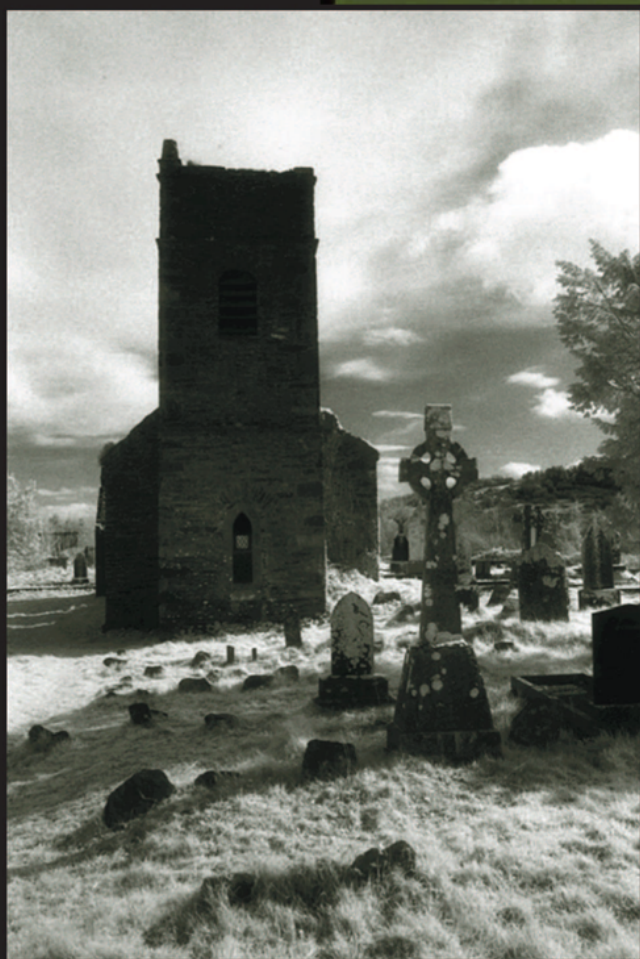# IRELAND

Historical Echoes, Contemporary Politics

Richard B. Finnegan
Edward T. McCarron

IRELAND

NATIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD: EUROPE

edited by W. Rand Smith and Robin Remington

This series examines the nations of Europe as they adjust to the changing world order and move into the twenty-first century. Each volume is a detailed analytical country case study of the political, economic, and social dynamics of a European state facing the challenges of the post–Cold War era. These challenges include changing values and rising expectations, the search for new political identities and avenues of participation, and growing opportunities for economic and political cooperation in the new Europe. Emerging policy issues such as the environment, immigration, refugees, and reordered national security priorities are evolving in contexts still strongly influenced by history, geography, and culture.

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IRELAND

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RICHARD B. FINNEGAN
EDWARD T. MCCARRON

In Memory of
Mary Therese Finnegan

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Acronyms

ADC	Anti Divorce Campaign
ANIA	Americans for a New Irish Agenda
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EEC	European Economic Community
EPC	European Political Cooperation
EU	European Union
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organization
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IRB	Irish Republican Brotherhood
IWFL	Irish Women's Franchise League
IWLM	Irish Women's Liberation Movement
IWSF	Irish Women's Sufferage Federation
IWU	Irishwomen United
NICRA	Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NORAID	Northern Aid Committee
PLAC	Pro Life Amendment Campaign
RTE	Radio Telefis Eireann
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SPUC	Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child
TD	Teachta Dala
UDA	Ulster Defense Association
UUUC	United Ulster Unionist Council
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union

County boundaries
Provincial boundaries
National boundaries
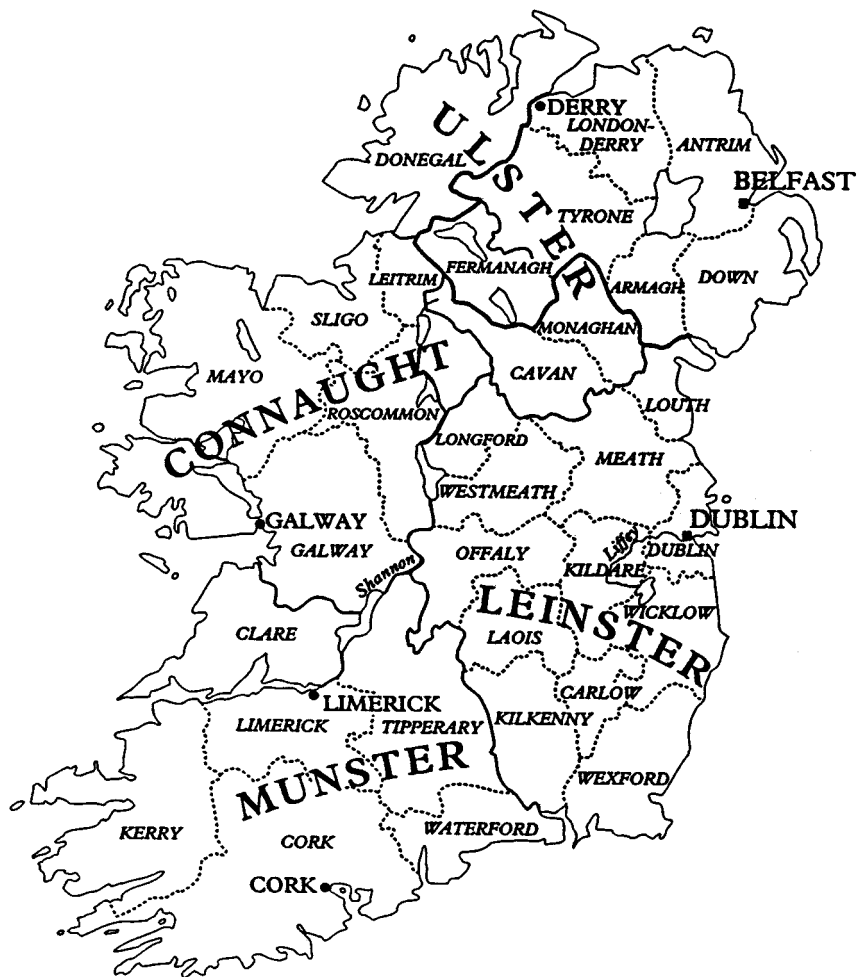
Introduction

Three Irelands; Many Interpretations

A visitor to Ireland, like Caesar encountering Gaul, will discover at least three Irelands. On this small island can be found some of the most attractive tourist areas in Europe. The jutting cliffs of Moher rival those of the Algarve in Portugal. The Ring of Kerry enchants the eye with its panoramic vistas of mountain and sea. The brooding Carlingford peninsula is redolent with Irish myth and legend. There is a mystique and intimacy to the Irish landscape that provides escape and inspiration to the world-weary traveler. Indeed, within easy reach—often just around the bend or across a field fence—a visual tapestry unfolds: Megalithic tombs, medieval monasteries, Norman tower houses, and Georgian estates. A tour through the west brings one in touch with a slower pace, from the traditional pubs and sessions of County Clare to the remote fishing ports and headlands of Donegal. Much the same spirit of discovery can be found on the urban scene. In Dublin one can sample the treasures of the National Museum, productions at the Abbey Theatre, the Dublin horse show, the Book of Kells at Trinity College, and the narrow streets and trendy shops of Temple Bar—all combined with the warm hospitality of the Irish people.

Another Ireland is that of the Irish people, different from the whirlwind Ireland of the tourist. Although the Ireland of traditional small farms still lingers on in part, a new diversity is apparent on the rural landscape. One can find prosperous Irish farmers driving Land-Rovers and air-conditioned combine harvesters, organic homesteaders from Germany and Holland, and locals trying their hand at chocolate making or ostrich farming, to mention but a few. Dublin, befitting its cosmopolitan persona, likewise plays host to a broad spectrum of people: urban professionals, brightly clad buskers, new immigrants from Romania and Somalia, working class families who seem to spill out of a Roddy Doyle novel, and an army of students drawn to Dublin like pilgrims to Mecca. Ireland is above all a youthful culture. Everywhere there are young people—mobile phone at the ready—who are influenced more by continental Europe, techno-pop, and computers than by the rural agrarian roots of their parents or grandparents.

The quintessential feel of present-day Ireland is change. During the 1990s Ireland enjoyed a booming economy, one that has brought an excitement of possibilities. Jobs abound in high tech and tourism. New housing developments

spring up like mushrooms, from Dublin to Dingle. Conspicuous consumption is everywhere in evidence, from luxury cars and holidays in Provence to designer clothes and gourmet food. Yet a closer look reveals another side to Ireland at the new millennium. The "Celtic Tiger" hasn't touched everyone. Indeed, urban slums, unemployment, and poverty coexist with new factories producing pharmaceuticals, chemicals, computers, and electronic components. In Dublin, politicians and bureaucrats struggle with unemployment, economic growth rates, currency fluctuations in the European monetary system, the effect of the Euro, tax policy, agricultural output, foreign debt, crime, drug use, and social welfare programs.

Since the 1960s, the Irish people have confronted new ideas and values in their schools, churches, and homes that have spilled into Ireland from tourists, television, and travel. The settled ways and firm beliefs of the old Ireland were, and are, battered by changing attitudes on sex, religion, work, consumerism, and education. The Irish people are becoming more numerous, better educated, younger, urban and suburban, and more aware of the possibilities for Ireland. They have higher expectations than did previous generations. The politicians run to keep up as the political parties and political leadership attempt to adapt to a new agenda of issues and a new electorate. The clamor of interest groups presses on Dublin: not only labor, farmers, and industry, but also new groups such as women, gays, students, and environmentalists. The Church, a powerful pillar of Irish society, is caught in a wave of change and struggles to reconcile paternal encouragement of piety with internal scandals and secular challenges to traditional practice and doctrine.

A third Ireland is geographically integrated with the first two but is politically separated by an international boundary. Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, is not only divided from the rest of Ireland but divided within itself. The two ethnic communities of Northern Ireland, nationalist Catholics and unionist Protestants, live in a state of persistent tension and conflict that occasionally flares into ruthless bloodshed despite politicians' efforts over the past quarter century to produce peace. Two urban areas, Belfast and Londonderry, contain the bulk of the population. In the 1970s and 1980s each of these cities was marked by rows of burnt-out houses and empty, bricked-up buildings. Streets were closed off at night with giant metal gates. Shoppers were searched at a fence, subsequently removed, that closed off the Belfast city center to potential bombers. The streets were busy not only with traffic but also with the patrols of British armored vehicles. The two communities were not only separated by a barbed-wire-topped "peace line" but were driven apart by wedges of fear and hostility. Hopes for peace have been elevated by different developments, most recently by the 1998 Good Friday Peace Agreement and the elections to a new Assembly, but the two sides are constantly subject to repolarization by events such as the burning of Catholic churches, a bitterly hostile demonstration over marches in Drumcree, the murder of three children in July 1998, and a savage explosion in Omagh in August

1998 that killed twenty-nine women and children shopping for school. Economic decay, high unemployment, an unpopular security apparatus, and skilled terrorists have been the everyday experiences of this Ireland. The economic decisions are made in London. The politicians in Ulster are wed to their respective communities and peace comes only inch by inch.

At the same time, the island, in a cornucopia of creativity emanating from both sides of the political divide, has become the center of a new Irish renaissance, symbolized by the Nobel Prize in Literature given to Seamus Heaney in 1995. Heaney's accomplishments are accompanied by the emergence of poets such as Paula Meehan, novelists like Roddy Doyle, playwrights such as Brian Freil, dancers from *Riverdance*, filmmakers such as Neil Jordan, and musicians ranging from U2 to Enya.

Of the three Irelands, it is the latter two that are the concern of this book. The tourist's Ireland is an attraction that should not be missed, but to see that Ireland alone is to miss the two central dilemmas of contemporary Ireland: the adaptation to the process of rapid economic and social change in the Republic of Ireland and the bitter fruit of political relations between the two communities in Ulster.

The modernization process began in the early 1960s, initiated by a period of relatively rapid economic growth in the Republic. The new crisis in Northern Ireland began in the late 1960s with the inception of a civil rights movement in Ulster. The inhabitants of the island have been caught up in the rapid currents of these two changes, some positive, some negative, but all touching virtually everyone in some way. Sociologist Michel Peillon notes that "to catalogue social change in Ireland under the single label of 'modernization' does not get us very far."[1] Peillon is correct in that the term *modernization* has been used predominantly to refer to nations striving to break the bonds of colonization, politically and socially mobilize their populations, develop an industrial economic base, and foster a sense of nationhood. Ireland had accomplished these goals to some degree in the hundred years from 1848 to the declaration of a republic in 1949.[2] However, the status of the Republic of Ireland in the 1950s, and even up to the present, was hardly that of a modern industrial nation. Not only was Ireland economically a very considerable distance from U.S. or European standards, but social and cultural patterns and values retained a traditional quality as well.

Political modernization involves increasing equality of the people in the political system in areas such as political mobilization and participation, equality before the law, and merit as the criterion for social rewards. Increasing capacity, in part based upon economic growth, involves the development of institutions in the political system to extract resources and provide the services that arise from the increase in participation. Increasing differentiation of social roles such as the division of labor and economic specialization create increasing social complexity. Finally, modernization implies secularization: information based on science, authority based on consent, and decisions based on personal values.[3]

The modernization of Ireland in this context is a process that occurred in the nineteenth century, when the Irish adopted the political ideology of liberalism from Wolfe Tone, were mobilized by O'Connell and Parnell, and developed national identity through Young Ireland and others, in the process of nation building. The values and structures of modern European industrial nations have been thrust onto the Irish political, economic, social, and cultural agenda. The effect has been to generate an unprecedented degree of prosperity coupled with problems of unemployment and international debt; the transformation of the educational system; the decline of rural Ireland; and problems of mass urbanization such as crime, drugs, and inadequate housing. Secular pressures and internal embarrassment are a blunt challenge to the values and role of the Catholic Church; a new political agenda has sprung from the suburban young electorate and from the economic transition. It is difficult to resist labeling this process "modernization" because these social dynamics are certainly closer to those of the most developed nations of North America and Western Europe. Although Ireland has not yet accumulated the capital base and wealth of the industrial nations, the economic, political, and social agenda of issues for this small country is essentially the same as that of the advanced members of the European Union.

When change occurs rapidly in a wide variety of arenas—social, political, economic, and cultural—there arises a wide variety of explanations and interpretations based upon the different opinions and perspectives of those involved. Positive and negative responses come from politicians, journalists, academics, religious leaders, and the population at large as they react to the actual and expected effects of the policies chosen and contemplated. In this book we examine a number of these different interpretations and explanations in the context of historical change, political development, economic development, Church–state relations, social change, and Northern Ireland, as the Irish grappled with the questions of political independence, economic autonomy, the decline of provincialism, the rise of pluralism, and the unsolved conundrum of Irish nationhood: Northern Ireland.

A country rooted as Ireland is in its past has a certain social investment in the preservation of that past and the values that it embodies for the nation. The past in Ireland is a dangerous zone of political and historical contention in which the understanding of events, ideas, and perspectives resonates into the present as part of the meanings people ascribe to their political and cultural identity. Because the history of Ireland is inextricably intertwined with that of the United Kingdom, the political history of Ireland has been seen as a saga of the evolution of a people toward their political, cultural, and economic independence from that omnipresent bulldog to the east. But the history of Ireland can be seen also in different ways that challenge that view of the struggle for independence.

Irish history can be seen also as not so much a uni-linear, uni-dimensional, scripted history as a series of competing stories or interpretations that condition our ideas about the present. The nationalist perspective, for example, treats the history of Ireland as the struggle of an Irish Celtic nation to fight free of the

bonds of imperial oppression of England beginning in 1170 and lasting to the present day in Northern Ireland. Judgments made about the people and events in that history are examined in the context of that story, and the heroes and villains are labeled as such based upon whether they advanced the freedom of the Irish nation, compromised it, or retarded it. The practices of the British—whether through the Penal Laws, famine relief, or contemporary judicial practices in Ulster—are evaluated in terms of the meta-story of the quest for freedom of the Irish nation on the island of Ireland. A great deal of Irish history has been framed in this language, which has had a significant impact on the adoption of certain public policies, the role of the Church, the formation of Irish national identity, and, of course, the laying of blame for Ireland's problems.

Irish history reverberates throughout present-day events, determining people's ideas and emotions about historical events. The construction and reading of Irish history is no objective exercise but itself part of the political dialogue (or shouting match) through such events as celebrating the history of the Republic of Ireland, venerating its patriots, and whether one defines Irish Republicans in Northern Ireland as heroes or terrorists. Evaluation of the character of Ireland; the amount, type, and direction of change in Ireland; and Ireland's relationships with the world is focused through the lens of history, so it makes a great deal of difference how thick, to say nothing of what shade of green, red, or orange, those lenses are. The choices made in the second half of the twentieth century in the realms of economic growth, Church–state relations, the role of women, relations with Europe, and Ulster were marked by controversy based upon the competing interpretations of the past and the consequent competing policy positions in the present.

The revisionist school of thought about Irish history was based upon the work of the renowned historians R. D. Edwards and F. X. Moody, who trained a generation of Irish historians to escape the ideological framework of the nationalist model and seek to tell the story of events and people on their own terms, not as part of a larger "drama" or meta-history. Their approach led to a significant breakthrough in Irish historiography and to sophisticated reinterpretations. (See Chapter 1 for an outline of revisionist ideas.) In this book we focus on the competing interpretations of the nationalist and revisionist schools as well as the perspective of a new generation of historians (called the "post-revisionists") who have fashioned a more balanced and often quite different "spin" on the pivotal events of the past.

Ireland: The Place

Ireland itself is small, located on the northwest perimeter of Europe, with Great Britain traditionally both a hovering presence and a barrier to the continent. A visitor can travel from one end of Ireland to the other in a few hours or a day: the distance from north to south is only 302 miles (480 km) and from one side to the other (east to west) only 171 miles (266 km). The total size of the island is 32,595

square miles (84,421 square km). The Republic comprises 27,136 square miles (70,282 square km) and Northern Ireland, 5,459 square miles (14,139 square km). The island's geographical area is approximately the same as that of Austria and slightly less than those of Portugal or Hungary. Compared to the United States, the whole island is the size of the state of Maine, while Northern Ireland is about the same size as Connecticut.

   The population of the island in 1996 was 5.2 million people, which is slightly smaller than that of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The population density of Ireland is quite low compared to other European states. Belgium has only one-third the area but almost twice the population. In 1991 the number of people per square kilometer of Ireland was fifty-one, the lowest in the European Union, while that of the Netherlands is approximately seven times higher. The population of the Republic of Ireland in 1996 was about 3,621,000. The population distribution of the island, including Northern Ireland, is heavily urban; in the Republic over 60 percent of the population can be considered urban. Dublin, the largest city on the island, has a population, including its suburbs, of over 1 million people, which is slightly less than one-third that of the Republic of Ireland. Cork, Limerick, and other towns and cities are substantial population centers. In Northern Ireland the total population is 1,573,000; the two cities of Belfast (population 280,000) and Londonderry (population over 72,300) account for over 20 percent of the population of that province.

   Both regions are characterized by a geographical east–west split that is as distinct as the political north–south split. The province of Ulster is bisected by the River Bann. To the east of the river the Protestants are more heavily concentrated, while the Catholics tend to live in the west and, in fact, are a majority in the city of Londonderry (called Derry by the Catholics).[4] Industry is concentrated in the eastern sector of Ulster, especially in Belfast, which became the first industrial area of Ireland in the nineteenth century. The rural areas of west Ulster have suffered deterioration. Population has declined and little industrial development has taken place. In the Republic the province of Connaught in the west has also suffered decline in population, and despite the efforts of the government to encourage industrial development, it remains less affluent than the more urbanized east. The last remaining Irish-speaking areas are sprinkled in a fringe along the western coast. The decline in the use of that language, even in those areas, accelerated in the last decades of the twentieth century. The decline of the western areas has left a population with more women than men, more old than young, and more poor than affluent, tending relatively inefficient, small farms.

   The religious affiliation of the people in the Republic is 92 percent Catholic and 2 percent Church of Ireland, with the remaining 6 percent Methodists, Baptists, and a very small Jewish population. Northern Ireland is composed of 39 percent Catholics, 21 percent Presbyterians, and 18 percent Church of Ireland, with the remaining 23 percent Methodist, Baptist, or other. On the island as a whole the

Catholics make up nearly three-fourths of the population, while Protestants and others constitute the remaining one-fourth.

The major industry in the Republic was for a long time agriculture, which has been supplemented by a vigorous tourist industry and a growing manufacturing base, especially in light industry such as electronics and pharmaceuticals. Services, however, are the fastest growing sector of the economy, with financial services emerging at an unexpectedly rapid rate. The effect has been to replace agriculture as the dominant sector of the economy. The north of Ireland has a good agricultural base, while tourism, understandably, was not a strong sector in the second half of the twentieth century. Nineteenth-century manufacturing strengths such as textiles and ship building were replaced by machine tools, aircraft, and electronics. While both parts of Ireland possess skilled workforces, both have been plagued by high unemployment.

The Chapters to Come

This book, like Ireland and Gaul, has three parts. Chapters 1 through 3 trace how the relationship of Ireland with Great Britain engendered the development of Irish nationalism, which in turn produced Irish independence. That independence, however, revealed the divisions among the Irish people and, in fact, produced the political separation of Ulster. In these chapters we explore the formative power of such events as the Famine and the Rising of 1916.

The ensuing fifty years set the two sections of Ireland on separate paths, the south seeking to realize full independence, the north to consolidate Protestant rule within the United Kingdom. In chapters 4 through 8 the struggles of the Republic for economic development are described and the effects on society of changes in the economic sphere are traced. The impact of economic development on virtually every sphere of society has generated stress and tension as old values conflict with the new forces of urbanization, materialism, and secularism. Critiques of the policies pursued are presented and examined, as are the ideologies of Church–state relations, with an eye to the clash of two very different views of Ireland. The government has had the responsibility of managing this modernization, and these changes have generated new political pressures; a new electorate; a new agenda of issues; and changes in party leadership, structure, and style. The new Irish renaissance and the effect of the creative burst on the global cultural stage compel our attention.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover Northern Ireland and trace the development of that province and the renewal of communal violence that has plagued Ulster for three decades. We look at the players, the role of the United States, the policies of the United Kingdom, and the political developments that have supported peace and those that have undermined it. In these chapters we examine the multiplicity of theories accounting for the conflict. At the end of the twentieth century the violence in

Ulster brought the people of Ireland once again to the question of Irish nationhood and revealed the reciprocal impact on one another of the politics of the two regions. From the dual pressures of modernization and communal violence we return again to the questions raised in the last century when Irish nationalism emerged: What are to be the central social and cultural values of the Irish people? What is the structure of the political order to be?

Notes

1. Michel Peillon, *Contemporary Irish Society* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982), p. 1.

2. See Joseph Lee, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848–1918* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1973).

3. L. Binder, et al., *Crises and Sequence in Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

4. Names can convey a lot of information about one's view of Ireland. The Constitution of the Republic of Ireland calls the country Eire, or Ireland in English. That Constitution claims sovereignty over the whole of the island including Ulster. To further confuse matters, prior to 1920 the whole island was called Ireland. Thus the name "Ireland" can refer to the whole geographical unit or to the Republic of Ireland alone. Within the United Kingdom the province of Ulster is called Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom claims sovereignty over it. When Ireland was partitioned in 1922, three counties of the traditional province of Ulster were separated and put into the Free State of Ireland. (Contributing yet more to the confusion over nomenclature, the South of Ireland was called the Free State from 1922 until 1937.) Thus the label "Ulster" can be used to refer to both the current political entity of Northern Ireland and the traditional nine-county province. This distinction leads to the use of the clumsy construction "twenty-six counties of Ireland" and "six counties of Ulster," which at least adds to the precision of language if not its elegance. This terminological morass does not end with the names of places; the anniversary of the potato blight of 1845 to 1850 has prompted a reconsideration of the widely used term "Famine," which implied a lack of food from a natural disaster. There is a suggestion that it should be replaced with the term "Great Hunger," which implies that something could have been done about it but was not, leaving the Irish to starve. Of course, in Northern Ireland one person's "freedom fighter" is another's "terrorist" the former are engaged in an "armed struggle" while the latter are on a "campaign of murder," depending upon one's view of Irish history.

1

THE QUESTION OF IRISH HISTORY: FROM THE CELTS TO O'CONNELL

Henry Ford once said, "History is bunk." This dismissal of history is akin to call-ing a magnificent tapestry just a collection of threads, which, of course, it is not. A tapestry is a reflection of the lives and ideas portrayed in its composition, and, like art, history is subject to interpretation and reinterpretation as successive genera-tions refocus their collective memories in the light of their current experience. This process is true for the history of any nation, but it is particularly true for the Irish because their experience has been intertwined with the destiny of their largest neighbor to the east.

   At least two major historical traditions have competed for attention since Irish independence in 1922. One is the long-standing "nationalist" tradition, with its stress on Celtic, Catholic, and revolutionary dimensions. It emphasizes the centuries-long struggle with the British as the central theme of Irish history and lauds a pantheon of national heroes—Wolfe Tone, the Fenians, Patrick Pearse—who have led Ireland's steady march toward independence. The other tradition is a "revisionist" interpretation, a scholarly approach that seeks to tell a more "objective" history of Ireland, one that is free from partisan and moralistic story-telling. Whereas nationalists view the Great Famine, for example, as the product of parasitic landlords and a near-genocidal British policy, revisionists have softened the rhetoric, opining that the tragedy was the outcome of complex socio-economic factors that were well under way before 1845. Such debates have cap-tured the hearts and minds of the Irish people and form the backdrop against

1

which they interpret their experiences today and explain changes in modern Ireland. This question of historical viewpoint is particularly acute concerning Northern Ireland, especially when considering the legitimacy of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

In the 1990s another interpretation began to find a voice. This "post-revisionist" commentary seeks to go beyond the comforting polarities of nationalist and revisionist history to encompass new viewpoints on politics and popular culture. In the following chapters this informing perspective provides an added dimension to our understanding of the Irish story.

This chapter begins our consideration of Irish history with the arrival of early peoples at the dawn of prehistory and progresses through the 1840s. We emphasize the development of Irish institutions and identity and also explore several case studies in light of nationalist and revisionist traditions. The major events examined in this and following chapters are the Penal Laws, the 1798 Rebellion, Daniel O'Connell, the Great Famine, the "Irish Nation," and the Rising of 1916.

The Early Peoples

> Writers of the present have nothing to say of anything
> beyond Ierne [Ireland] which is just north of Britain.
> Natives are wholly savage and lead a wretched
> existence because of the cold. In my opinion it is
> there the limits of the habitable earth should be
> fixed.
>
> Strabo (63 B.C.–21 A.D.)

Strabo's depiction of Ireland on the eve of the new millennium is a chilling one, rooted in classical prejudices regarding "remote countries" and the nature of barbarism. It belies the rich and impressive prehistory that this island, poised on the edge of the North Atlantic, enjoyed. Indeed, Ireland's proximity to Britain and its direct access to Europe contributed to the successive waves of peoples and influences that reached its shores.

By 7000 B.C. hunter-gatherers had arrived from Britain. They entered a country heavily forested and teeming with game. It was their unique adaptation to the environment that forged the first distinctive Irish identity. The first farmers reached Ireland about 4000 B.C., bringing with them cattle, sheep, wheat, and barley, as well as the tools needed to exploit them. Within a few hundred years Ireland had seen the emergence of extensive pasture land and farming, the growth of a substantial population, and the construction of increasingly sophisticated megalithic (great stone) architecture. These megalithic tombs served not only as repositories of human remains but also, arguably, as territorial markers and, in some cases, symbols of power. The major monuments in the Boyne valley—Dowth, Knowth,

and Newgrange—rank among the finest achievements of passage tombs in western Europe.[1]

The Celts

With the introduction of metalworking to Ireland around 2500 B.C., Ireland entered a new age of economic advancement. Henceforth the farmer and the craftsman constituted the basis of society. Into this world around 300 B.C. arrived the Celts. Originating in the Bronze Age peoples of central Europe, they brought with them a vibrant assemblage of religion, language, and metalworking. This Celtic culture survived for many centuries in Ireland and parts of Scotland, regions unconquered by the Roman Empire. There is no surviving evidence of a large-scale "invasion" by the incoming Celts. Rather, it is thought that they formed a dominant minority whose language and culture were rapidly assimilated by the indigenous peoples of Ireland.[2]

Socially the Celts lived in loosely knit communities whose elite built defensive hill forts that still dot the Irish rural landscape. Politically, Celtic society was organized along tribal lines, with more than 100 small kingdoms, called tuatha, each with a chief or king. These tribal kingdoms formed shifting alliances among themselves and lived by agriculture and raiding expeditions for land and cattle (which were used as a unit of wealth). The religion of the Celts, Druidism, was filled with pagan mysticism, taboos, and privileges. The different classes of Druids and seers held powerful positions in society and presented a formidable opposition to the new Christian religion initiated by contact with Roman Britain. The encounter between these two worlds is captured satirically in one of the earliest poems surviving in Irish, lampooning St. Patrick (with his bishop's miter) as "an adze head, crazed in the head."[3]

Introduction of Christianity

Patrick was one of many missionaries who brought Ireland more fully into the Roman world, its Latin language, and Christianity. A native of western Britain, he was captured by Irish raiders and enslaved for six years. After escaping his masters he eventually returned to Ireland (he asserts as a bishop) to preach the gospel and evangelize. The process of conversion by Patrick and others spread gradually and fused with many features of pagan Celtic culture. The unique syncretism that emerged in Irish Christianity is particularly notable in the absorption of Celtic customs and festivals into the Church calendar and Christianization of early Celtic sites such as holy wells and royal centers. St. Patrick, especially, understood the symbolic power of place among his Irish converts and thus gained stature through his close association with Ard Macha (Armagh), the capital of the old province of Ulster. Indeed, Patrick's chroniclers would later cite the ancient prominence of this site to support claims that Patrick's church should be the

primatial see of all Ireland. Thus, even at an early date, the Irish past was being manipulated to effect contemporary opinion.[4]

This fortuitous blend of Celtic culture, politics, and social structure with the learning and language of Christianity produced the golden age of Ireland in the seventh and eighth centuries. The monasteries were the landmarks of this age: centers of devotion, political power, and scholarship. Indeed, the writing of Irish history began in the monasteries with the adoption of the Latin alphabet to write Gaelic. Thus the ability was developed about the year 600 to record the law of the Gaels, or Brehon Law; the songs, poetry, and scholarship of the bards and monks; and the events of the political and social order. The imprint of this culture upon the Irish gave them a distinctive religious, cultural, and political identity to which they could refer during the long struggle with the British from the twelfth to the nineteenth centuries. British imperialism confronted an integrated, highly developed society and began the slow, uneven process of anglicizing it. The Celtic and Catholic components of Irish nationalism are rooted in that golden age of over two and one-half centuries of Celtic achievement. In the nineteenth century, despite the dominance of the English language in Ireland, it was this cultural heritage, however romanticized, that contributed to the rising nationalist movement.

The Vikings

Irish society and political alignments took on a new pattern as a result of invasions from Scandinavia. The Vikings, chiefly Norwegian in the case of Ireland, began to attack the islands of the north Atlantic in the 790s A.D. Their initial targets in Ireland were Irish monastic settlements, the repositories of valuable and precious metals as well as a potential source of captives, who were pawns in the extensive slave trade carried on by the Norsemen. In the century and a half from 830 to 1014 the Vikings, or Ostmen as they called themselves, controlled the Shannon, founded Dublin, and raided the great monasteries. A ninth-century Irish monk, thankful for a raging storm that made the seas impassable, wrote in the margins of his manuscript:

> The wind is fierce tonight
> It tosses the Sea's white hair
> I fear no wild Vikings
> Sailing the quiet main.[5]

New research indicates that this traditional portrait of the Norsemen as raiders and plunderers of the Irish monasteries is incomplete.[6] True, some of the smaller monasteries foundered during the Viking era, but the extent to which the Ostmen were a deciding factor in the decline of the "Golden Age" of Irish saints and scholars is exaggerated. Indeed, prominent monasteries such as

Armagh and Clonmacnoise managed to survive the Viking incursions with their resources intact.

Our view of the Ostmen, particularly by the mid-tenth century, should also include their permanent settlement in Hibernia and their impact on Irish society. Excavations at Dublin's Wood Quay and in Waterford city have indicated their influence on foreign trade, introduction of coinage into Ireland, and role as the first town builders. Indeed, Irish port towns such as Dublin, Wexford, Waterford, and Limerick owe their beginnings and even their names to the Vikings.

By the end of the tenth century, the Ostmen controlled much of coastal Ireland. The Irish challenge to this rule produced one of the most notable figures in the history of the Irish kingship: Brian Boru. Brian Boru began his ascent by defeating the Norse rulers in Munster and becoming king of that province from 976 to 1014. In the north another king, Malachy, rose to defeat the Norse at Tara and then went on to drive the Scandinavians from Dublin. The two Irish kings divided up Ireland; Brian became master of Dublin and Leinster. In 1002 Malachy conceded the high kingship to Brian, who set out to consolidate his power. He spent a week in Armagh, formally acknowledging its ecclesiastical ascendancy over Ireland, and in turn was proclaimed "Emperor of the Irish." One task remained: to defeat an incipient challenge to his rule. At the battle of Clontarf, on Good Friday 1014, Brian defeated a coalition of Leinster Irish and Dublin Ostmen. He was killed in the battle, but his rule had brought significant achievements. He had dominated the high kingship of the Irish people and thus had accomplished what few high kings had achieved: a semblance of unified monarchical authority. His death, however, revived the pattern of political conflict among the provincial kingdoms of Ireland, which now included Hiberno-Norse settlers who had intermarried with the Irish and had integrated into the loose Irish political and social structure.

Brian Boru holds an important place in the nationalist interpretation of Irish history. He is often romantically depicted as a Gaelic champion defending Ireland against Viking domination (even his death on Good Friday symbolically suggests his role as savior). From this perspective the battle of Clontarf is portrayed as the climactic victory of the Irish over a foreign foe, a victory that ended Norse aspirations of conquering Ireland. The reality was more complex. Clontarf was occasioned by long-standing provincial rivalries and pitted the king of Leinster against Brian Boru. It was a battle fought between Irish kings—with Viking allies participating on both sides.[7]

The Norman Conquest

Just as the Irish political climate was unsettled, so too was the identity and direction of the Irish Church. Over the years criticism mounted concerning the vast wealth and temporal power of the monasteries. Complaints of hereditary abbots,

married clergy, and the protection of secular and family interests all drew the attention of Rome. By the twelfth century monastic life had reached a low ebb. Major synods reshaped the Irish Church into territorial dioceses and parishes, and native monasteries were increasingly supplanted by foreign orders such as the Cistercians, who brought in new models of monastic rule. While suspect practices such as simony were not eradicated immediately, reforms did succeed in bringing the Irish Church closer to Rome and continental attention.

Ireland also came under closer scrutiny from outsiders in the political sphere. Protest against the evils and abuses in the Irish Church prompted Pope Adrian IV (the only English Pope) to issue the papal letter "Laudabiliter" in 1155, which gave King Henry II of England authority to take possession of Ireland. The immediate impetus, however, for the Norman invasion came from Dermot McMorraugh, a king of Leinster. McMorraugh carries a special burden in the nationalist history of Ireland because it was at his invitation that Richard de Clare, the Earl of Pembroke (known as Strongbow), went to Ireland in 1170 with an invasion force of Welsh-Norman knights and archers. Strongbow's agreement with McMorraugh gained him a wife (McMorraugh's daughter) and designation as heir to the kingdom of Leinster. At this point King Henry II of England began to fear a rival Norman kingdom in Ireland and, under the disputed authority of the papal bull, crossed the Irish sea to claim his title as lord of Ireland.[8] Henry distributed the land in Ireland among his loyal Norman barons and several Irish provincial kings who agreed to pay him tribute. In time, the Normans extended their conquests beyond Leinster, an achievement that was due in part to Norman military skills and superior weaponry. Fortified sites, protective armor, heavy cavalry, and archers (largely unknown in Ireland) gave the Normans a tactical advantage over their Irish foes. Moreover, the invaders were aided by the fragmented resistance and internecine warfare they encountered among Gaelic tribes. As one chronicler remarked: "There has been fighting in all provinces, endless campaigns, cattle raids, burnings, atrocities—Ireland lies like a trembling sod."[9] Norman domination also depended upon more subtle avenues of persuasion such as strategic political and marital alliances. As new historical work suggests these factors may have been equally, if not more, important than military conquest.[10]

While images of the Norman knights emphasize their skill at sword and conquest, we should recall that the Welsh-Norman barons who won land grants from Henry II were primarily interested in promoting commerce and developing market agriculture. They sought out the best land in Ireland (nestled along fertile river valleys to the east and southeast), and some planted rural colonies of Welsh and English farmers to turn a marketable profit. Gerald of Wales, a Norman cleric who visited Ireland about 1185, described the countryside and made an often uncomplimentary comparison between native Irish life and that of their Norman

Tomb Effigy of Cantwell, a fine example of a medieval Norman knight of the fourteenth century in full armor. It stands in the ruined church at Kilfane, County Kilkenny.
Photo by Edward T. McCarron

betters. He remarked that, "The Irish have no use of castles. Woods are their forts and swamps their ditches." In terms of economy,

> They have not progressed at all from the primitive habits of pastoral living. While man usually progresses from the woods to the fields, and from fields to settlements and communities of citizens, these people despise work on the land. . . . For given only to leisure and devoted only to laziness they think that the greatest pleasure is not to work and the greatest wealth is their liberty.[11]

Gerald also described the Irish as a "barbarous" people who were ignorant of the rudiments of the Christian faith and addicted to vice and outlandish habits. This image of the barbarian, as W. R. Jones points out, was a highly useful cliché "that served equally well as a means of self congratulation and as a rationalization for dispossession."[12] Indeed, the writings of Gerald of Wales were consulted for centuries as an authoritative source on the Irish and provided moral and ideological fuel for English officials intent on the conquest of Ireland.[13]

In time, these deeply felt divisions between the "civilized" Norman lords and the "savage" native Irish began to blur, especially outside the gravitational pull of Dublin, the Anglo-Norman seat of government and administration. Intermittent conflict with the native Irish was accompanied by a slow integration of the Normans into the Irish cultural milieu. Intermarriage, adoption of the Irish language, and general acceptance by the Irish created several layers of Norman influence over the next two centuries. In the Leinster area surrounding Dublin, called "the Pale," the English influence was greatest and was characterized by English law, customs, dress, and administration. The second layer of influence was in the east and south, where the Norman feudal system took hold but where Norman landholders also increasingly adopted the Irish culture. Least influenced were Ulster in the north and areas in the west of Ireland, where the rule remained essentially Gaelic.

Political authority was vested in an Irish Parliament convened in 1297. It was exclusively ecclesiastical and Norman, and no native Irish were invited. The first Parliament condemned the cultural integration of the Normans and labeled as "degenerate English" any people who adopted the Irish language and mores. An often-cited example of the attempt to preserve the Englishness of the Normans is the Statutes of Kilkenny, enacted in 1366. These laws forbade intermarriage, wearing Irish dress, recognizing the Brehon Law, speaking the Irish language, fostering Irish children, and patronage of Gaelic bards and poets. The statutes not only were a reflection of cultural superiority but also signaled the somewhat insecure status of the Anglo-Norman elite in Ireland. By the fourteenth century Norman settlement surrounding the Pale was in a defensive posture, but the traditional political divisions among the Irish prevented the focus of power necessary to drive the Normans out of the country. By the fifteenth century the political arrangement gave the descendants of the original Norman settlers—now known as the "Old English"—substantial home rule (with some areas still under Gaelic rule) and left them resentful of royal authority and inclined to ignore it.

The Shipwreck of the Old Order

The Tudor monarchs observed that the expanding imperial role of Britain was threatened by the vulnerability of Ireland. The lack of English authority beyond the Pale, coupled with the less than total devotion of the Old English aristocracy, was a potential opportunity for England's enemies. This was especially true after the English Reformation in 1534, when Henry VIII severed Britain's allegiance with Rome. The Irish Catholic faith now became an added security risk, a conduit of alliance and complicity with the Catholic powers of France and Spain. England, as one official asserted, must determine not "to have the Pope keeper of the keys of [our] back door."[14] The task of asserting the authority of the English Crown and extending English law to Gaelic Ireland was formidable. Henry VIII tried to garner the adherence of the Gaelic chieftains by having them surrender their lands, whereupon he would return them and grant titles to the chieftains, who would administer the land as tenants-in-chief of the English Crown. Moreover, in 1541, Henry had himself designated king of Ireland by the Irish Parliament.

Of greater consequence in fueling Irish antagonism and deepening the political and cultural gap were attempts by the Tudors to extend the Protestant Reformation into Ireland. Dissolution of the monasteries, attempts to impose Anglican church doctrine, and Edward VI's edict outlawing the Catholic mass all drew the ire of the Gaelic Catholic Irish. Moreover, under the Tudor's, royal power in Ireland was administered in a more partisan fashion, and English-Protestant administrators were increasingly tapped to rule in place of Old English magnates. This developing policy of religious apartheid was resented by the Old English. Catholicism would thus become the hub of Irish identity and later one of the pillars of Irish nationalism.

The Flight of the Earls and Plantation

In the 1590s the Irish came as close as they were going to come to defeating English rule. The earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, and the earl of Tyrconnell, Hugh O'Donnell, marshaled support from the lesser Gaelic nobles throughout Ireland. For nine years they withstood the English assault but, despite success at the outset, they were finally defeated by superior forces of the Royal Army at the Battle of Kinsale. The struggle ended in 1603 when O'Neill surrendered. (He was subsequently pardoned.) O'Donnell fled to Spain, and a few years later O'Neill and about 100 Irish chieftains from the north, fearing a conspiracy against their lives, left for the Continent.

This "flight of the earls" left the way open for the completion of the English conquest and the decline of a Gaelic Ireland with its own traditions, law, and society. The flight of the earls also led to the plantation of Ulster, a strategy revived by James I to firmly establish English control of the land. Plantation consisted of granting land confiscated by the Crown to "planters," or landlords, who would

farm the land. James I seized the O'Neill and O'Donnell lands, which comprised vast tracts of Ulster. Beginning in 1610 English planters and especially Scottish settlers took up land in Ulster, so that by 1641 only one-seventh of the province was in Catholic hands. Thus, despite the fact that many Gaelic Irish remained as tenants, Ulster eventually became a Protestant colony, and the distinct ethnic majority of that region was established.

The pattern of rebellion, defeat, and plantation was to continue. In 1641, during the English Civil War, the native Irish and Old English Catholics mounted another effort to throw off English domination and were quite successful in controlling a substantial portion of Ireland. They formed a government, the Confederation of Kilkenny, which then proceeded to splinter into factions, thus preventing any coherent organization of resistance. The Irish rising of 1641 (like the Cromwellian invasion that followed) is most remembered for its unprecedented sectarian violence. In locales such as County Armagh angry Catholic tenants, many displaced by the Ulster Plantation, took revenge on Protestant settlers—especially at Burntollet Bridge, where more than 100 Protestants were drowned in the river Bann at Portadown. Incidents such as these, which were exaggerated out of proportion by English propagandists, have since echoed down the chambers of history and have helped forge a besieged and defensive consciousness that pervades Ulster today.[15]

Memories of atrocity, in the person of Oliver Cromwell, also seared the Catholic community. Having defeated his royalist enemies in Britain, Cromwell turned to Ireland and ruthlessly crushed the rebellion in 1650. The tone was set by Cromwell's massacre of an Anglo-Irish garrison at Drogheda, a royalist stronghold on the river Boyne. The ensuing sack of the town provided generations of nationalist apologists with historical firepower: images of priests and civilians being murdered, survivors being transported to the West Indies, and violence so intense that laneways such as "Scarlet Street" still attest to the bloodletting.

Land Settlement

The most far-reaching aspect of the Cromwellian conquest, however, was its policy of land settlement. Under the Act of Settlement in 1652, all Catholic estates were confiscated and dispossessed Irish were forced to move to "hell or to Connaught." This transfer of land proceeded rapidly, with expropriated estates being assigned to Cromwellian soldiers and English adventurers.

Catholic "exile" to Connaught, however, was more haphazard. While some Catholic proprietors were transplanted, others remained on the land as tenants, creating a layer of resistance—an "underground gentry"—that would resurface in the century to come. The fact remains, however, that Catholic landholding east of the Shannon was on its way to becoming a memory.[16] It would prove a potent memory, nonetheless, as voiced in the poetry of the dispossessed:

Gerald the Bitter, with your polished smile,
may all be desert up to your door . . .
- for you took my son and you took his father,
you took my dozen cows and the bull.
Your heir, Gerald, may he never inherit![17]

Involvement in English Political Rivalries

In 1688, and not for the last time, English political rivalries played themselves out on the Irish stage. James II, a closet Catholic, had become king in 1685. His pro-Catholic convictions and the fact that his heir was Catholic prompted the British Parliament's decision to depose him and install the Protestant William of Orange on the British throne. James sought his restoration through the back door of Ireland, where he knew he would have Catholic support. James's efforts failed at the siege of Londonderry and on the banks of the river Boyne, where his forces were defeated by the army of William III. While of decisive strategic importance, the Battle of the Boyne was also a symbolic triumph of Protestant forces over Catholic—a victory that is still played out in marches and commemorations in the north. The Catholic forces held out until 1691, when William offered the besieged Catholics in Limerick promises that they would be free to practice their religion, their property would remain secure, and they would be free from reprisals. Although William may have concluded the Treaty of Limerick in good faith, his co-religionists in Ireland and England wanted the Irish punished.

The Treaty of Limerick allowed some 11,000 soldiers—predominantly officers and swordsmen—to sail for France. These "Wild Geese," as they are known in Irish tradition, were part of a steady movement of Hibernian immigrants to the Continent, expatriates who sought a place in one of the Catholic armies of Europe or a career in trade.[18] Irish merchant communities emerged at Cadiz, Bordeaux, and Lisbon, and Irish entrepreneurs played an important role in the European wine and brandy trade. The Hennessys of Cork, who built a cognac dynasty in France over several generations, are only the most famous example. Elite Catholic families in Ireland also sent their sons to be educated abroad, including many intended for the priesthood. Indeed, with little opportunity for religious instruction at home, Hibernian clerics founded Irish colleges at Rome, Louvain, and Salamanca. These centers became hotbeds of dissension during the Counter-Reformation and were the staging grounds for Irish apologists and historians abroad. Geoffrey Keating, educated at Bordeaux, wrote *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn*, the first narrative history of Ireland (written in the vernacular) and highly critical of English views on the Irish.[19] Archdeacon John Lynch likewise attacked the prevailing stereotypes of the Irish, particularly those spread by Gerald of Wales. He was especially outraged at charges of Irish inferiority and barbarity, emphasizing the important contributions of early Medieval Irish culture to learning.[20] These

works represent some of the first "nationalist" writing in defense of Irish culture and identity and came at a time when Irish rights were quickly eroding.

The Penal Laws

At the close of the seventeenth century the land-owning Protestant elite (a minority in Ireland at roughly 25 percent of the population) approved a series of anti-Catholic measures, fueled in part by prevailing stereotypes and anti-popery. These laws, enacted by the British Parliament and the Irish Parliament between 1695 and 1727, sought to suppress Irish Catholics and prevent their participation in public office, the army, and civil employment. The principal elements included banishment of bishops and religious orders from the country; those priests who remained were to register and disclaim loyalty to the Stuart pretender to the English throne. Catholics were also excluded from Parliament and from the practice of law; they could not found schools or send their children to Europe to be educated. Leasing of property to Catholics was limited to thirty-one years; purchase by Catholics was not allowed. Any property still owned by Catholics could not be left to one son but had to be divided among all sons. If an eldest son, however, converted to Protestantism, the entire family estate became his. These laws were to last in various forms until 1829.

How should we interpret the Penal Laws during the eighteenth century? What role did they play in suppressing religious practice and economic opportunity among Catholics and in galvanizing their resentment and animosity? These questions have prompted a lively debate in the second half of the twentieth century.

The nationalist interpretation of eighteenth-century Ireland has argued that anti-Catholic legislation, allied with an exploitative landlord class, created a spiritually and economically impoverished peasantry. Popular images abound in early nationalist writing of priest hunters exposing clandestine Catholic activity for bounty and Irish communities clinging precariously to their faith in lonely glens and open fields. Likewise, observers such as Arthur Young, who toured Ireland in the 1770s, described poor wretched souls living in "miserable looking hovels" and everywhere "working as cottiers on lands which were once their own."[21]

Not surprisingly given these images, the nationalist community has underlined the existence of a deeply divided society in eighteenth-century Ireland, one in which the Irish Catholic tenantry, disenfranchised and poverty stricken, were victimized by an Anglo-Irish ascendant class. Daniel Corkery strongly underlines these views in *The Hidden Ireland*, first published in 1924. In his opinion there was little relief for the Gaelic Irish:

> Those Penal Laws that denied him ownership, that forbade him education, that closed the professions to him.—Those laws were as so many nails that held him fast in the bondage where half a century of war had left him—a hewer of wood and a drawer of water—"for his conqueror!"[22]

Here Corkery posits a clear distinction between the Irish peasants who toiled over their patch of rock-strewn ground and the Protestant gentry who lived in the Big House. While the native Irish were "dying of starvation in their cabins," a visit to the landlord's demesne revealed "the wine flushed revelry of the alien gentry, the hunting, the dancing, the drinking, the duelling, with the Big House itself in the background, its half felled woods hanging like dishevelled garments about it."[23]

This view of the Penal Laws and eighteenth-century society has been challenged by revisionist historians since the 1950s. They argue that, whatever the original intent of the Penal Laws, the contention that they created a prostrate Catholic community and an impoverished Irish people is largely overstated.[24] Part of the problem, they suggest, is that nationalists have emphasized a partisan view of past oppression and injustice to suit political purposes. The long-term memory of discrimination under the Penal Laws, for example, was a useful weapon in the armory of the land reform movement of the 1870s. Indeed, as S. J. Connolly reminds us: "The tradition of a parasitic and remorselessly exploited landlord class had an obvious appeal at a time when landlord-tenant relations had become a bitterly contested political issue."[25]

The revisionists have called for a more balanced view of the eighteenth century, one that goes beyond a simple reading of the statute books to explore the local realities of religious experience and economic change.[26] A new "reading" of the Penal Laws suggests that they were, in fact, laxly enforced, particularly after 1730. Many of the cities and towns outside Ulster tolerated "Roman" chapels, which were built unpretentiously along back lanes. Priests likewise enjoyed a practical freedom of movement, cushioned by the fact that Catholics vastly outnumbered Protestants in many districts. Given this disparity it is not surprising, as one contemporary put it, that some priests felt able "to say mass publicly and afterwards put on their swords to dare the country."[27]

A similar reassessment has taken root with respect to economic disabilities. Revisionists have largely rejected the assumption that the Penal Laws created a uniformly impoverished "peasantry." Historians such as Maureen Wall, on the contrary, emphasize the emergence of a Catholic middle class in the eighteenth century, one that was active in manufacturing and overseas trade. She argues that this nascent Catholic elite, prevented from channeling its resources into politics and land holding, refocused its energy into the comparatively fluid and lucrative enterprise of trade.[28] Wall's thesis has recently been modified by David Dickson, who asserts that although a rising Catholic commercial class was in evidence, eighteenth-century urban and maritime trade was firmly in the control of a small cadre of Protestant families and interests.[29]

One finding that has helped to deflate the nationalist position is that penal legislation was not only leveled against Irish Catholics. Eighteenth-century legislation also sought to exclude dissenters and Presbyterians from public office and the military. This religious discrimination, coupled with rising rents, prompted

many Presbyterians in Ulster to emigrate to the American colonies. And, in an interesting twist on the Irish nationalist "spin," these Scots-Irish harbored a festering animosity for British and colonial rule in the New World—a consciousness that was expressed most visibly in their enlistment during the American Revolution.[30]

In the late twentieth century a new generation of historians in Ireland has taken issue, in part, with the revisionists. They maintain that in banishing the classic images of penal oppression and injustice, the revisionists may have gone too far on the other side toward whitewashing the evidence of sectarian tension that pervaded eighteenth-century Irish society. Thomas Bartlett, for one, suggests that a central purpose of the Penal Laws was to bring about the conformity of the Catholic elite—a task that would ultimately ensure the safety of the Protestant minority. Most of the legislation that was actually enforced against Catholics— barring them from professions, from political power, and from purchasing land— indicated not a desire to punish an entire people but rather a concern over security and controlling the leadership class of the Irish community. As Bartlett asserts, "In the eighteenth century it was axiomatic that the lower classes of society without elite leadership, could not pose any real threat to the existing social or political order."[31]

While conformity made some inroads into the Catholic elite, recent historical scholarship also reveals that the traditional Gaelic gentry (and the threat from "below") did not simply disappear. Kevin Whelan, in *The Tree of Liberty,* underlines the survival of a uniquely divided and unstable society.[32] "These divisions were due," as one reviewer elaborates, "not just to a history of violent dispossession but to the existence of an 'underground gentry' of middlemen descended from displaced Catholic proprietors. For the Catholic masses this visible survival of the old ruling class provided the basis for continuing disaffection."[33] Perhaps Arthur Browne, the American-born senior fellow at Trinity College, said it best in 1787: "Elsewhere landed title was purchase, in Ireland it was forfeiture. The old proprietor kept alive the memory of his claim. Property in Ireland resembled the thin soil of volcanic countries spread lightly over subterranean fires."[34]

The Protestant Nation

Land redistribution and economic expansion during the eighteenth century led to the establishment of a Protestant "ascendancy," an elite of Anglo-Irish gentlemen who monopolized the legal profession, politics, and land holding. Their attitude of privilege and self-confidence was most notably expressed in their architecture: the fine Georgian houses that dotted the countryside and public buildings such as the Customs House and the Four Courts in Dublin, masterpieces that were designed to rival and even surpass those in London. This self-conscious identity carried over into the world of letters, where intellectuals such as Jonathan Swift sought to transcend their colonial status with England and declare themselves "The Irish Nation."

This Protestant sense of independence shifted to the Irish Parliament in the late 1700s. Increasingly more secure in its position within Ireland, the Protestant minority began to express dissatisfaction with its relationship with Britain. The discontent was directed at two main issues. First was the political restrictions placed upon the Irish Parliament with respect to enacting legislation; the Irish Parliament was a subordinate political entity. Second was the imposition of economic restraints upon Ireland by England. The export of woolen goods to England was restricted, as were other manufactured products. Restraints on the export of livestock, wool, and glass were designed to protect English farmers and manufacturers (linen manufacture was the exception to this policy). Whether these colonial restrictions greatly hampered the growth of trade has been disputed, but the fact remains that these two issues brought the Irish Protestant leadership into opposition with Britain. Although the majority of the Irish Parliament were pro-English (their seats were provided as patronage from the lord justices appointed by the king), a group emerged that was infused by the ideas of John Locke, and it fostered a form of Irish patriotism not unlike the American patriotism of the same period. These "patriots" condemned absentee landlords as parasites who drained Ireland of needed investment and leadership. Just as the American colonists protested the injustice of being ruled by an unrepresentative Parliament, the Irish patriots stressed the need for an independent Irish Parliament, one that would have the exclusive right to legislate for Ireland.

The British were now confronted with a war in North America and Anglo-Irish patriots agitating for Lockean rights at home. Moreover, in 1778 Irish Protestants (along with a few Catholic gentry) organized a national volunteer force, designed to protect against an invasion by the French, who were then allied with the Americans. By 1780 the Irish Volunteers numbered over 40,000, a potent force that began to think of itself not only as a bastion of defense but also as a means to press Irish grievances against Britain. Under these pressures London passed a bill removing the restrictions on Irish trade. The leader of the Anglo-Irish patriots, Henry Grattan, was a liberal who believed in Catholic civil rights, repeal of the Penal Laws, equality of Catholics and Protestants, and an independent Irish Parliament. The liberal Whigs came into power in England in 1782 and, under Irish and international pressure, granted the Irish Parliament legislative independence.

Although Grattan had championed the rights of Catholics, he did not represent the sentiments of the Anglo-Irish. In fact concessions made to Catholics between 1782 and 1800 came at the instigation of the British rather than of the Irish. Fearing the political tumult that was sweeping Europe as a result of the French Revolution, the British urged the Irish Parliament to discourage Catholic disloyalty by limiting the harshest edge of "no popery." Ceding to this pressure in 1792, the Liberals granted Catholics access to civic positions and the legal profession and the right to open schools, vote, and bear arms. Britain also encouraged the opening of a Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth in 1795. Clearly not motivated by an overwhelming devotion to Catholicism, Protestant British and Irish

Henry Grattan memorialized outside of the gate of Trinity College on Dame Street in Dublin. He was a champion of Catholic emancipation and submitted a bill to end the Penal Laws in 1793 and grant full rights for Catholics. Though that bill failed, Grattan continued his efforts to achieve rights for the Catholic community throughout his career. The Irish Parliament from 1782 to 1800 came to be known as Grattan's Parliament because it was seen by nationalists as a manifestation of self governmment for Ireland. *Photo by Richard B. Finnegan*

leaders feared that the radical ideas of the French Revolution would flow into Ireland through the seminarians trained in Europe. The Irish bishops were in full agreement about creating a seminary at Maynooth because that action was consistent with their long-term interests in controlling education.

Although the bishops and political elites were interested in quarantining the ideas of the French Revolution, there were others who were swept up in the ideas of Tom Paine, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the American and French Revolutions. In 1791 middle-class dissident intellectuals formed the Society of United Irishmen in Belfast. Adopting the ideas of republicanism, they advocated a democratic Ireland and the elimination of sectarian strife. Because the Ulster Presbyterians had suffered religious oppression under the Anglicans, the idea of a nonsectarian state appealed to the nonconformist Protestants as well as those Catholics who joined the Society. Although the Society united Protestants and Catholics in a common cause, the appearance of unity belied the reality of sectarian conflict in Ireland at that time.

1798

The 1798 Rebellion of the United Irishmen had its prelude in 1796 under the leadership of Wolfe Tone. Tone, the guiding light of the movement, was from Dublin, a Protestant educated at Trinity College. He had a vibrant personality and a keen mind and was totally committed to translating the ideas of republican France to Ireland. He had persuaded the French, then at war with Britain, to send an expedition of 20,000 men to join the Society's force in rebellion. The invasion force, accompanied by Tone, reached Bantry Bay in west Cork but was unable to make a landing due to wild weather. The fleet was scattered and returned to France—one of the great "what ifs" in Irish history.[35]

The Irish Parliament, alarmed by rising tension in the country, created an armed Protestant yeoman corps and instituted a series of coercive measures (house burnings, floggings, mass arrests) to quell unrest. By early 1798 events began to accelerate. In March the government arrested most of the leaders of the United Irishmen in Dublin. Thus, when the Society rose in rebellion several days later, their efforts were hampered by a lack of coordination and focus. Moreover, the scattered conflagrations that erupted were "conducted by local leaders with local reputations, rather than by the better known principals, now dead or in prison."[36]

In May the curtain rose on the first act of the rising in Wexford, where United Irish forces (most drawn from the local countryside) decimated a detachment of militia at Oulart. The victory encouraged many more to join: country folk and "united men" led by strong farmers, priests, and gentry (several of them Protestant). The insurgents fought bravely for over a month before they were defeated decisively at the Battle of Vinegar Hill, overlooking Enniscorthy. The second act unfolded in August 1798 when a small French force under General Jean-Joseph Humbert landed in Mayo and for a month fought alongside local

farmers. Despite several electrifying moments—particularly the rout of Irish militia and British regulars known derisively as "the Castlebar races"— Humbert surrendered when he ran out of supplies.[37] In October the final act came to a close when Wolfe Tone was captured off the Donegal coast in a futile attempt to invade Ireland. Rather than be hung as a traitor, he took his own life.

The 1798 Rebellion has been the focus of a substantial body of work and differing interpretations between nationalists and revisionists. Was it a "glorious cause" based on Enlightment ideals of republicanism and inclusiveness, or was it a sectarian fist fight that was distinguished by atrocities and bloody reprisals? The pendulum of interpretation has swung back and forth on these questions over the years, and it may be instructive to explore the various versions because the peal of 1798 still has resonance for our own day.

The personal reflections of Daniel Gahan, a historian of the Wexford rising, open an illuminating window on the impact of nationalist image and the popular history of the period. Gahan recounts growing up in Wexford surrounded by family lore, ballads, and hallowed sites such as Vinegar Hill. The rising, he learned, was a valiant attempt against impossible odds to overthrow the English yoke and to create an independent Ireland. "The schoolroom confirmed it all," Gahan writes. "There the battles of ninety eight took on an even grander significance. There they were part of the great story of the redemption of our nation by men like Tone, O'Connell, Parnell and Pearse."[38] Indeed, one of the important conduits of nationalist tradition in twentieth-century Ireland was the national school system. In 1922 the Free State government instructed history teachers to inspire their students with the aspirations of such men as Thomas Osborne Davis and to emphasize "the continuity of the separatist idea from Tone to Pearse."[39]

This nationalist tradition—passed down in popular accounts, history textbooks, and the national school curriculum—increasingly came under fire in the 1950s and 1960s by the Irish academic establishment. They called for more rigorous scholarship and professional "objectivity" that would carry one beyond the "myths" and "unquestioned assumptions" inherent in the traditional narrative.[40] This revisionist perspective was expressed in several works that became authoritative accounts of 1798. Chief among these was Thomas Pakenham's *Year of Liberty*, a vividly written work that painted a vastly different picture of the Wexford rebels from the heroic accounts of Gahan's youth. Instead of brave amateur soldiers fighting for liberty, the rebels were "a half disciplined mob with little idea beyond plunder."[41] Moreover, they had no serious political aims; they were simply "local peasantry" driven by religious hatred and local grievances.

Pakenham's lead was followed by subsequent works that highlighted the scattered and sectarian nature of the movement. Here, the ideals of the United Irishmen were de-emphasized as simply rhetoric; the reality on the ground in the 1790s was, instead, one of sectarian bitterness. Clashes between the Catholic Defenders and the Protestant Orange Order and sectarian violence by rebels and counter-insurgency troops alike were more representative of the period than the

unity of the United Irishmen. Indeed, Roy Foster, in an influential history of Ireland, dismisses the origins of the Rebellion as being due to Catholic land hunger, an increase in taxes, and religious bitterness. "What broke out . . . was a localized jacquerie, taking hold in Wexford and east Leinster, leading to blood-letting and massacre on an appalling scale."[42]

During the bicentennial of 1798, historians debated the merits and the message of the revisionist interpretation. While revisionists have exposed the simplistic and often partisan history of the nationalists, their critics suggest that they were writing in service of an equally politicized reading of history. The escalation of vi-olence in the north after 1970 increasingly led many in the Irish intellectual com-munity to equate nationalism (and its revolutionary icons such as Wolfe Tone) with support for physical force. Indeed, this violence engendered a more sympa-thetic attitude to British government policy and a consequent disenchantment with the republican movement. In the hands of revisionist historians this alien-ation with popular revolutionary ideals was translated, unwittingly perhaps, into a negative portrait of the 1798 rebels and a less critical treatment of the role of government during the rising.[43]

The question remains, should the 1790s be viewed as a potpourri of agrarian discontent, old antipathies, and sectarian rivalry? Or was it a defining moment in Irish history, the springboard for new ideas and a developing identity whose tra-jectory would have a vibrant afterlife in the two centuries to follow? A new wave of historians appears to firmly embrace the latter interpretation. Recent work has focused on the intellectual context of the United Irishmen, the impact of popular politics, and a better understanding of the role of sectarianism in the 1790s.[44] It has also effectively challenged the idea that the Rebellion was a "spontaneous" outburst of peasants without planning or direction. As Kevin Whelan reminds us, the Rising was actually a sophisticated and well-coordinated undertaking, which failed because the key element in the plan, a coup in Dublin, did not succeed, "thereby prompting a disjointed, spasmodic look to the wave of supporting mo-bilisations in a crescent around the capital."[45]

A central theme in this new scholarship has been the significance of mass politicization. In particular, interest has focused on the rank and file of the move-ment and the extent to which radical ideology percolated down to the local and parish level. The United Irishmen, while initially a society of radical elites and in-tellectuals, made it their business to politicize popular culture and penetrate the ranks of ordinary folk.[46] They utilized newspapers, broadsheets, ballads, prophecy men, and hedge schoolmasters to take the message to the people: to "make every man a politician," as Thomas Adis Emmett expressed it.[47] The United Irishmen also moved to incorporate pre-existing clubs into their orbit. Artisan and drink-ing societies, masonic lodges, and sports teams all served as nurseries for Enlightenment ideas and radical activity. In Wexford, for example, entire United Irish units were based around pre-existing hurling teams. Rather than view par-ticipants of the rising as mindless lemmings acting out local grievances, we

should appreciate that these groups embraced at least part of the Enlightenment ideas and common cause of their leaders.

In this view 1798 should be remembered not as a sectarian wedge that divided the Irish people but rather as a pivotal moment when strife was laid aside in pursuit of higher ideals. As historians such as Kevin Whelan suggest, we must relinquish our obsession with the atrocities, mayhem, and martyrdom of 1798 and concentrate on "the living principles of democracy and pluralism" that are the lasting legacy of the United Irishmen.[48] Here, then, was a "window of opportunity which opened and was forcibly closed in the 1790s, a window which beckoned to the still unattained prospect of a non-sectarian, democratic and inclusive politics adequately representing the Irish people in all of their inherited complexities."[49] In a time of fragile peace and guarded optimism in Northern Ireland, this is perhaps the most instructive legacy of 1798.

Consequences of the Rebellion

The results of the uprising were both immediate and long term. The immediate impact was the dissolution of the Irish Parliament after 500 years of existence. British Prime Minister William Pitt decided that Ireland would have to be integrated into the United Kingdom. The factionalism of the Irish Parliament, the demands of Catholics for rights, and the vulnerability of Ireland to revolution and foreign influences were too threatening to English leaders. The persuasive skills of Charles Cornwallis and Robert Stewart Castlereagh were turned loose on the Irish parliamentary members. These advocates of union with Britain stressed the need for internal and external security. The Protestants had come to recognize that the maintenance of their power was dependent upon Britain. If the 1798 Rebellion had not been successful, the next one might be. Thus a significant segment of the Protestant elite supported union. The Protestant patriots, however, argued that union would subordinate Ireland's interests to Britain's and relegate Ireland to the status of a mere province. It should also be remembered that the bishops and upper-status Catholics favored union because they were persuaded that the English Parliament would grant Catholic emancipation. This possibility was precisely what the more "anti-popery" Protestants feared, and thus they disliked the idea of union with the British. Their arguments, in the end, proved less persuasive than the mixture of pressures and payoffs to the Irish parliamentarians engineered by the king's lord lieutenant, who handed out peerages to get the vote. Ireland was now to be represented in the British Parliament by 100 members of the House of Commons and 32 peers in the House of Lords. The Irish Parliament ceased to exist in 1800.

The enduring heritage of the 1798 Rebellion was to provide intellectual fuel and emotional ardor to the development of Irish nationalism. Tone's vision of an independent republic free of sectarian privilege provided a modern foundation for the Irish independence movement. No longer was the ideal the restoration of a Gaelic Catholic ascendancy free of English domination, but rather the

Continental and American doctrines of individual freedom, democracy, and representative government.

In the emotional sphere the heroic struggle of the Wexford "croppy boys" meeting British muskets with farmers' pikes provided ample material for the creation of revolutionary myth and lore to be retold, sung, or recited. Finally, the failure of the Rebellion was not seen as irrelevant or fruitless but rather as a heroic sacrifice, the worth being in the act itself and not in its outcome. Thus the pattern of heroic failure was set for numerous Irish revolutionary endeavors, some plausible, others foolish, but all revered with the same ferocity in the collective folk memory. David Thornley notes: "The year 1798 with its curious blend of the political republicanism of the intellectuals and the agricultural suffering of the dispossessed, better perhaps than any other date marks the birth of modern Irish nationalism."[50]

Union

Absorption of Ireland into the United Kingdom may have been seen by Pitt as the answer to British security problems, but he could not foresee that Ireland was to prove to be politically hard to digest. In the course of the next century Irish political energies focused on Catholic emancipation, repeal of the Act of Union, land reform, and Home Rule. The skill of some Irish members of Parliament—such as O'Connell, Parnell, and Redmond—cast Irish interests as the political balance weight in the partisan political conflicts of Britain. Two other threads were to accompany Irish political agitation for Home Rule: new organizations favoring violent revolution and an emerging sense of nationalism. These threads were to weave together in the early years of the twentieth century to bring Britain to the brink of civil war and Ireland into open rebellion.

Background

In the early nineteenth century, Ireland's social and economic character was swiftly changing. Ultimately, much of this can be attributed to growth in population, which exploded from 4 million in 1800 to almost 7 million by 1821. The reasons for this increase are various, but a better diet—based upon the nutritious potato—played an important role. By 1800 Irish society had become highly stratified, with a small but influential gentry at the top of the social pyramid, followed by a tenant farmer class (many of them Catholic), and finally a broad base of cottiers, landless laborers, and rural artisans.

A rising population in rural Ireland meant greater competition for available land. This was reflected in the disproportionate rise of cottiers, who rented small plots from tenant farmers that they paid for in labor services.[51] Other laboring poor moved into previously unsettled upland and marginal areas, particularly in the west of Ireland. The prolific potato and a surfeit of turf for fuel allowed these folks to subsist in extended farm clusters that were often densely populated and

subdivided into ever-smaller plots. For many of these people the margin of sub-sistence was quite thin. Two-thirds of the families in Connaught lived on only one to five acres, and opportunistic landlords and head tenants often pushed rents far beyond the real value of the land. This situation was exacerbated by dependence on the potato, which in times of scarcity or blight resulted in localized famines during the early nineteenth century.

Religion in the Union

After the Union was formed the established church was the Church of Ireland. To this alien church the Catholic tenant paid a tithe (although altered in 1838, it was not removed until 1869), which represented one-tenth of the land's produce. This tithe went to support 4 archbishops, 18 bishops, and 1,400 Anglican clergy who ministered to approximately one-tenth of the island's population. If the tenants improved the land through their own efforts, higher rents were charged, and a bill passed in 1816 made capricious eviction easier.

   The British politicians in Westminster were either ignorant of, or indifferent to, these conditions because few of them ever visited Ireland. The British leaders per-ceived the conditions as being the fault of the Irish themselves, who were increas-ingly depicted in cartoons and the press as slovenly and ignorant. Moreover, some politicians personally harbored anti-Catholic, anti-Irish prejudices or were sensi-tive to British public opinion, which was characterized by anti-Catholic nativism.

Political Status Under the Union

The Act of Union did not integrate Ireland into the United Kingdom as an equal component. Ireland continued to be treated as a province whose economic inter-ests were to be subordinated to Britain's and whose population was to be subjected to law and order. Sporadic violence continued in rural areas as secret societies such as the Threshers, Caravats, and Shanavests mobilized against tithes; against the in-vasion of common bog or grazing land; and also against other farmers, especially outsiders who took land over the heads of local tenants. This activity prompted the garrisoning of troops in Ireland and in 1822 the establishment of a special con-stabulary. In 1836 this was reorganized into the Royal Irish Constabulary, an armed police force directed at suppressing agrarian discontent.

   Within Ireland the liberal Protestant patriots faded away and the Orange Order increasingly became the spokesmen for the Protestant community. Founded in 1795 to counter Catholic secret societies, the Orange Order soon grew beyond its Ulster origins. Characterized by anti-popery of a particularly vivid variety, the Orange Order was now dedicated to the Union because Ulster's economic pros-perity was seen to be tied to it. The Irish unionists allied with the Tory politicians in Britain because they shared religious, property, and class interests with the Irish Protestant ascendancy.

This political environment had a deadening effect on Catholic aspirations and activities for two decades after the Act of Union. One notable and tragic exception was the futile "rebellion" in 1803 by Robert Emmet and his followers. The uprising was less a harbinger of the future than a remnant of 1798, as Emmet had absorbed the ideas of his brother Thomas Addis Emmet, one of the founders of the Society of United Irishmen. After attempting to seize Dublin Castle, Emmet was arrested and convicted for treason. Before he was hung he delivered an emotional speech from the dock, a zealous condemnation of British oppression and a clarion call for Irish revolution. He concluded with the words: "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written." Thus, Emmet joined Wolfe Tone in the hagiology of Irish martyrs whose acts were more important than their consequences. Emmet became a heroic figure and thus a contributor to the revolutionary tradition.

Daniel O'Connell

Catholic Emancipation

A far more important figure in the development of political organization among the Catholics and in the achievement of Catholic emancipation was Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell was born in Kerry in 1775 to a well-off Catholic family who could afford to send him to France for his education. Attracted to radicalism in his youth, he was a sometime member of the Society of United Irishmen. He had extraordinary success as a barrister, which established his reputation in Ireland. Earlier he had opposed the 1798 Rebellion because he feared it would provoke bloody reprisals from the British Army. This nonrevolutionary approach to the liberation of Ireland was to characterize his efforts throughout his life (despite his conviction by the House of Lords on a trumped-up sedition charge in 1843). Two great issues shaped O'Connell's career: Catholic emancipation and repeal of the Union with Britain. In pursuit of these objectives O'Connell enjoyed success on the former but fell short on the latter.

The quest for Catholic emancipation was the first item on O'Connell's agenda. The Penal Laws had largely been abandoned by the late eighteenth century, but Catholics were still denied the right to sit in Parliament, advance in the military and civil service, or be appointed to the judiciary. Although civil rights had been virtually promised to Catholics at the time of the Act of Union, Pitt was unable to deliver because King George III refused to agree. Catholics, however, continued to petition the House of Commons for emancipation.

In pursuit of this goal O'Connell welded the Irish Catholic community together in 1823 through the Catholic Association. O'Connell created a mass-based organization using priests as his local grassroots organizers and recruiters. He recognized the strength of the relationship between priest and parishioner, as well as the literary and social eminence of the clergy. The emancipation movement sparked mass enthusiasm and was supported by small contributions (called

"catholic rent") collected at mass on Sundays and encouraged from the pulpit by
the parish priest. In small ways the Irish peasantry had already been flexing its po-
litical muscles. Traditional gatherings such as funerals, sporting occasions, and
fairs all gave Catholic tenants a forum for exchanging ideas, affirming their
strength, and organizing. These "men of no property," as Wolfe Tone called them,
and the threat they posed, ultimately provided O'Connell with the means with
which to win emancipation.[52]

The power of the Catholic Association was dramatically demonstrated in 1828
when O'Connell defeated a Tory landlord, William Vesey Fitzgerald, in a parlia-
mentary election in County Clare. The message to the British government was
clear. It was faced with a choice between extremely unpleasant alternatives. Either
O'Connell's demands for emancipation had to be met, which might provoke anti-
Catholic sentiment in England, or they were to be denied, risking, as O'Connell
warned, insurrection in Ireland. The Peel government chose Catholic civil rights
and passed the Relief Act in 1829. The gain was not without costs to the Irish
Catholics: the Catholic Association was outlawed and 180,000 voters (most of
them small-holders) lost the franchise.

Seeking Repeal of the Union

The second issue to which O'Connell devoted himself was that of repeal of the
Act of Union. Having opposed the Union in 1800, when he urged the Irish not to
"sell their country for a price," O'Connell remained steadfast in that position un-
til his death.[53] Echoing Grattan, O'Connell argued that Ireland could never be
justly governed from London because British politicians could never respond to
Irish needs. Repeal, however, had hardly any adherents in Parliament, and
O'Connell was forced into parliamentary alliance with the Whigs to bring about
advances in Ireland. In some instances this cooperation worked. Lord Mulgrave,
the viceroy, and his undersecretary Thomas Drummond, brought decent, impar-
tial rule to Ireland and outlawed the Orange Order in 1837 (it was revived in
1845). In virtually all other instances, however, O'Connell was frustrated. He
hoped for an increase in Irish representation from the reform bill of 1832; none
was forthcoming. He expected elimination of the tithe in 1838, but it was simply
incorporated into land rents. He expected relief for the poor of Ireland, but
Parliament passed a Poor Law that was inappropriate for Irish conditions and
added taxes to pay for it.

Mass agitation had worked for emancipation, and O'Connell now believed it
was the only road to repeal of the Union. As he had done for emancipation,
O'Connell formed a broad-based Catholic organization, the Loyal National
Repeal Association, by building upon hostility to the Poor Law. O'Connell had an
enormous following, which he excited with promises of freedom, their own par-
liament and courts, tenant's rights, democracy, and prosperity. The voice of this

support can be found in the letters of James Prendergast, a Kerry small-holder who wrote to his children in Boston proclaiming that, "We are all in this country repealers." When O'Connell was later indicted in 1843, Prendergast defended him in no uncertain terms:

> Danl O'Connell the Liberator was on his trial in Dublin this time past for trason against the government for holding Repeal meetings, for enticing the people at those meetings . . . and also for collecting money at home and from foreign lands called America. They say for the dismember-ment of the Empire but they are liers. Danl means no such thing. he means equal laws, equal justice and equal right to Ireland together with some means of support for the poor of all Ireland.[54]

The repeal movement, as suggested in these letters, also flourished among the Irish emigrant communities of the United States. Their organizational zeal and monetary support were the first indications of a potent force that would fuel the manpower, coffers, and arsenals of Irish nationalist societies well into the twentieth century.

In the early 1840s O'Connell organized vast public meetings—called "monster meetings"—to petition for repeal. O'Connell, always the propagandist, staged several of these meetings at historical sites such as Clontarf and the Hill of Tara, shrewdly gauging the symbolic power of place and history in the consciousness of the Irish people. The gathering at Tara, for example, was estimated at over 400,000 souls, a show of strength that implied the force O'Connell could bring to bear against Britain if necessary. As in 1828, O'Connell confronted Prime Minister Peel with the alternative of granting repeal or risking Irish revolution. Peel didn't blink. Emancipation had been costly for the Whigs in 1828 and what they had then conceded was certainly less than Irish self-government. Peel sent troops to Ireland and told O'Connell flatly that he would crush an insurrection rather than grant repeal. O'Connell backed down because he believed the costs of violence to be too high.

Interpretations of O'Connell's Legacy

Since the mid-nineteenth century the perceived image of Daniel O'Connell has changed dramatically, serving as a barometer for measuring Ireland's political atmosphere. While the "Liberator" was idolized by the Irish people during his lifetime, his public stature and legend were diminished in many nationalist circles after his death in 1846. Two of his most vociferous critics were John Mitchel and Charles Gavan Duffy, Young Irelanders who had encountered opposition from O'Connell over the legitimacy of using physical force. Duffy, in particular, sowed doubts about O'Connell's effectiveness as a leader. He argued that O'Connell's political pragmatism—particularly his alliance with the British Whigs, which often slowed the momentum of repeal—was a deviation from the goal of independence

to which O'Connell had committed himself and the Irish people.[55] Duffy and Mitchel saved their harshest comments for O'Connell's retreat at Clontarf, the monster meeting in 1843 that the British government had banned. Duffy implied that O'Connell had earlier pledged himself to stand and fight should the government forbid the meeting. His ultimate decision to back down not only showed his own weakness but ultimately derailed the repeal movement.[56]

The barbs unleashed by Mitchel and Duffy had a powerful impact on a generation of nationalists who took center stage in the crucial years between 1900 and 1920. As Donal McCartney points out, Republicans, Socialists, Sinn Feiners, and spokesmen for the Gaelic Revival all found an ax to grind with O'Connell. James Connolly, a union organizer who established the Irish Citizen Army, described O'Connell as an enemy of the Irish working class and their labor unions. Patrick Pearse, a leader of the Easter Rising, criticized O'Connell for his message that physical force had no place in the attainment of political objectives. And, perhaps most telling, supporters of the Gaelic Revival argued that O'Connell "had done more than any other man to kill the language, and the distinctive character of the nation."[57] O'Connell, who was a native Irish speaker, nonetheless saw the survival of Gaelic culture and the Irish language as a badge of inferiority and weakness. He argued that to compete with the British, to best them at their own political game, the Irish people must master English, the language of law, politics, and power.

This opposing image of O'Connell began to change after the 1940s, in large part due to the work of revisionists who wanted to clear away the myth from the man and judge him according to the political climate of his own time. Much of this work has restored the reputation of O'Connell and commends him as a pragmatic leader and political realist.[58] O'Connell's growing stature and "renaissance" also had much to do with events in Northern Ireland. As terrorism and a militant nationalism re-emerged in the 1970s, republicans legitimized their ideal of a united Ireland and the methods to attain that goal by calling on revolutionary role models such as Patrick Pearse, the Fenians, and Wolfe Tone. For political moderates and revisionists alike, O'Connell thus became a prophet whose doctrine of passive resistance and civil rights offered the proper tactics for the struggle in Northern Ireland. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw a spate of O'Connell biographies and studies that laud his political pragmatism, his power sharing in the Whig alliance, and his attention to civil rights, all strategies that take on meaning for Ulster today.[59]

Post-revisionist historians would have us look anew at the O'Connell legacy. While one has to respect his policy of non-violence, several scholars suggest that O'Connell has a lot to answer for. His embrace of Catholicism as a necessary partner of Irish nationalism, they argue, helped drive home the last nails in the coffin of 1798—a spirit and vision that called for a more inclusive, non-sectarian society.[60]

During his lifetime O'Connell's commitment to nonviolent means had come under sharp criticism in the Repeal Association from a group of agitators who called themselves Young Irelanders and who split away and formed the Irish

Confederation in 1847. This movement had sprung up after 1842 and was encouraged and molded by the newspaper *The Nation*. Founded in 1842 by Thomas Osborne Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, and John Blake Dillon, *The Nation* advocated an anti-industrial cultural nationalism as well as demanding Irish independence. The movement's nationalism flowed from the romantic movement in Europe at the time, which influenced leaders such as Giuseppe Garibaldi in Italy. Its adherents admired Wolfe Tone, Grattan, and liberal political principles but infused them with ideas from the Irish past. Lamenting the retreat of Gaelic before the English language, they urged people to preserve the Irish language and culture.

The Young Irelanders had split with O'Connell over the issues of his cooperation with the Whigs and the question of revolutionary violence and on general differences in philosophy and ideology. The Young Ireland movement itself then split on the question of whether the central issue in Ireland was landlordism and the pursuit of peasant proprietorship, as proposed by James Finton Lalor, or national independence, as proposed by Charles Gavan Duffy. Young Ireland chose the latter course and hoped to extract repeal of the Act of Union from the British Parliament. The Young Irelanders themselves held out little hope for a revolution on the part of the famine-wracked Irish, but the British government was convinced that insurrection was imminent. Parliament passed laws against treason; sent troops to Ireland; and applied martial law to Dublin, Waterford, and Cork. The government began to arrest the leaders of the Young Ireland group and provoked the remainder to "revolution." The constabulary crushed the minuscule attempt at rebellion with little difficulty, and the leaders were transported to penal colonies in Australia. Young Ireland, however, contributed poetry, songs, and a legacy of romantic revolution that would be taken up by subsequent generations of Irish nationalists.

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NOTES

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1. The authoritative account of the first peoples in Ireland is Frank Mitchell and Michael Ryan's *Reading the Irish Landscape* (Dublin: Townhouse Publications, 1997), especially chapters 4 and 5.

2. Barry Raftery, "The Early Iron Age," in *The Illustrated Archaeology of Ireland,* ed. Michael Ryan (Dublin: Country House, 1991), p. 108; and Donnchadh O'Corrain, "Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland,* ed. R. F. Foster (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 1–3.

3. James Carney, *Medieval Irish Lyrics* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1985), p. 3. A sixth-century poem, put in the mouth of a Druidic opponent of St. Patrick.

4. On Ard Macha, see Barry Raftery, *Pagan Christian Ireland: The Enigma of the Irish Iron Age* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1994), pp. 74–79.

5. Donnchadh O'Corrain, "Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland," in *Oxford History of Ireland,* ed. Foster, p. 35.

6. See Marie Therese Flanagan, "The Vikings," in *The People of Ireland,* ed. Patrick Loughery (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1988), pp. 55–65; and Ryan, *The Illustrated Archaeology of Ireland*, p. 153.

7. Marie Therese Flanagan, "Irish and Anglo-Norman Warfare in Twelfth-century Ireland," in *A Military History of Ireland,* ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 52–55.

8. Pope Adrian IV was English, and no traces of the bull have been found, thus leading to speculation that it never existed. The Irish Catholic Church, however, was considered to be in need of reform at the time, and Adrian IV was interested in the assertion of strong government in Ireland to bring order to the Irish Church.

9. Mitchell and Ryan, *Reading the Irish Landscape,* p. 173.

10. This point is outlined in Flanagan, "Warfare in Twelfth-century Ireland," in *A Military History of Ireland,* ed. Bartlett and Jeffery, p. 75.

11. Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 101–102.

12. W. R. Jones, "England against the Celtic Fringe: A Study of Cultural Stereotypes," *Journal of World History* XIII, no. 1 (1971), pp. 155–171.

13. On this point see W. R. Jones, "Giraldus Redivus: English Historians, Irish Apologists, and the Work of Gerald of Wales," *Eire-Ireland* IX (1974), pp. 3–20.

14. Jane Ohlmeyer, "The Wars of Religion, 1603–1660," in *A Military History of Ireland,* ed. Bartlett and Jeffrey, p. 160.

15. English contemporaries such as Sir John Temple, writing in 1646, inflated the number of Protestant victims in the 1641 rising to as high as 300,000. See Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question, 1690–1830* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1992), pp. 6–9.

16. After the Cromwellian confiscations, Catholic ownership of land in Ireland was reduced to one-fourth of the total. In the century to follow, this total would be reduced to less than 5 percent.

17. Sean O'Tuama and Thomas Kinsella, eds., *An Duanaire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 345.

18. See L. M. Cullen, "The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800,* ed. Nicholas Canny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 113–153; and Harman Murtaugh, "Irish Soldiers Abroad, 1600–1800," in *A Military History of Ireland,* ed. Bartlett and Jeffery, pp. 294–314.

19. On Keating, see Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 13–15.

20. On the Irish contribution to Counter-Reformation thought and Irish historical writing, see John Silke, "Irish Scholarship and the Renaissance, 1580–1673," *Studies in the Renaissance* XX (1971), pp. 169–206; and W. R. Jones, "Giraldus Redivus: English Historians, Irish Apologists, and the Work of Gerald of Wales," *Eire-Ireland* IX (1974), pp. 3–20.

21. Arthur Young, *A Tour in Ireland, 1776–1779* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1970, reprint), vol. I, p. 300.

22. Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1967), p. 39.

23. Ibid., pp. 40–41.

24. ·A good review of literature on the Penal Laws can be found in S. J. Connolly, "Religion and History," *Irish Economic and Social History* X (1983), pp. 66–80.

25. Connolly, "Eighteenth Century Ireland: Colony or Ancien Regime," in *Making of Modern Irish History,* ed. Boyce and O'Day, p. 18.

26. See, for example, Louis Cullen, "The Hidden Ireland: Reassessment of a Concept," *Studia Hibernica* 9 (1969), pp. 7–47.

27. Quoted in Bartlett, *Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, p. 48.

28. Maureen Wall, "The Rise of the Catholic Middle Class in Eighteenth Century Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* XI, no. 42 (1958), pp. 91–115.

29. David Dickson, "Catholics and Trade in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: An Old Debate Revisited," in *Endurance and Emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. T. P. Power and Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), pp. 85–100.

30. On the Scots-Irish in America, see David Noel Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America, 1760–1820* (Dublin: The Mercier Press, 1981), especially chapters 4 and 5.

31. Bartlett, *Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, pp. 22–23.

32. Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760–1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), especially pp. 3–56.

33. Connolly, "Review of Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty*," *History Ireland* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1996), p. 55.

34. Quoted in Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty*, p. 56.

35. At least one historian of the United Irishmen maintains that had the French landed at Bantry Bay in December 1796, they would in all likelihood have liberated the country. See Thomas Graham, " 'A Union of Power'? The United Irish Organisation: 1795–1798," in *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion,* ed. David Dickson, Daire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p. 246.

36. ·Thomas Bartlett, "Defence, Counter-insurgency and Rebellion: Ireland, 1793–1803," in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Bartlett and Jeffery, p. 278.

37. For an excellent treatment of these events in the form of a novel, see Thomas Flanagan, *The Year of the French* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979).

38. Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising: Wexford 1798* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1995), pp. xiii–xiv.

39. Roy Foster, "History and the Irish Question," in *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism,* ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), p. 139. See also Francis T. Holohan, "History Teaching in the Irish Free State, 1922–35," *History Ireland* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 53–55.

40. A balanced overview of the revisionist position (and its critics) can be found in *Interpreting Irish History,* ed. Brady. See also Boyce and O'Day, eds., *Making of Modern Irish History*.

41. Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 131.

42. R. F. Foster, "Ascendancy and the Union," in *Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. Foster, p. 182.

43. For a review of this issue, see Connolly, "The Eighteenth Century?", in *Making of Modern Irish History*, ed. Boyce and O'Day, p. 27.

44. See Marianne Eliot, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); David Dickson and Hugh Gough, eds., *Ireland and the French*