basic Income for all denizens in any society, complimented by work rights and a collective voice.

One of the values of the book is its easy-to-follow writing, avoiding the specialised jargon and the 'dry' neutrality often found in the academic style of argumentation. The many theoretical arguments of the book are invigorated by accessible examples and information drawn from sources worldwide, while avoiding the reader's flooding with references. Is this a good thing, though? In certain passages, one feels that some more evidence and referencing is needed to back up the author's polemic arguments and ethico-political positioning.

Indeed, this is its main shortcoming, especially for students and scholars of anthropology. The author's perspective comes from atop, from the ivory tower of academic social theory, not from below, aided by and revealing the precariat's voice and agency. Both in Ireland and in Greece, the financial shock has multiplied the number of the people falling into the ranks of the precariat, with social sciences and humanities students and young scholars exceptionally affected. In order to conclude empirically that the precariat is 'a-class-in-the-making', there is an eminent need for more evidence and systematic, participatory ethnographic work on the singularities, the localisations, the discourses, the transnational networks and the agencies of the precarious especially in those countries most affected.

In any case, *The Precariat* feels more effective as an introductory monograph, more suitable for a lay audience, advancing the author's opinion and politics on Basic Income, but not as a major scholarly work for the social sciences; one which would empirically establish the precariat as a normative social grouping of people.

GIORGOS KESISOGLOU

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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